

Russell City Redevelopment  
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### **Redeveloping Russell City: Alameda County, the City of Hayward, and industrialization**

Russell City was an area in unincorporated Alameda County, whose land today lies in the city of Hayward. From 1963 to 1967, Russell City underwent a period of redevelopment, whereby the residents of the city were displaced, the area razed, and sold to a property developer. This report is the reflection of our investigation into this redevelopment period and represents a partial telling of the actions that were taken by the city of Hayward and the county of Alameda during this time. Below, we provide a narrative recounting of the redevelopment period in Russell City, as seen through the documents and articles we collected; in the appendix, we detail the various sources we consulted for this research and the results of our endeavors.

As we discuss below, the land called “Russell City” that was subject to redevelopment was subject to contestation, violent displacement and settler colonialism practice from the outset. The area that constituted Russell City was the homeland of the Jalquin Ohlone (Chocheño) ancestors of the present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.<sup>1</sup> Colonialism and Catholic missionization brought the first displacements by Western forces to this area in the 1700s, thus by the time it was christened at Russell City in 1854, violent displacement had been established as a legitimate practice in the eyes of the state. In this context, Russell City “redevelopment” that occurred in the 1960s in Alameda County is part of a longer tradition of white supremacy and settler colonial practice, and the buying of land, relocating of residents, and transformation of the area from a residential community to private industrial park is one episode in this history.

The Russell City that underwent redevelopment in the 1960s was also the site of another practice at the intersections between state power and geography: the creation of it as a residence for those in Alameda County who were unable to live elsewhere. This inability stemmed not from the residents, but from the practice of white supremacy embedded in US real estate that created racial covenants, steered nonwhite residents from white neighborhoods, and fostered racial residential segregation. Initially inhabited by Danish immigrants, by World War II, the area was home to shipyard workers and braceros pulled to the area by military industrial development.

The 1960 census placed Russell City in the HA-56 census tract. According to the census, this tract had 1,549 people in the area, with 64.75% listed as white, 31.96% listed as Black and 3.29% listed as “other race.”<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with the surrounding census tracts that ranged from 97.76% white to 99.81%. In the 1960 census, the city of Hayward was 99.6% white. Most residents in Russell City were under 18 (50.17%), with 19.82% of residents between 18 and 34, 24.4% of residents 35 to 64,

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<sup>1</sup> Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. (2023). Historical Overview. Available at : <http://www.muwekma.org/historical-overview.html>

<sup>2</sup> During this time period, it was common for Latinx communities to be included as “white” on the census. In a report from the school superintendent in 1954, it was noted that the racial composition of the area was “Mexican 57%, Black 24%, with the balance largely Americans who came from hill country... and a few Puerto Ricans.” From “Meeting with Wilda Mette”, May 7, 1954, in [Russell City RC planned industrial area](#) files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

and 5.62% of residents over the age of 65. Of the population 14 years and over, 30.22% were single, 55.43% were married, 4.57% were separated, 6.74% were widowed, and 3.04% were divorced. The majority of residents had completed elementary school (52.11%), with another 31.2% attending high school, and 5.32% college; 11.27% of residents had no school years completed. Only 48.04% of the population 14 and older was listed as in the labor force, likely reflecting the prevalence of informal labor amongst poor communities. Residents whose occupations were listed were 27.9% in “operatives and kindred workers, including mine” category, with 16.1% “laborers except farm and mine” and 15.2% in “craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.” Median income in the area was just over \$4,000, compared with \$7300 for the city of Hayward.

Due to pervasive racism and classism, Russell City was a place where the poor and people of color, who were not welcome in other spaces, could live. Because of this, it was also a place that was the recipient of blame from surrounding communities. For instance, in 1949, in what was likely an example of racial violence, Alameda county youth were reported to have descended upon Russell City in an effort to “clean-up” the area; this effort started “shortly before midnight”, and consisted of beating up local Russell City youth, such as Henry Garron who received a badly lacerated left eye.<sup>3</sup> In a less violent, but nevertheless revealing episode, youth from a Christian congregational fellowship descended again upon Russell City in 1959, in an effort to again “clean-up” the area and create “productive ways of meeting racial problems.”<sup>4</sup> These two seemingly disparate events demonstrate how Russell City was seen as the site and source of what some in Alameda County defined as its “problems,” including “racial problems”, rather than as we demonstrate below, the recipient of broader community inaction, neglect, and disregard. In these instances, racism, classism, and other intentional actions to exploit Russell City area residents were commonplace. Further, the negative stereotyping of the area, along with biased news and political reports, led many in surrounding communities to blame Russell City for community conditions, and in some instances, appointing themselves to “clean up” the area.

### **Precursors to Redevelopment: Public health and government responsibility**

Contestation over the land in Russell City started from the founding of the city, as Frederick Russell was quickly embroiled in multiple legal conflicts over the development of the area. East Shore and Suburban Realty sued Russell in 1909, arguing that their contract to sell land in the area was undermined by Russell’s actions of selling lots at greatly reduced rates.<sup>5</sup> Russell’s problems deepened in 1912, when tax assessments of lots were valued at \$200, but lots themselves were only selling for between \$20-25.<sup>6</sup> Eventually in 1912, the lots had a levy placed on them in response to the lawsuit from East Shore and Suburban Realty.<sup>7</sup> By 1945 when we locate the beginnings of redevelopment, however, the lots were sold to individual owners and Russell City was part of unincorporated southern Alameda County. Located next to the city of Hayward, beginning in 1945, Russell City citizens endured two decades of legal wrangling over their efforts to get surrounding municipal entities to deliver water and sewer services to the area. These efforts resulted in the redevelopment of the area in 1968, which finally led to water and sewer lines supplying the geographical space that was, at that point, the place where Russell City once stood.

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<sup>3</sup> Six Hurt in Riot at Russell City Dance Hall Café, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/31/1949, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Russell City: Clean Up Slated, *Daily Review*, 3/21/1959, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Legal Fight Begun Over Valuable Realty, *San Francisco Call*, 12/23/1909, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Lot Owner Opposes High Tax Assessment, *San Francisco Call*, 7/23/1912, p. 5; Hot Air Peddled in Russell City, *San Francisco Call*, 7/25/1912, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Attachment Levied for Alleged \$520,000 Debt, *San Francisco Call*, 9/22/1912, p. 25.

## *Media and Political depictions of Russell City in the 1940s*

Descriptions of Russell City during this time describe a vibrant community who lacked municipal services, including water lines, sewer service, and road maintenance. One article from 1946 offers an insight into the community by reporting on a meeting between Alameda County Supervisor George Janssen and city of Hayward Mayor George Mays. Mays “pointed out that the county authorities had taken the stand that the property value in Russell City would not warrant extensive grading or paving of the roads.” Kenneth Garcia, a resident of Russell City at the time, noted that “‘If the county would even gravel the roads it would make the streets accessible in the winter time. At the present time’, Garcia continued, ‘with the exception of Washington Avenue, the streets are absolutely inaccessible in the rainy weather.’”<sup>8</sup> Six months later, roads were so bad that the Russell City road was closed by order of the county health department.<sup>9</sup> It was in this first meeting between the county and the city that one of the first mentions of redeveloping the area for industrial purposes appears in local newspapers, as it was “suggested that the county planning commission in the proposed land use maps regard the Russell City property as industrial rather than residential property.”<sup>10</sup> It is also here that we see a recurrent theme—that the tax base of Russell City would not support service provision; in essence, that Russell City residents were too poor to warrant service provision.

There were no water and sewer lines extended to the area due to its development prior to the requirement for such services. The city of Hayward first considered extending water service to Russell City in 1945, when it tasked the water department superintendent with “investigat[ing] the feasibility of extending water services”;<sup>11</sup> this was done at the request of the fire department, whose failure to save homes was often the direct result of the lack of water availability in the area.<sup>12</sup> During this period, residents received water from a series of wells, or buying it as many reportedly did, and septic tanks were the main source of sewage disposal.<sup>13</sup> In periods of dry weather, wells would run dry and during these periods, septic tank waste would sometimes seep into the water supply. This was the case in 1949, when there was a dysentery outbreak in the community, that killed a 20-month-old baby and sickened 13 others.<sup>14</sup> Described as the result of “deplorably unsanitary conditions” by the county health officer, the area was sprayed and underwent a “general sanitary cleanup.”<sup>15</sup>

Further, while Russell City was not itself designated as an industrial community, it did have several industrial businesses surrounding it. Several garbage dumps, scrap metal yards, and agricultural businesses surrounded the residential community. Garbage dumps were one type of business that located in the area, and often caused negative environmental conditions for the residents. A study of the Russell City dump by the Alameda County Garbage Study Committee “resulted in the

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<sup>8</sup> Chamber Meeting Held At Ashland School, *Daily Review*, 6/13/1945, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Chamber Asks Road Openings, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/12/1946, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Chamber Meeting Held At Ashland School, *Daily Review*, 6/13/1945, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hayward Has Four-Point Plan, *Oakland Tribune*, 2/18/1945, p. C2.

<sup>12</sup> Eight Flee as Fire Sweeps Grocery, Living Quarters, *Oakland Tribune*, 2/17/1947, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Supervisors Refuse to Help Remedy This!, *Daily Review*, 9/13/1949, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Dead, 11 Sick of Dysentery in Bay Area, *Oakland Tribune*, 6/21/1949, p. 1; Russell City Dysentery Outbreak Under Control, *Oakland Tribune*, 7/17/1949, p. A23

<sup>15</sup> 1 dead, 11 sick..., 6/21/1949.

conclusion that 'present conditions of all dumps observed were found unsatisfactory.'<sup>16</sup> Locating industrial businesses, particularly unpleasant ones, in Russell City is just one example of how the state not only neglected to provide services to residents, but also willingly subjected residents to land uses that were often not allowed elsewhere in the county.

Despite state neglect, from the outset, it was clear that Russell City residents made considerable efforts to improve their community. A community clean up in 1947 was sponsored by the “Russell City Improvement League” in order to raise money from salvageable materials for a new fire truck.<sup>17</sup> An extensive editorial in the *Daily Review* titled “Russell City—the community that knows how!” described Russell City as a “a model which the entire area could adopt with profit.”<sup>18</sup> The article describes the road conditions in the area, recounting how the Board of Supervisors “ignored” residents’ pleas for help. Residents then formed the Russell City Improvement League, which compiled all the evidence as to how the lack of sufficient roads in the area impacted health, garbage, postal service, and children attendance at schools. With this evidence, the county authorized improvements on a few main streets. Further, the article recounts how the supervisors also told Russell Cityans that they did not have enough votes for county-funded improvements, which resulted in “the residents of Russell City—black, and brown, and white—registering in unprecedented numbers.” Further, the article reported that meetings, to accommodate the needs of all residents in the area, were conducted with interpreters. A boy’s club was also formed, demonstrating the commitment of area residents to youth development, and it also had an official interpreter, which the article writes is a sign that “Russell City believes in organizing ALL its people for worthwhile projects.” The article concludes by listing the residents who served as officers for the boys club in 1947: Buster Brooks, Phil Day, Demetrius Kimble, Sam Barrett, William Ouiroz, George Feliciano, Rufine Perez, Edward Brown, and Dupree Pryor Sr. Leona Alves, Evetta Brooks, Carmen Martin, Joe Melia, Mytice Brown, Jay Clyde Brown, and Garnet Thomas (listed in order of article).

*“No legal authority”: Dysentery, water, and city and county responsibility*

The dysentery outbreak in 1949 in Russell City also prompted the first documented effort to extend water lines into the area. Just one month after the dysentery outbreak ended, in August 1949, Hayward City Councilperson John Haar suggested extending Hayward water lines, and asked the city engineer and public works administrator to study the cost.<sup>19</sup> He also indicated that Supervisor Janssen had said the county would finance the cost. Despite Councilperson Haar’s declaration, the county “rejected” supplying water to the area.<sup>20</sup> Hayward Councilperson William O. Wilson decried the county’s decision, saying that an epidemic does not have geographical boundaries and that “what affects them affects us.” At this point, the city of Hayward was already planning on extending a water line to a new National Guard installation on the airport land near Russell City. The city asked the county to pay for the cost of increasing the size of the water line from 6” to 12””; this would accommodate servicing both the National Guard and Russell City. Hayward council then suggested that another 3000-foot of 6” line could be installed—either at the cost to the residents, the county,

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<sup>16</sup> Hearing is Sought on Permit for Oakland Scavenger Dump, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/23/1948, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Russell City Turns Out for Clean-up, *Oakland Tribune*, 2/17/1947, p. C15; Russell City Buys Fire Truck, *Daily Review*, 5/17/1947, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> A Lesson in Community Effort, *Daily Review*, 4/4/1947, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> May Extend City Water to Russell, *Daily Review*, 8/18/1949, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> County Will Reject City Council Plan to Supply Russell City Water, *Daily Review*, 9/3/1949, p. 1.

or a special assessment district—that ran from the National Guard to Russell City residential area.<sup>21</sup> Supervisor Janssen, however, indicated the county “cannot go along” and the county refused to provide the needed water line infrastructure.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the county’s refusal, the city of Hayward, residents and area groups continued to pressure the county. Mrs. J.G. Gonzalves, resident of Russell City, noted that the area was “in dire need of water services” and began organizing area residents to put further pressure on the county.<sup>23</sup> Editorials in the *Daily Review* worked alongside residents to implore the county to provide water to the area, decrying the county line that it had “no legal authority” to provide water to the area.<sup>24</sup> Russell City Community Council, Hayward Carpenters Local 1622, Hayward Merchants Association, and federated improvement club, such as the Eden Improvement Club, all asked the county to reconsider its refusal, to no avail.<sup>25</sup> Eden Improvement Club brought attention to the high cost of water that residents of the area already paid; by having to buy water from Oakland for drinking, Russell City residents paid a higher cost for drinking water than the average Hayward resident paid for the entirety of their water usage.<sup>26</sup>

At this point in the historical juncture, it appeared as if all the local agitation had convinced the county to provide the line. An article in the *Daily Review* recounted how the board of supervisors offered the city of Hayward a proposal, that if Hayward went ahead and laid the line to Russell City at the same time as it laid one to the National Guard, the county would reimburse. The article wrote that “Although the county cannot directly pay for such a line, [Supervisor Harry] Bartell said that the supervisors are willing to give the city additional aid in other fields where the board has legal authority which will repay the city in full for extra expenses of the Russell City line.” Reportedly, at this meeting, Supervisor Bartell said, “If the city can find a way to lay the line, the supervisors will see that the additional county funds make up the difference.”<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, community conditions were going from “bad to worse”, and Mrs. J.G. Gonsalves reported that surface wells were running dry.<sup>28</sup> Wells on one street had already run dry and others were getting there. Despite these conditions, Supervisor Bartell took issue with a *Daily Review* editorial calling for county support for the water line saying it “wasn’t fair to the supervisors.”<sup>29</sup> In response, a *Daily Review* editorial published Supervisor Bartell’s letter alongside another editorial which recounted how the county had taken the stand that it had “no legal authority” to aid Russell City. The editorial implored the county to take “responsibility” for the area, given that the whole of the county is impacted by epidemics. Instead, Supervisor Bartell responded that the “Board of Supervisors has taken action so that never again in Alameda county can the condition that now exists in Russell City again occur in this county.” While it is unclear what actions Bartell is referring

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<sup>21</sup> County will reject..., 9/3/1949; Russell City Water Fight Takes Shape, *Daily Review*, 9/8/1949, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> County will reject..., 9/3/1949.

<sup>23</sup> Russell City Water..., 9/8/1949; 100 sign request for county aid, *Daily Review*, 9/9/1949, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Russell City and Water, *Daily Review*, 9/8/1949, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Russell City Council Sets Water Talk, *Daily Review*, 9/10/1949, p. 2; Russell City Plea for Water Grows, *Daily Review*, 9/12/1949, p. 1; Supervisors Refuse to Help Remedy This!, *Daily Review*, 9/13/1949, p. 1; More Help in Russell City Water Fight, *Daily Review*, 9/14/1949, p. 1; Russell City Wins Round in Fight, *Daily Review*, 9/20/1949, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Support to Russell City, *Daily Review*, 9/14/1949, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Supervisors offer to help city on Russell City Water Problem, *Daily Review*, 9/15/1949, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Russell City Conditions Going from Bad to Worse, *Daily Review*, 9/16/1949, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Editorial: To the supervisors, *Daily Review*, 9/17/1949, p. 16.

to, it could be in reference to an emerging decision by the county health department to deny all building permits in the area until water and sewer service was provided (more on this below).

Supervisor Bartell continued that the Board knew of “no authority by which it can change the present condition” and would “be glad to have you, or any other citizen” recommend legal actions the board could take. Supervisor Bartell continued:

In many portions of Alameda county, there are serious water conditions and there is no authority to use the funds of all the taxpayers of Alameda county to correct conditions in any particular area... Let me assure you very definitely that the board of Supervisors is not unmindful of the unsatisfactory condition now existing and the time may come when drastic action will be taken, ***if the people affected in that area do not clear up the conditions themselves, which is their obligation and not that of the Board of Supervisors*** (emphasis added).

The county’s position reveals an important insight into the governance of Russell City—a theme of neglect, refusal, and disavowal of the community, despite numerous efforts by the community to, as the Board of Supervisors suggested, “help themselves.” This theme, that the residents were ultimately responsible for shouldering the cost of water and sewer lines recurred repeatedly during the period of redevelopment, and frequently relied on the low cost of tax assessments in the area as a reason for denial of these services.

Residents contested these claims by the county.<sup>30</sup> Through their attorney, T.I. Foley, residents pointed out to the county that the supervisors could use their “police powers”, that included “jurisdiction over health and safety in the unincorporated areas of the county” to provide the lines. Foley further countered the Supervisors claims, saying

It might be wise to point out that should the county find that such is the case--they might legally aid Russell City through those powers, then there should be no other hurdle. The county need not fear setting a precedent which might work to its disadvantage at a later date. By their own claims, the supervisors say that the situation at Russell City cannot be duplicated elsewhere in the country.

Residents’ arguments to the county were backed by the Hayward City Attorney, who provided the county with the legal mechanism to pay for the water line.<sup>31</sup> When the city laid the water line to the National Guard, it did install a 12” line. According to the article, the line was city paid and county financed, writing that “Negotiations between Hayward and the board of supervisors reportedly have ironed out a legal technicality that previously blocked county agreement to handle the Russell City line in this manner.”

Despite county commitment, by May 1950, water still had not arrived in Russell City. An editorial in the *Daily Review* reminded the county about the “promise” it made to Russell City and southern Alameda County, and that summer meant the return to water and health problems. Community groups began agitating again for the county to provide water and sewer service to the area. Eden

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<sup>30</sup> Editorial: Work out an answer, *Daily Review*, 9/21/1949, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Work Starts on Water Line to National Guard Installations; Good Tidings for Russell City, *Daily Review*, 12/21/1949, p. 1.

Council for Civic Unity sent a letter to both the Hayward City Council and the Board of Supervisors with three questions: “Is it possible to say when the new water main to Russell City will be completed? What authorities have jurisdiction for issuing building permits in Russell City? Is there a reason for the refusal of such building permits in Russell City at this time?”<sup>32</sup> Eden City Council however did not get the answers it sought and made a second appeal to both the city and the county.<sup>33</sup> They wrote:

The impression is that responsibility for such an extension to Russell City by the city of Hayward when, through its official representative, it accepted a large sum of money from the county board of supervisors for road projects as an ‘assist’ in underwriting the Russell road water main project. According to the report, at the time of accepting the above mentioned financial assistance, a statement was made which in effect assured the citizens of Russell City that funds would be used to extend the Russell road water main to their town.

Part of the reason for the county’s refusal for laying the line to Russell City had also to do with what it said were road funds allocated to Hayward in order to compensate the cost of the pipeline.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, the city of Hayward disagreed with this characterization in a four-page letter sent to the Eden Council by Hayward City Manager Lohn Ficklin.<sup>35</sup> Ficklin wrote that there was no connection between county road funds and the city and the water line. Like the supervisors before him, Ficklin also cited legal issues, writing that it would be “impossible for either the county to give, or the city to use such funds” and that the “city never was part of such an agreement.” Ficklin further recounts how the money received by the county was only \$30,000, was for its own “merit”, and was not accepted by the city with any intention of extending the water line to Russell City. He wrote further:

As a matter of fact, the board's action was taken at a date considerably later than the completion of the 12-inch line to the National Guard area. At that time the chairman of the board of supervisors sought to ***prevent the allocation of the money to the City of Hayward on the grounds that the city council had not cooperated with the board of supervisors on an entirely different matter***, which also bore no relationship to the general purposes of the county road fund, and that was the question of bridge toll collections for the construction of the approach structures for the San Francisco bay bridge. (emphasis added)

The county disputed these claims, writing in a letter to the Eden Council that the county had in fact provided \$50,000 in road funding to the city, and that the city had accepted it.<sup>36</sup> Though this dispute happened in 1949 and 1950, this exchange did not necessarily end when newspapers stopped reporting on it. In 1953, Supervisor Bartell again revisits this conflict, noting that the most recent allocation of road funds for the improvement of 3 streets that it would “allow Hayward to use its own money to extend water mains from Russell City” since the city had reported the issue was funding.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Group Wants Facts About Russell City, *Daily Review*, 7/11/1950, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> New Appeal for Russell Water Plans, *Daily Review*, 8/14/1950, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Group wants facts..., 7/11/1950.

<sup>35</sup> Water Supply for Russell City is County Supervisors' Responsibility, City Manager Tells Eden Civic Group, *Daily Review*, 8/19/1950, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Bartell answers Willetts, *Daily Review*, 8/31/1950, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> County grants Hayward \$50,000 for Road Jobs, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/7/1953, p. E31.

The series of above exchanges between the city, county, and resident and community groups demonstrate just how Russell City was caught between the politics of the city and the county, with neither taking responsibility for assisting Russell City residents with obtaining sanitary community conditions. As one editorial in the *Daily Review* called it, it was a “kids’ game” of “somebody else is ‘it.’”<sup>38</sup> As this game played on, Russell City did not get water; but as the editorial noted, it did get a hog range, a polluting industrial business that both San Lorenzo and Warm Spring rejected, when the Board of Supervisors provided a permit for it to operate on the outskirts of Russell City. This was in far contrast to how the residents of the area were treated; as the Eden Council asked, the county had routinely denied building permits to anyone in the area since it passed its uniform building code in 1945.<sup>39</sup>

Russell City residents did not just ask the city and the county for help, though. They also contacted state authorities. In a campaign began by Ruth Manwarren, residents contacted state authorities, and particularly Governor Earl Warren’s office, for help in the matter. While state authorities “indicated...interest in the problem”, they also suggested that it was a matter in which the state “has no jurisdiction.”<sup>40</sup> Mrs. J.G. Gonzalves also wrote Warren, describing how wells were already at mud stage or dry in fifty percent of homes.<sup>41</sup> E.S. Oie wrote about having to buy drinking water, and how wells were in danger of contamination from cesspool seepage; Oie foreshadowed typhoid or diphtheria epidemics and concluded that the “people of this area feel you are the only to whom they may look for help.”<sup>42</sup> Manwarren reflected these sentiments, when writing, in response to the accusation that Russell City was the “worst shantytown in the nation” that...

I, as a resident of Russell City for the past five years, only agree with you on one point--the fear of a plague breaking out due to sanitary conditions. I have been trying to put that idea across for the past four years but our state and county officials. never agreed with me... As for being a ‘shanty town’, the worst in the nation...we do have some very modern homes here; the rest did not get theirs finished before the county building inspection office...put those restrictions on us, so how can we can we improve our homes? In the second place, what chance have we for improvements, such as water and sewage. We got to Supervisor Janssen with our problems and he gives us the run-around and then takes a vacation. Then to Mr. Bartell, the head of the Alameda county board of supervisors. He is ‘not in the right frame of mind to discuss our problems.’ I write to Gov. Warren; his secretary refers us to Berkeley, they in turn refer us to Oakland, then back to Janssen.<sup>43</sup>

With the city and county bickering over who had responsibility for extending the line from the National Guard installation to the residents—just 3,000 feet of line—the residents began looking towards other options.

### **Russell City: Annexation, Service District, Incorporation and the continued quest for services**

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<sup>38</sup> Editorial: Kids' Game, *Daily Review*, 8/26/1950, p. 8 .

<sup>39</sup> Group Wants Facts About Russell City, *Daily Review*, 7/11/1950, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> State Health Department Into Russell City Water Conditions Investigation, *Daily Review*, 9/23/1949, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Crusader for Water Gets Help, *Daily Review*, 8/23/1950, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Epidemic Danger in Area Told, *Daily Review*, 8/30/1950, p. 2 .

<sup>43</sup> Answer Sent on Russell 'Shantytown', *Daily Review*, 10/17/1950, p. 12.



With both the city and the county refusing to extend the National Guard line to Russell City, over the next decade, residents undertake various measures to try and secure water and sewer service to the area themselves. These efforts ranged from establishing a range of community organizations to seeking services alongside neighboring communities to establishing a service district able to assess fees on property owners. Each of these endeavors met with their own challenges, and none were successful in bringing water and sewer lines to the area. At the same time, this period also saw considerable action on the part of city and county officials, who sought not to bring water and sewer services, but rather to redevelop the area altogether into an industrially zoned area

### *Annexation and the Oro Loma Sanitary District election*

The city of Hayward was not the only provider of water and sewer services. Oro Loma Sanitary District was formed in 1911 and provided sanitary services in Alameda County. In 1951, Oro Loma created a proposal for annexation of an area in southern Alameda County that would service Russell City, along with other communities.<sup>44</sup> The district would encompass 1,635 acres and run from Russell City Road to San Mateo Bridge Road, and from Hesperian on the east, about a mile and a half west. This area would include 611 homes, 40 business, and hundreds of acres that could be used for industrial and residential development. Alleviating the conditions in Russell City was part of the selling point of the idea.

In a meeting with Russell City residents, Oro Loma managers outlined how property owners could get sewers for less than \$1/month.<sup>45</sup> Oro Loma further suggested that property owners would save by annexing to it, since the city of Hayward would charge \$25 versus their rate of \$7.50 for the same services.<sup>46</sup> At a subsequent meeting, opposition to the plan began to emerge. It was raised by the owner of Jackson Hospital in Mt. Eden, that annexation by Hayward would provide a better deal because individuals could choose whether or not to be part of it, and services would be available quicker.<sup>47</sup> 201 people presented written protests to the board, asking to be excluded from the plan.<sup>48</sup> A Russell City-Mt. Eden Taxpayers' Committee organized to oppose annexation to Oro Loma.<sup>49</sup> At a public meeting, "several Mt. Eden residents voiced reluctance to stand in the way "progress" but claimed that their area cannot be saddled with responsibility because a need exists elsewhere."<sup>50</sup> One resident voiced concerns about double taxation, and while another noted that Mt. Eden owners were largely rural land, so would not benefit from annexation. Another resident indicated that Mt. Eden was well served by septic tanks, a solution that did not work for Russell City due to its low elevation.

Oro Loma Sanitary district pushed forward with the plan to hold an election to decide. In the meantime, the city of Hayward also protested inclusion in the plan, indicating it did not want any of its property included and would not say whether it would allow a sewer easement.<sup>51</sup> Further, the city outlined a potential site for a sewage plant that could service Russell City and Mt. Eden, and adopted a resolution declaring that there was a need for such services, that the costs were within the ability of

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<sup>44</sup> Russell City and Mt. Eden Study Made, *Daily Review*, 2/14/1951, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Sewer study meet tomorrow, *Daily Review*, 4/5/1951, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Annexation Issue Held Over to January 8, *Daily Review*, 12/5/1951, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Annexation Costs Still Are Puzzling, *Daily Review*, 4/7/1951, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Annexation Issue Held Over to January 8, *Daily Review*, 12/5/1951, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> 'Final' Sewer Meeting in Russell City, Mt. Eden, *Daily Review*, 4/14/1951, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> 201 Protest Annexation to Oro Loma, *Daily Review*, 12/5/1951, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> 201 Protest Annexation..., 12/5/1951.

the properties to pay based on assessed valuations, and that the city council would aid residents in securing the services.<sup>52</sup> Even with 201 people protesting annexation, 359 people had signed the petition for annexation, so the Oro Loma plan to hold an election on annexation continued ahead.

Despite Oro Loma's intentions, the Russell City-Mt. Eden 'Taxpayers' Committee sued to halt the election.<sup>53</sup> This lawsuit depended on whether the annexation benefited "the Southern Pacific's slender right of way connecting the Sanitary District and the area under dispute." Oro Loma indicated at the hearing that it was not of any consequence to it whether the annexation happened, and several property owners testified that it would provide no benefit to them. After the hearing, the judge in the case ruled in favor of the 'Taxpayers' Committee and halted the election. The opinion rested on the inclusion of the property of Southern Pacific. Writing the decision, Judge Agee argued that "Inclusion of a part of the rail line's right of way did not make the Oro Loma district contiguous to the proposed annexations once the railroad would not benefit by installation of sewers."<sup>54</sup> Arguments about drainage made by Oro Loma for the inclusion of Southern Pacific land were countered by the judge, who eventually concluded that Oro Loma "abused its discretion."

Oro Loma annexation briefly reappeared again in 1959, when two groups who appeared "wrathful towards the directors" of the community services district went public with their opposition to another proposed Oro Loma annexation.<sup>55</sup> Property owners reported that they were "not ready for sewers and will not be for five years"; Louis Camenzind said that he would "fight this annexation as far as we can go... Even if it breaks me." While over seven years on from the first annexation attempt, the mere suggestion of the possibility of annexation again revealed that there were some property owners who were steadfastly opposed to bringing water and sewer services to Russell City, especially if it meant impacting their properties.

#### *Community services district*

When the Oro Loma annexation failed, the residents of Russell City once again sought another way to bring water and sewer services to their families and community.<sup>56</sup> Organizing the Russell City Committee for Adequate Utilities, residents next sought to form a community services district.<sup>57</sup> Headed by chairperson Robert Kennon (identified in *Daily Review* as a Berkeley resident and Russell City property owner), the committee also included Mrs. D.M. McNahon (vice chairperson), Mrs. E.C. Kingwell (recording secretary), Mrs. R. Manwarren (corresponding secretary) and Mrs. T.L. Burse, treasurer. Also assisting were Rev. Celso Moran, Rev. H.O. McCormick, Mrs. Leona Alves, Mrs. J.G. Gonzalves, Mrs. Emma Perry, Frank P. Arellano, C.D. Pryor, Loney Smith, and Floyd Huey (spelled Hughey elsewhere). Together, this group of residents sought once again to bring water and sewer service into the community, and their first step was petitioning the county for the formation of a community service district.<sup>58</sup> Signed by 81 residents in the area, the letter proposed a district bounded by Clawiter to Madison, between 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets.

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<sup>52</sup> City Offers Russell City Sewer, Water Connections, *Daily Review*, 1/22/1952, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Election Proposal for Oro Loma Annexation Rests with Judge Agee, *Daily Review*, 1/26/1952, p. 1 .

<sup>54</sup> Court Denies Oro Loma Election, *Daily Review*, 2/9/1952, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Oro Loma Sanitary Board Says Mt. Eden Protest 'Premature'; 250 sign it, *Daily Review*, 3/29/1959, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Russell City Improvement Meeting Set, *Daily Review*, 7/10/1953, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Russell City Mass Meeting Plans for Water and Sewers, *Daily Review*, 7/11/1953, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> RC Service Area Request Considered, *Daily Review*, 9/30/1953, p. 13.

Part of the argument for the district stemmed from the very issues created by the county of Alameda's ban on building permits in the area.<sup>59</sup> Without the ability to improve their homes, Robert Kennon warned that "wholesale condemnation proceedings" would result and the "entire population of approximately 4000 people [would] face economic ruin by being driven from their property." Despite the arguments of some residents, opposition to the service district emerged from petitioners saying that Russell City would not benefit from an independent district.<sup>60</sup> Instead, the petitioners advocated annexing to Hayward. Others argued that the assessed valuation of the area was not enough to support the district, and several property owners asked to be excluded from the district altogether.<sup>61</sup> Opposition, however, did not deter this election, and the goal to use the district to provide Russell City with "sewers, water, police and fire protection, streetlights, garbage disposal and mosquito abatement" moved forward.

Before doing so, another issue arose, this time from the city of Hayward. The city planned to annex a "large portion" of Russell City, which would remove residents of a 150-acre section between Clawiter Road and the Southern Pacific tracks on either side of Russell City road from the district.<sup>62</sup> Further, H.J. Tomlinson, a Russell City building contractor, spoke for 28 petitioners who also asked to be excluded, but also did not want to be annexed by the city. Tomlinson further noted that Russell Cityans should seek annexation by the city of Hayward, but Buster Brooks objected that Russell City had not been encouraged to do so by the city.

When the final election took place, a 150-acre section of the Hayward Airport was excluded, as was a section bordering Russell City road between Clawiter and the railroad tracks.<sup>63</sup> The original boundaries were 300 acres, 314 voters, and an assessed value of \$186,000; with the reduction, the service district was less than half the original size at only 143 acres, contained approximately 250 voters, and had a 25% drop in assessed tax valuation.<sup>64</sup> While the Committee urged supervisors to deny the exclusions, in a 3-1 vote, they passed. Only Supervisor Bartell dissented, noting that the assessed value of the final area was too low to support service district assessments and that the disputed land would have benefitted from the services.<sup>65</sup> According to the *Daily Review*, plans were "already afoot" for the city of Hayward to annex the excluded areas.

During this period, an anonymous letter was sent to Russell City owners that warned "against possible legal difficulties for property owners who favor withdrawing" from the service district, and noted that legal action would be taken against the Board of Supervisors for the exclusion of areas "on the grounds of annexation to the City of Hayward."<sup>66</sup> Tomlinson responded to this letter, writing that they were excluded because those services were already available for the properties that had petitioned the city of Hayward for annexation, and that duplication of the services was the basis for exclusion. Tomlinson further wrote asking the anonymous letter writing if they could "imagine the condition in which it would place our properties if we were unfortunate enough to end up in a Russell City Service District or in the so-called town of Russell City in which the present time no construction is allowed?" Tomlinson's letter illustrates the plight of Russell City perfectly—deprived

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<sup>59</sup> Funds Available for Russell City, Kennon Reports, *Daily Review*, 6/15/1954, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Service District Opposition Grows, *Daily Review*, 11/6/1953, p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Supervisors call for Russell City Service District, *Daily Review*, 2/10/1954, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Services District Action Blocked; Annexation Due, *Daily Review*, 2/17/1954, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Russell City Vote Set for April 13, *Daily Review*, 2/23/1954, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> County readies April Vote on Russell District, *Daily Review*, 2/24/1954, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Russell City Vote Set for April 13, *Daily Review*, 2/23/1954, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous letter on Withdrawal from Service District Criticized, *Daily Review*, 3/6/1954, p. 8.

of water, sewer, and the ability to build and improve their homes by a freeze on permits in the area, few communities were willing to ally with Russell City and one of the poorest communities in southern Alameda County was forced to fend for itself once again. Despite the exclusion, the anonymous letter, and the threat of lawsuits, the election was held on April 13, the services district passed, and a slate of directors—Bernice Kingwell, Raoul Joseph Lopez, and Chauncy D. Pryor--were elected.

Though the community services district election was successful, the district itself was ultimately not successful in bringing water, sewer, or any other service to Russell City residents. Robert B. Kennon, the chairperson of the Committee, was named the secretary-manager of the district and a series of articles just six months after the election, in October and November 1954 in the *Daily Review*, demonstrated that the establishment of said district did not satisfy Russell City's service needs. Instead, Kennon and the directors—Kingwell, Lopez and Pryor—were soon embroiled in a public conflict resulting in Kennon's firing or disputed resignation, depending on the party telling the story, and a series of letters in the *Daily Review* condemning the actions of the board.

Conflict over redevelopment ultimately caused Kennon and the board to part ways. Kennon wanted to pursue the use of state chapter 1551 funds, which was intended to “aid areas with low assessed valuation obtain the needed sewage and water mains thereby increasing their valuation.”<sup>67</sup> The state would loan the area funds, and the area would repay with 2% interest. This proposal was endorsed by two engineers, as well as the Oro Loma Sanitary district head, Gerald Worthley. In a meeting in Fall 1954, the *Daily Review* reported that the board and Kennon “exchanged verbal barrages” after the board announced it would be meeting with county officials to discuss redevelopment, rezoning and relocation.<sup>68</sup> Residents took the idea of relocation as a “bombshell”, which was further reinforced by Kennon who noted that the “area was being ‘suppressed’ by ‘outside forces’” buying and reselling properties to industrial developers. Kennon further noted that the City of Hayward Master Plan of Area Development<sup>69</sup> had identified Russell City land for industrial development, and the plan claimed most lots in the area were assessed at only \$500. Kennon warned that they would buy property for \$500 and then sell it for much more (the article notes, however, that assessment figures run about 25% of the market value of a home).

Kennon also criticized other actions of the board, such as the board's decision to hire a lawyer, Frank Dubovsky. According to Kennon's letter to the *Daily Review*, he requested managerial control over the district so that he could “see to it nothing funny is put over on the people of Russell City, like the recent hiring of a lawyer before a program has worked out where funds to pay him are coming from.”<sup>70</sup> Kennon further criticized the board for failing to hold meetings when people could attend, and choosing a lawyer “whom the masses of voters resent.” Dubovsky, however, contended that Kennon was turning residents against him, and that he was not paid for his services.<sup>71</sup> Despite this claim, the ending accounting of the service district shows one of its few payments was for attorney services.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Russell City Disputes Operation of Community Services District, *Daily Review*, 11/8/1954, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Russell City Disputes..., 11/8/1954.

<sup>69</sup> A search of the city of Hayward Laserfiche public portal site for historical documents did not result in locating this plan, but multiple sources from [Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment](#) files, provided by the Alameda County Community Development Agency, refer to such a plan.

<sup>70</sup> From our readers: Robert Kennon Denies He Resigned, *Daily Review*, 11/3/1954, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> Russell City Disputes Operation of Community Services District, *Daily Review*, 11/8/1954, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Russell City Dist. Taken Apart, *Daily Review*, 3/27/1958, p. 13.

Coverage of the conflict culminates around Kennon's departure from the service district. Called a 'resignation' by the board, Kennon disputed this and called it a firing, and wrote to the *Daily Review* that the board's claim that he "asked to be released" from duties was "an absolute falsehood."<sup>73</sup> Kennon also noted that recall petitions for the board were circulating particularly targeting Bernice Kingwell. Residents wrote to the *Daily Review* imploring their neighbors to support the service district and Robert Kennon in particular. Carolyn Martinez wrote in a letter published October 1, 1954 that this was the "one and I do believe, last chance to help better our homes" and that residents should attend the meetings of the district and give Kennon their "fullest SUPPORT" (emphasis in original).<sup>74</sup> Martinez wrote a published letter again on October 18 providing "thanks and appreciation" for Kennon, and criticized the "president's high-handed methods in discharging you as secretary."<sup>75</sup> Leona Alves wrote that it was "time we people of Russell City wake up, and try to do something about the mess our board we voted in are doing to us."<sup>76</sup> Alves wrote further that the "majority want [Kennon] back." Mr. and Mrs. Earstine Hughey agreed with Alves, writing that they would like to "see a recall election, a new president, a complete new board."<sup>77</sup> Hazel Singleton also wrote in saying that "running us in debt, hiring a lawyer, and also a secretary is no way to get things started." Martinez, Alves, Singleton, and Hughey all noted that it was the hiring of the lawyer and putting "the taxpayers in debt" that ultimately shaped their judgement of the board.

In 1957, an article about the board notes that the district has "been impotent", citing an assessed value of \$248,370, which resulted in a "bonding capacity [that was] practically nil."<sup>78</sup> Alameda County budget provided just \$1200 annually to the service district, of which \$1,000 went to salaries and the other \$200 for maintenance.<sup>79</sup> As an editorial noted, "it is not anticipated the \$200 will bring noticeable improvements" and instead "all are waiting for the someday, the someone, the something to spring up in what has become a petrified forest of dreams."<sup>80</sup> In recommending redevelopment of the area, the 1957 Alameda County Grand Jury report noted that it had "studied the minutes of meetings held by the governing group of the district" and that these "fail[ed] to disclose that any useful purposes has been accomplished by it."<sup>81</sup>

In 1958, the pros and cons of the district were discussed at a local meeting, with Oro Loma District Manager Gerald Worthley noting that he felt "strongly the district should be abolished" given its tax assessments did not support the cost of the projects.<sup>82</sup> In 1958, it was noted that over three years, the district collected \$2,467.28. A *Daily Review* article noted that \$965 of this amount when to attorney fees, \$720 went to fees for the directors (Pryor, Lopez and Kingwell), with \$156.21 for director travel, \$240 for a secretary manager, and \$46 for an annual audit and legal publication.<sup>83</sup> The district was up for a vote in 1959, and the *Daily Review* advocated voters "should chop it down without hesitation. The Russell City Community Services District was born in hope, but

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<sup>73</sup> From our readers: Robert Kennon Denies He Resigned, *Daily Review*, 11/3/1954, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Letter to editor, *Daily Review*, 10/1/1954, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> From our readers: Robt. Kennon Praised by Readers in R.C., *Daily Review*, 10/18/1954, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> From our readers..., 10/18/1954.

<sup>77</sup> From our readers, *Daily Review*, 10/21/1954, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Russell City's Outlook Bleak, *Daily Review*, 2/8/1957, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Editorial: No Stirring in the Forest, *Daily Review*, 10/21/1957, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Editorial: No Stirring..., 10/21/1957.

<sup>81</sup> Alameda County Grand Jury. (1957, December 30). Report of the 1957 Grand Jury County of Alameda: Russell City. From [Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment](#) files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>82</sup> Services Dist. Airing Friday, *Daily Review*, 9/17/1958, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Russell City Dist. Taken Apart, *Daily Review*, 3/27/1958, p. 13.

disappointment has been its handmaiden. It is an almost perfect example of the fiction that reaction of a governmental agency automatically takes care of a community's ills.”<sup>84</sup> Only board officer expenses for travel and attorney fees were paid, with none of the fees collected over the years—41 cents for each \$100 of valuation in 1959—going to sewer or water service in the area.<sup>85</sup> It was not until redevelopment was already almost completed that the district was dissolved in 1966.<sup>86</sup>

### *Annexation to Hayward*

On the heels of the redevelopment proposal, county planners sought to zone Russell City for industrial use.<sup>87</sup> Representatives of the Community Services District however argued against this designation, suggesting that change would “discourage homeowners who sought to improve their properties and could hinder installation of sewer and water service.” Some suggested that the area be classified as agriculture, but it was noted by the county that this was in conflict with the Hayward Master Plan at that time which designated the area a “light industrial zone.” This began a several-years process by which the city “studied” annexing Russell City and residents similarly studied the city’s plans for their community.

The water and sewer plight of Russell City was one reason used by Hayward to justify its industrial expansion into the area. In 1956, the Hayward city manager pitched Hayward expansion into the area as the city “com[ing] to the aid of Russell City”, and that the provision of water and sewer lines into the area now “seems more solvable”, with the cost of providing services to residents and industry just \$200,000.<sup>88</sup> The conditions that led to illness outbreaks in the 1940s continued well into the 1950s, and in 1956, Eden Taxpayers’ Association used the conditions in Russell City to argue that the city of Hayward should adopt into East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), thereby making it possible for EBMUD to service Russell City. This could further push industrial development in the area, generating enough taxes to pay for the services.<sup>89</sup> Hayward city officials however “rejected” this suggestion to join EBMUD, and claimed it was engaged in a study of its own on bringing services to the area.<sup>90</sup> Eden Taxpayers’ Association President, J. Paul Roberts, responded to the city by saying that failing to adopt EBMUD water—and instead relying on Hetch Hetchy supply—would stymie industrial development in the area as developers would not want to pay for more expensive Hayward services.<sup>91</sup>

Russell City clubs also discussed annexation with city officials. In a meeting between Russell City Civic Club and City Manager S.D. Smith, residents were told that annexation to the city was likely. When residents discussed the possibility of federal urban aid for the area, Smith “told the group that in his opinion RC is in an industrial location. It has facilities for industry, and the Hayward master plan puts it in an industrial use category.”<sup>92</sup> According to Smith, the “best thing” for Russell City

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<sup>84</sup> Time for an End to Futility, *Daily Review*, 1/19/1959, p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> Time for an End..., 1/19/1959; Editorial: Ambition in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 8/18/1959, p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Russell City Service Area Superfluous?, *Daily Review*, 2/7/1966, p. 15; Old Water District Dissolved, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/20/1966, p. 16.

<sup>87</sup> Planners Decide Not to Change Zoning in R.C., *Daily Review*, 11/23/1954, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Council Spurs Hayward Growth, *Daily Review*, 6/5/1956, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Russell City Health Threat Drive Begins, *Daily Review*, 8/14/1956, p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Officials Refuse Water Aid Plan for Russell City, *Daily Review*, 8/15/1956, p. 1; see also city of Hayward council records from

<sup>91</sup> Questions Arise on Russell City Water Situation, *Daily Review*, 8/16/1956, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Russell City Annex Move Decision Due, *Daily Review*, 11/15/1956, p. 1.

was the relocation of residents. The executive board of the Community Services District also met with Smith, where residents reportedly were fearful that they were being rushed into annexation by Hayward and emphasized that federal funds could be used to “improve housing in Russell City without forcing people to leave the community.”<sup>93</sup>

Despite resident opposition early in the process, the city and county continued to pursue industrial development for the area. In 1957, county supervisors restated their policy to block all building in the area. They would support city of Hayward city officials in seeking to redevelop the area, noting they would “grant the city whatever jurisdiction it requires to proceed.”<sup>94</sup> Residents, however, also sought to use federal redevelopment funds, but not for relocation and industrial development, but to better their home and community. To qualify for federal urban renewal funds, however, residents had to seek residential zoning for the area, something that the county refused to provide. Russell City leaders met with city officials repeatedly to discuss annexation and improvement of the area, meeting with county, federal and sanitary district representatives to discuss urban renewal programs.<sup>95</sup> Residents further resisted city of Hayward annexation, as the city reportedly made it clear that if they did annex the area, they would relocate the residents.<sup>96</sup>

### *Lacking water, tragedy again strikes Russell City*

Russell City had long relied on a local entrepreneurialism, and not the county, to provide fire service in the area. In 1950, a local resident, Jack Reynolds, housed and serviced the Russell City Fire truck that residents had raised funds to buy.<sup>97</sup> Reynolds eventually lost his home in a fire, in part because of lack of funds to repair the truck.<sup>98</sup> Less than a decade after the dysentery outbreak spurred local interest in Russell City conditions, in 1957, another tragedy brought home the consequences of continuing to fail to provide for water for residents when a fire broke out. Four children of local resident Marie Riller, ages 1-3, died in a fire that destroyed their and a neighbor’s home.<sup>99</sup> To quell the fire, it took almost thirty minutes for fire trucks to arrive (though the fire chief reported 7 minutes after the first call), and the work of local residents and Oakland Scavenger company employees, who worked to fill local dump trucks with water to keep the fire trucks, when they did arrive, supplied with water.

While there was dispute as to when the fire trucks finally arrived, it was clear that the lack of nearby fire service in the area, as well as the lack of water, led to the tragedy. Immediately following the fire, local residents again found themselves the subject of renewed attention. The *Daily Review* noted that the residents had for 12 years tried to create a workable plan for water, sarcastically writing that the “county has recognized its responsibility and discharged it commendably” back onto the community.<sup>100</sup> The nearest county fire department was over eight miles from Russell City, and the lack of water in the area hampered every effort to quell fire when it broke out. Further, the lack of

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<sup>93</sup> Russell City to Talk Annex, *Daily Review*, 11/17/1956, p. 1; Russell City Annex 'Rush' Fear Calmed, *Daily Review*, 11/20/1956, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Board Backs Russell City Clean-Up Job, *Daily Review*, 1/9/1957, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Russell City Annex Parley Date to be Set, *Daily Review*, 1/19/1957, p. 6; Russell City Citizens Hold Key To Help, *Daily Review*, 2/7/1957, p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> Russell City: Answer to Problem Seen in Relocation, *Daily Review*, 3/19/1957, p. 9.

<sup>97</sup> Russell City Is Warned to Obtain Burning Permits, *Daily Review*, 6/29/1950, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> Side Views--End of Search, *Daily Review*, 1/27/1954, p. 13.

<sup>99</sup> Four Children Killed in Blaze, *Daily Review*, 2/5/1957, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Editorial: the county, and Russell City, *Daily Review*, 2/6/1957, p. 14.

improvements in the area— fueled by the county decision to withhold building permits—meant that the area was prone to electrical and gas fires. A letter to the *Daily Review* from R.L.S. in Hayward recounts how in the case of the four young deaths, fire fighters had to stick their bodies into a burning gas meter to try and shut it off, “but all this heroism, wonderful as it was, may not have been needed, nor would the coroner, had Russell City received adequate services in the past.”<sup>101</sup>

The deaths of the Riller children led to local outlets recounting the plight of Russell City and the failure of local leaders to address the water and sewer conditions in the area.<sup>102</sup> The *Daily Review* described twelve years of residents attempts to remedy issues within their communities, noting that there had “never been a permit issued for a new dwelling in Russell City” and that there had been no new homes since 1946 when the county uniform building code went into effect.<sup>103</sup> The area was routinely stranded by floods in the area during years of high rain, and there was no adequate flood control in area. County streets in the area—of which there were only 5—were only minimally maintained. The volunteer fire department in the area did not have enough funds to keep up their equipment, and the only equipment the county had to quell the fire was a 15-year-old truck with a 300-gallon water tank. Despite this outcry, just a week later, three additional homes were destroyed in fires just four hours apart.<sup>104</sup>

As with water and sewer, both the city and county committed to studying the issue, and local organizations, such as the school board, called for placing an additional fire station in the area.<sup>105</sup> City Manager S.D. Smith said Hayward would be limited in what it could provide by whether it would be compensated for its services and also what impact servicing Russell City would have on the city’s fire rating. Smith noted that the fire rating directly related to home insurance rates in the city and that an airport station already being built could service this area if another fire engine and crew provided. While visiting the board of supervisors and asking for funds from the county’s “hardship fund”, the city agreed to “cooperate in mutual aid fire protection” for Russell City from Harder Road station.<sup>106</sup>

### **County barriers to improving Russell City**

As the above efforts make painfully clear, Russell City residents wanted their community to thrive, and were prevented in efforts for doing so by the lack of water and sewer service in the area. Other issues also impacted the ability of residents to improve their community, namely the types of uses to which land could be put, or what is more typically called zoning. Zoning impacts building permits, the location of businesses, and in the case of Russell City, urban redevelopment. Zoning of Russell City was a battle in which both the county and residents had a stake in the 1950s. When the county adopted its zoning map, Russell City was classified as an “U” zone, or “unclassified district.” This meant that the area was not zoned for industrial use, nor was it residentially zoned which impacted residents’ ability to fight for their area. As we show next, the legal regulation of building and businesses in Russell City contributed to the conditions identified by local authorities as ‘slum’ or ‘blight’ conditions.

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<sup>101</sup> Viewpoints by readers, *Daily Review*, 2/8/1957, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> Russell City---Forgotten Town, *Daily Review*, 2/7/1957, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> Russell City's Outlook Bleak, *Daily Review*, 2/8/1957, p. 13.

<sup>104</sup> Fire Razes Three More Russell City Homes, *Daily Review*, 2/12/1957, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Russell City, Mt. Eden Fire Aid in Sight, *Daily Review*, 3/12/1957, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> Hayward to Ask County road Funds, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/13/1957, p. E7.



### *Uniform codes, permits, and the residential character of Russell City*

As noted previously, the county did not issue building permits in the Russell City area, which prevented residents from improving their homes and putting in upgrades which would have increased the valuations of their properties. When Alameda County adopted the uniform building code in 1946, no new buildings could be erected in Russell City due to the lack of water and sewer service. A letter from Ruth Manwarren questioning permits issued in Russell City published in the *Daily Review* prompted the Board of Supervisors to instruct Marcus Carlson, Alameda County Building Official to respond.<sup>107</sup> Carlson wrote that Manwarren's "statement implies that dwellings under construction at the time the Building Ordinance became effective on October 19, 1946 were not permitted to be completed. Such is not the case. The law applies only to construction started on or after that date."<sup>108</sup> On or after that date, "proper sanitary facilities is of major importance" for permits for new construction, conversions, or additions. Carlson further noted that the health department advised on private sewage disposal systems and was bound by their decisions.

Objections to the building permit system ranged from residents to Eden Council for Civic Unity to the NAACP. In 1955, NAACP for south county organized a documentation of the ban to challenge it.<sup>109</sup> Despite these objections, in 1957, the board made it an official policy to deny permits for Russell City "unless proper fresh water was available or sewage facilities available for the site of the proposed building" based on the advice of the Alameda County Health Department.<sup>110</sup> The Health Department passed a policy in February 1957 that recounted how since 1946, the department had not issued approvals for any private sewage disposal systems in the area.<sup>111</sup> The policy further recounted that no approvals would be given for any residences if they "aggravate[d] existing problems." They did indicate that permits were available, but only if a resident could comply with existing building codes which many Russell City properties could not.

This denial of building permits was in part a motivating factor to create a new city in the area with Mount Eden.<sup>112</sup> It further contributed to population decline in the area, as when property sold, it had to be rehabilitated before it could be rented and "because it is virtually impossible to rebuild present structures to meet county specifications the property remains without tenants."<sup>113</sup> Indeed, a county study of Russell City concluded that "Strict enforcement of county building codes will probably bring about the disappearance of Russell City within a few generations, even though no other efforts are put forward."

### *Industry, environmental conditions, and permits*

Despite the freeze on building permits, however, there were business permits that were issued that also impacted the character of the neighborhood. Adjacent to Russell City were some of the more polluting industrial uses in the county, such as garbage dumps, wrecking yards and hog farms. In

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<sup>107</sup> Bartell answers Willetts, *Daily Review*, 8/31/1950, p. 1; Answer Sent on Russell 'Shantytown', *Daily Review*, 10/17/1950, p. 12; Our readers say..., *Daily Review*, 10/25/1950, p. 16.

<sup>108</sup> Our readers..., 10/25/1950.

<sup>109</sup> NAACP Unit in South County Organized; Russell City Plea, *Daily Review*, 11/7/1955, p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> BOS minutes: Jan 6, 1957, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/17/1957, p. 35.

<sup>111</sup> Alameda County Health Department. (1957, February 7). Policy Re: Housing and Sewage Disposal in Russell City. From [Russell City RC planned industrial area](#) files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>112</sup> Drive to Incorporate Russell City Ignited, *Daily Review*, 8/6/1959, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Russell City Development Cost Cited, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/28/1960, p. 77.

1950, the county permitted an industrial hog farm to locate in the area, even though this very same business had been protested and denied locating in San Lorenzo and Warm Springs.<sup>114</sup> A permit application for a garbage dump in the city in 1953 led the *Daily Review* to lament that the “attitude toward the Russell City area is too often one of abandonment rather than corrective effort” and that “establishment of another garbage dump will add neither to the ease of that effort or to the health standards of a community already overburdened with risks.”<sup>115</sup> Dozens of residents from both Russell City and Mount Eden, as well as the Mt. Eden School District, protested the dump, noting the traffic hazards to school children, smoke nuisance, odors and health hazards.<sup>116</sup> Raul Ramirez, President of the Alameda county Community Service Organization wrote to the Alameda County Planning Commission that granting the permit would be “heaping insult upon injury” and would be “a nuisance and a health menace not only to the residents of Russell City but to a large proportion of the entire population of Southern Alameda County.”<sup>117</sup> This time residents won their protests and another garbage dump was not permitted to be located in the area, but as these protests make painfully clear, Russell City was already the disproportionate recipient of undesirable land uses in its vicinity.<sup>118</sup>

While residents won this battle, the push to regulate industry, particularly polluting businesses, in the area continued. In 1954, Russell City again protested dump conditions in the area, with 18 residents signing a petition that East Bay Sanitation was not complying with health and safety regulations and was overrun with rats.<sup>119</sup> The planning commission appeared sympathetic but told protestors that “under present law...the county is powerless to control such operations.” East Bay Sanitation responded saying none of the nuisances identified by residents were the consequence of the company and that a second petition, circulated by the dump owner’s wife and Ruth Manwarren, supported the company.<sup>120</sup> In 1955, the Alameda County Planning Commission passed a resolution approving another dump in the area for the Oakland Scavenger Company, writing that the permit “will not, in the opinion of this Commission, materially affect adversely the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood and will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in said neighborhood.”<sup>121</sup>

Despite this characterization of dump practices, in 1956 the Eden Taxpayers’ Association identified garbage dumps in the area as a health hazard because they become “exposed cesspools” during the rainy season.<sup>122</sup> The health hazards were allowed to continue through the actions of the supervisors who, for instance, permitted a variance to a dump owner to cover it only every 12 days instead of 7 as requested by the health department.<sup>123</sup> While the health department could prevent individuals from obtaining permits to improve their homes, it could not prevent the dump in the area from getting a variance to a county health standard.

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<sup>114</sup> Editorial: Kids' Game, *Daily Review*, 8/26/1950, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> Poor relation, *Daily Review*, 6/22/1953, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> County Planners Hear Arguments on Refuse Dump at Russell City, *Daily Review*, 6/25/1953, p. 11; BOS minutes: September 22, 1953, *Oakland Tribune* 10/6/1953, p. 53.

<sup>117</sup> Ramirez, Raul. (1953, October 23). Letter to Board of Supervisors. From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>118</sup> Russell City Wins Victory, *Daily Review*, 10/27/1953, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Russell City Protests Dump, *Daily Review*, 4/7/1954, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> Proponents for Dump Operation Answer Petition, *Daily Review*, 4/9/1954, p. 13. From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>121</sup> Alameda County Planning Commission. (1955, June 27). Resolution #1978.

<sup>122</sup> Russell City Health Threat Drive Begins, *Daily Review*, 8/14/1956, p. 11.

<sup>123</sup> Emergency zoning ordinance ordered for annex areas, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/20/1957, p. E14.

Russell City was also the site for location for several liquor venues in the area, which is a common geographical theme where activities often considered inappropriate for other spaces are located disproportionately in neighborhoods of poor people of color. For instance, the Russell City Country Club was a venue that attracted revelers from all over the county, bringing outsiders intent on doing activities they likely would not do in their home communities. Frequent reports listed the Club as the site of gambling, criminal activity, and other disreputable acts, with residents from nearby towns almost always listed as the culprits. This point was made by Russell School trustees who fought against the issuance of a liquor permit in 1957 on the grounds that there were “five booze emporiums already in the community of 1500 persons” and that “consideration of a sixth is a travesty on state liquor laws.”<sup>124</sup> Trustees noted that gambling, loitering, and the harassment of young women made the area dangerous for the area youth. Residents also could not expect city or county support in dealing with the impact of entertainment businesses on their community; noting that dice games were frequently on the street corners, the Federal Improvement Clubs of Southern Alameda County contacted the district attorney noting that efforts of the Russell City Civic Club to contact the Sherriff about the conditions were met with no response.<sup>125</sup> This is another example of how residents were unable to get state support for their community, and instead, were burdened by the state practice of locating problematic businesses in the area.

In 1958, the county health department investigated complaints by residents about odors that were created after recent warm weather.<sup>126</sup> The health department concluded that the Russell City dump, Hayward Sewage disposal, Russell City hog farm, an animal feeding farm, and the bay shore contributed to the smell. The *Daily Review* recounted sending a photographer to the area to document but said they “got downwind” and “had to beat a hasty retreat.” The report noted that Hayward’s Sewage disposal unit had a “sewage outfall line into the bay.” Further, the Chief Sanitarian for the southern district, Julio Juarez, noted that the dump created flies but that the “dump’s operators were complying with regulations under a variance granted by the board of supervisors.” The health department also foretold that the “days of hog ranching...may be numbered” since the operations failed to meet health requirements.

This did not come to pass, and the hog ranch continued to operate in the area, well into the razing and redevelopment of Russell City. Instead, the county continued to apply its approach to regulating the character of the area, by denying residents the ability to improve their homes while also permitting businesses that could not gain a foothold elsewhere in the county to locate in Russell City. In 1960, the Board of Supervisors even “scrapped” a ten-year old policy by the Board of Zoning adjustments preventing new development in the area and issued a use permit for Abraham Knowles to operate a wrecking yard at 2140 W. Winton Avenue.<sup>127</sup> It is unclear what led the board to reverse its longstanding policy, but it is clear that the zoning and permitting process allowed some developments in Russell City and not others; sometimes this was on the advice of the health department, and other times it directly contradicted it.

In either case, as we discuss further below, redevelopment again changed how permits were issued in the area. In 1964, the Hayward Planning Commission urged the county to deny a dump permit

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<sup>124</sup> Reporters' Memos, *Daily Review*, 3/13/1957, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Russell City Gaming Action Asked of D.A., *Daily Review*, 2/18/1957, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Strong' Plight: Big Smell in Area Traced to Sources, *Daily Review*, 9/18/1958, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Board scraps policy, OKs Wreck Yard, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/26/1960, p. 20.

because it would affect the redevelopment project adversely, and the hog farm also had to change the tenor of its operations in response to complaints by redevelopment agencies.<sup>128</sup> The distaste in other areas for the industries that were allowed to locate in Russell City was evidence in the relocation of a junkyard operated by Forrest Brown in Russell City for 25 years. In this case, Brown sought to relocate his business somewhere in the area, as other operators such as the Santucci Hog Farm were given permission to do. However, the city of Hayward denied his permit to located to the city, arguing that “wrecking yards discourage development of a good industrial park and make it hard to attract high-class industrial growth.”<sup>129</sup>

### **Planning for redevelopment**

All the while Russell Cityans tried to save their city through annexation, incorporation and creating a service district, the county was “studying” the area for industrial development, even touring the area with the Urban Land Institute in 1957.<sup>130</sup> In 1954, John Jay Thomas, a county planning director, submitted a plan to redevelop the area into industrial lands with federal funds.<sup>131</sup> This plan included relocation of residents and “no financial loss to Russell City property owners.” Shortly thereafter, a group of Russell City residents formed to fight relocation for industrial development and was named the Russell City and Southern Alameda County Defense Committee.<sup>132</sup> Carolyn Martinez was named as president, with Leona Alves, Hazel Singleton and Robert Kennon as officers

Resident opposition to redevelopment grew as the city and county continued to seek to industrially zone the area. In 1957, city Manager S.D. Smith told the Hayward League of Women Voters that “we feel it is industrial property” in response to questions about what is being done for Russell City residents. Further, he noted that “we don’t feel providing sewers and water is the answer” and that in his “opinion we have to convince the people they should be relocated. The decision should be theirs.”<sup>133</sup> Despite this declaration of the resident’s autonomy in deciding about relocation, the implication of Smith’s words is that the city of Hayward viewed Russell City as a site ripe for industrial expansion and annexation and did not provide water and sewer service to pressure residents to leave the area. This policy was made explicit by the Alameda County Health Department in 1957, when it noted that “water, storm and sanitary sewerage systems should only be provided for the Russell City area if concurrent positive steps are undertaken to improve the existing housing to prevent perpetuation of slum conditions.”<sup>134</sup> Thus, it is likely unsurprising that though the city of Hayward frequently “studied”<sup>135</sup> the costs of providing services in the area, this was not actually done until the area was already undergoing razing and rezoning for industrial use in the 1960s.

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<sup>128</sup> Unanimously: Planners Nix Winton Ave. Dump Permit, *Daily Review*, 10/9/1964, p. 9; Hog Operation Permit Shortened, *Daily Review*, 4/18/1969, p. 13.

<sup>129</sup> City Still Battling Junk Yards, *Daily Review*, 5/1/1966, p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> County studies Russell City Development Plan, *Daily Review*, 10/28/1954, p. 1; Experts to Tour Sites for Future Industries, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/17/1957, p. 12.

<sup>131</sup> County studies Russell City Development Plan, *Daily Review*, 10/28/1954, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Russell City Committee To fight Relocation of Homes for Industry, *Daily Review*, 11/2/1954, p. 1; Russell City To Fight Relocation, *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/7/1954, p. 16.

<sup>133</sup> Women Voters Given Answers By Officials, *Daily Review*, 2/20/1957 p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Alameda County Health Department. (1957, April 12). Recommendations relative to Russell City. From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>135</sup> May Extend City Water to Russell, *Daily Review*, 8/18/1949, p. 14; Council Spurs Hayward Growth, *Daily Review*, 6/5/1956, p. 1; Officials Refuse Water Aid Plan for Russell City, *Daily Review*, 8/15/1956, p. 1; Russell City Annex Parley Date to be Set, *Daily Review*, 1/19/1957, p. 6; Russell City, Mt. Eden Fire Aid in Sight, *Daily Review*, 3/12/1957, p. 1.

The composition of Russell City residents—generally not as wealthy or as white as their Hayward counterparts—undoubtedly played a role in the neglect of basic services for the community. In further response to a Hayward League of Women Voters question about whether the city council should take a stand for “free integration” of residents into Hayward, city councilperson Wright noted that the city was “not going to throw anything in their way”, but certainly did not extend a hearty welcome to the residents the city was intent on displacing.<sup>136</sup>

### *Alameda County Grand Jury Report of 1956*

Shortly after the fire that killed the Riller children, the Alameda County Grand Jury released its report for 1956, which officially branded the Russell City a “slum area.”<sup>137</sup> The report described the area as follows:

The houses are nothing more than shells. There is no sewage or water systems. Septic tanks do not function owing to the low elevation and the flooding of the land in winter. The water supply comes from shallow wells and nearly all houses have outside privies, some with seat covers but most of them without. Animals are kept in some of the yards and very few of the houses have screens. The unsanitary condition contributes a serious health problem and will continue to do so as long as the residents are allowed to live under these conditions.

The report continued that there was no water, sewer, or fire protection, as well as frequent community health problems created by these unsanitary conditions. The report also noted the low tax assessment of the area, just \$13,700 annually, as well as tax delinquency rates of 10%, and that there were 91 welfare cases in the area receiving over \$8,000 a month. The report further suggested condemning the entire area and relocating the residents.<sup>138</sup> This report painted the Russell City area as a net drain on the coffers of Alameda County and was pivotal in the justification for county officials to raze the area and relocate residents.

Following the report, Hayward City Manager Smith and County Supervisor Francis Dunn met to discuss the grand jury report. Dunn reported that the area has always been a “vital issue” but claimed that the “people have resisted” relocation which was “impossible.”<sup>139</sup> This foreclosure of residents’ concerns about relocation came as city and county dreams for industrial expansion proceeded apace.

### *Relocation*

Also in 1956, the Alameda County Planning Staff issued a report titled “Redevelopment Suggested as a Possible Solution to the Deep Lot Dilemma” that described how relocation for industrial development could take place. This report concluded that it was an “absolute requirement that all

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<sup>136</sup> Women Voters. . . , 2/20/1957.

<sup>137</sup> Russel City Branded Slum Area, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/6/1957, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Grand jury urges new aged home, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/6/1957, p. 1.

<sup>139</sup> Russell City: Meet Set tomorrow For Plan of Action, *Daily Review*, 3/7/1957, p. 9.

families and businesses displaced by redevelopment be located to their satisfaction (usually means a selection of several - 3 or 4 places. And that these places must be decent, safe and sanitary, within reason economically, and within reasonable distance of the place of work cannot be overemphasized to citizens. No redevelopment can take place before this is done.”<sup>140</sup> Despite residents’ opposition to relocation, city and county officials continued to press this plan. At a meeting with Smith, Dunn, US Urban Renewal Agency representative Arthur Hoff, Service District representatives, and the NAACP, Bernice Kingwell, district board president, noted that many of the Russell City owners are older people who did not want to assume the indebtedness of a new mortgage should they relocate.<sup>141</sup> Further, they did not think they could raise enough money from their homes to move elsewhere. In response, Dunn continued to press that the community would not have enough money to provide services for itself, even with urban renewal, as they would have to raise one third of the estimated \$200,000 cost. Further, Smith indicated that he would ask city council “to take a firm stand” and tell residents they must face relocation, as Hayward “would lose a big chunk of money if [it] redeveloped the area for residential use.”<sup>142</sup>

Relocation was strongly opposed by Russell City residents. A survey of families by the Russell City Civic Club found 175 families opposed to relocation, with only 7 willing families.<sup>143</sup> In 1957, 236 residents signed a petition to ask the county to rezone the area residential so that it might qualify for federal urban renewal funds.<sup>144</sup> Manuel Furtado, attorney with Newman, Marsh and Furtado sent a letter to the supervisors on April 18, 1957 that stated it was the “wish of the overwhelming majority of residents and property owners of Russell City that the area be rezoned so it would be predominantly residential.”<sup>145</sup> According to the *Oakland Tribune*, “the citizens explained their appeal this way: ‘If we can become a residential community instead of a hodgepodge of everything, we will be able to stabilize land use and property values and qualify for financial aid under the Federal Urban Renewal program.’”<sup>146</sup>

At a meeting of Russell City Civic Club, many residents felt that there was a sense of bias in the selection of Russell City for relocation;<sup>147</sup> a sentiment reinforced in a letter to editor from Patrick Hancock, of Hayward, who wrote that:

The 'question' of sewerless and waterless Russell City has been at the expense of the citizens of the area, kicked around for years. Once again, because of the desires of some, to wipe out Russell City and put industry in the entire area, the question of Russell City is again in the limelight. However, the wants and desires of the people in Russell City are more important than industry or profits. Russell City is their home. It has not been easy for a Negro or Spanish-speaking American to purchase a home in San Lorenzo, Castro Valley, or Hayward. So they live where they have been forced by us to live--in Russell City.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Alameda County Planning Staff. (1956, May 28) “Redevelopment Suggested As Possible Solution to the Deep Lot Dilemma.” From Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>141</sup> Meeting Tonight on Alternatives for Russell City, *Daily Review*, 3/18/1957, p. 2 .

<sup>142</sup> Where we stand, *Daily Review*, 3/22/1957, p. 14.

<sup>143</sup> Relocation Hit in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 3/26/1957, p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> Rezoning Plea for Russell City, *Daily Review*, 4/23/1957, p. 1 .

<sup>145</sup> Furtado, Manuel. (1957, April 18). Letter to Alameda County Board of Supervisors. From Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>146</sup> Russell City Launches Urban Renewal Drive, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/3/1957, p. E13.

<sup>147</sup> Relocation Hit in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 3/26/1957, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> Letter to editor, *Daily Review*, 3/25/1957, p. 10.

Hancock's recounting of the history of racial segregation in housing provides important context to the beginnings of redevelopment in Russell City. Residents sought to rezone residential in order to benefit their homes and community and many feared relocation because it would not only rip them from their community and home, but also because there was not many places in southern Alameda County with rents that they could afford.<sup>149</sup> Hancock concluded by imploring the county to seek federal urban renewal funds to improve and benefit the residents of Russell City, but instead county actions placed the redevelopment of Russell City as another episode in the longer history of race, power, and the making of urban space.

The county, however, did not act on rezoning Russell City residential, and instead deferred the decision until the next Grand Jury report. According to the board of supervisors, "since rezoning is a method of encouraging specific types of land use and development, the commission believe there should be a comprehensive study of the county's intention or ability to relocate Russell City residents, clear the area, assemble individual parcels of land and assure utilities and improvements essential for industry."<sup>150</sup> Fred Dubovsky, attorney for Russell City Community Services District, "urged the board to refrain from 'sending these people to Siberia,' by forcing them to leave their homes to make way for industrial development in the area."<sup>151</sup> In June 1957, a letter from Thad McCarty, Foreperson of the Grand Jury, and W.A. Bender, Chairperson of the Russell City Committee of the 1957 Grand Jury, sent a letter to the Planning Commission recommending "that said requests of the residents of Russell City for single-family residence zoning, be denied."<sup>152</sup>

Part of the issue with rezoning the area stemmed from the inclusion of the area in local master plans. In a report from the Alameda County Planning Staff in 1957, they note that both the master plan proposals of the City of Hayward and the Tentative Master Plan of the Alameda County Planning Commission "propose that the land be used for industry in this area in the long-range future."<sup>153</sup> The report surveyed the problems of the area, locating the consequences of structural issues such as racial residential segregation, land uses, and the issuance of permits in the area as the cause of its "blight." The report identified the "factors which combine to make Russell City unsuited to continued residential use" as the typical lack of water and sewer that others had cited, but also "proximity to future and existing industrial uses, airport, main line railroad, hog ranches, refuse dumps", "a ghetto-like area of racial minority groups that should be absorbed into other communities of their choice" and substandard housing. The report concluded that

Even if there were a basis for conserving Russell City itself, its position as a residential community surround by industry would be untenable. The advantages afforded the area by the provisions of water, sewers, drainage, improved streets, even if financially possible, would be a mistaken reinforcement of a misplaced residential area. The first determination should be that of the appropriate, long-range land use of the area. Generally, the conclusion

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<sup>149</sup> Editorial: Russell City a Year After Tragedy, *Daily Review*, 2/6/1958, p. 10.

<sup>150</sup> Russell City Zoning Plan Action Slated, *Daily Review*, 8/7/1957, p. 5; see also [Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment](#) files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>151</sup> Board Delays Zone Problem, *Daily Review*, 8/19/1957, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> McCarty, Thad and Bender, W.A. (1957, June 26). Letter to Alameda County Planning Commission. From [Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment](#) files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>153</sup> Alameda County Planning Staff. "Russell City—A preliminary report of its problems and a consideration of procedure towards their solution." From [Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment](#) files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

of agencies has been that the Russell City area should be cleared of its residential use and made available for industry.

In June 1957, the Russell City Committee of the Grand Jury issued a report to the Grand Jury noting that “it was the unanimous decision” that Russell City be developed into “an industrial site, rather than a residential one.”<sup>154</sup> As the report concluded, the “major problem” was simply the “relocation of present residents.” Shortly after, in July 1957, the Planning Director for Alameda County, Robert Williams, sent the recommendation of the Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors that the county “relocate and rehouse Russell City residents” and the Board of Supervisors “concurred” in the recommendations in August.<sup>155</sup> Residents continued to press the board throughout 1957 for residential zoning to no avail, and through Manuel Furtado, an attorney for residents, the board was asked to hold a public hearing on the matter in October 1957.<sup>156</sup>

In late 1957, the Alameda County Grand Jury report was released, and it again identified the “Russell City Problem.” In this report, however, it too did not side with residents and instead concluded that the area should be zoned for industry.<sup>157</sup> The Grand Jury found that it would be “inadvisable to approve continuance of the slum conditions found, nor would it be to the best interests of the community for any additional residences to be permitted.”<sup>158</sup> The report further pressed that “the current health situation is maintained by the constant vigilance of the health authorities at excessive cost and any relaxation thereof would undoubtedly be hazardous to the entire county.” Industrial zoning, however, was not necessarily a foregone conclusion; as the Alameda County Planning Department noted in its preliminary report on turning the area into a “planned industrial district” in 1958, the “developing residential neighborhood east of Clawiter Road” could be “maintained.”<sup>159</sup>

The city of Hayward’s study of redevelopment also focused on redeveloping the area into an industrial one, and relocating residents.<sup>160</sup> By July 1958, the county concluded that the area would be rezoned for industrial use, and October 1958, the city and county were holding joint meetings to discuss industrial development in the area.<sup>161</sup> At this point, at least one resident who had fought against relocation—Mrs. Buster Brooks—was slowly becoming resigned to relocation, reportedly

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<sup>154</sup> Russell City Committee of the Grand Jury. (1957, June 10). Report to the Grand Jury. From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>155</sup> Williams, Robert. (1957, July 26). Memo: Planning Commission Recommendation Regarding Rezoning of Russell City Area. From Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment files, Alameda County Community Development Agency; Schulze, Harold (1957, 8/8). Letter: Recommendation Re Russell City Area. From Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>156</sup> Russell City Airs Demand, *Daily Review*, 10/25/1957, p. 13; Russell City Fights Rezoning, *San Francisco Examiner*, 10/28/1957, sec 3, p. 12.

<sup>157</sup> Grand Jury Urges Probe of Schools, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/30/1957, p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> Alameda County Grand Jury. (1957, December 30). Report of the 1957 Grand Jury County of Alameda: Russell City. From Russell City Petition Against Redevelopment files, Alameda County Community Development Agency.

<sup>159</sup> Alameda County Planning Department. “Preliminary Report: Is a 'Planned Industrial District' a Feasible Development for the Area South of the Hayward Airport?” From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>160</sup> Russell City Study Gains, *Daily Review*, 2/7/1958, p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> County Will Start Industry Zone Plans, *Daily Review*, 7/29/1958, p. 5; City Officials Tackle Russell City Problem *Daily Review*, 10/10/1958, p. 13; see also Strathman, Earl (1958, November 24). Letter to Robert Williams, Planning Director, Alameda County. From Russell City RC planned industrial area files, Alameda Community Development Agency.



saying in the *Daily Review* :“If it's to happen, let's get on with it. Naturally we'd like to keep our homes but what's to be is to be.”<sup>162</sup>

### *Mt. Eden and incorporation*

Before redevelopment got underway, a third attempt by Russell Cityans to obtain water and sewer service began with a plan to incorporate into a city with the nearby Mt. Eden community. Similar to the Oro Loma annexation, this plan also did not result in water and sewer service and laid bare race and class tensions in the area. This plan apparently began with a “secret meeting” at the home of Bernice Kingwell of Russell City, with about 30 people representing most segments of area landholders.<sup>163</sup> Proponents of the bid filed a letter with the Alameda County Boundary commission seeking to establish the boundaries of the new city, and Kingwell indicated that the “main purpose of the incorporation effort is to create an industrially-oriented city along the lines of Union City.” She further declared that “Hayward is gradually reaching out and getting a chunk here and a chunk there, and if that continues we'll be left with nothing.” Kingwell’s comments reveal the tensions between Hayward’s industrial plans and the residents of Russell City who stood in its way; it also revealed that others also sought to profit industrially from the surrounding area, or as one article put it, “where few residents would reap the tax advantages of lots of heavy industry, and at the same time obtain home rule...”<sup>164</sup>

Despite the seeming cooperation of some Mt. Eden property owners, “vigorous objections to the proposal” soon emerged.<sup>165</sup> Herbert J. Kent, wrote to the *Daily Review* that “the residents of Mt. Eden have no intention of surrendering their autonomy as an individual community to become part and parcel of some undetermined area.”<sup>166</sup> Kent further lamented that though Mt. Eden was “deeply sympathetic towards Russell City”, Mt. Eden had “never been a backward community, never has reduced itself to the position that a slum label should be attached to it. We have always maintained our community as an individual area, asking favors of no one. As such, we expect to remain as long as possible.” Like the city and county, Mt. Eden property owners also blamed Russell City for the lack of sewer and water services in the area, deciding against allying with a community it saw as a “backward...slum.”

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<sup>162</sup> City Officials Tackle Russell City Problem, *Daily Review*, 10/10/1958, p. 13.

<sup>163</sup> Drive to Incorporate Russell City Ignited, *Daily Review*, 8/6/1959, p. 1.

<sup>164</sup> Hayward Silent on Proposal to Form New City, *Daily Review*, 8/7/1959, p. 9.

<sup>165</sup> Hayward Silent..., 8/7/1959.

<sup>166</sup> Opinions from Readers, *Daily Review*, 8/11/1959, p. 12.

## Russell City incorporation plan 1959

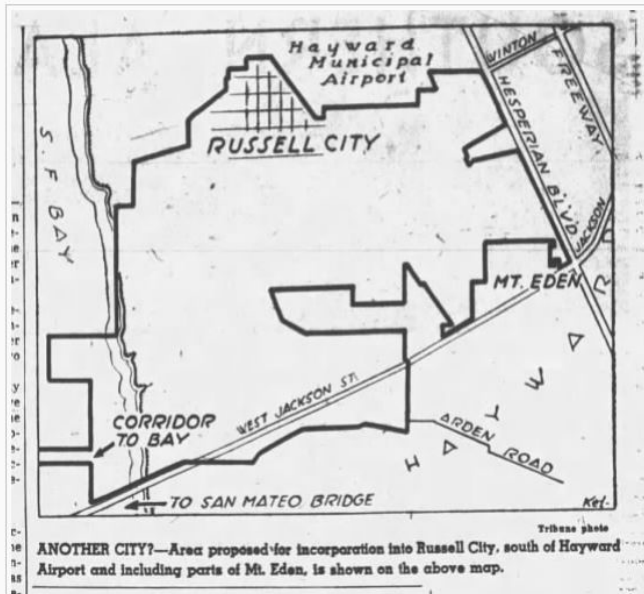


Figure 1 Map of Proposed Incorporation area

Russell City residents “pleaded” with Mt. Eden to stymie Hayward’s industrial expansion and create a new city that could benefit all.<sup>167</sup> Some even spoke out against incorporation arguing that it would “end any responsibility for the county to continue trying to solve [Russell City’s sewer, street and water needs]; the job would be Russell City’s alone.”<sup>168</sup> Others argued that it would “deny its residents the benefit of thousands of dollars in sewer, street, and water improvements to be put in by Hayward.”<sup>169</sup> Critics of the incorporation plan also argued that the assessed valuation of the proposed area at \$2.8 million, with a population of 2-3000, would only yield about \$28,000 in tax revenue per year and that the costs of water, sewage and storm drainage was five times the “bonding capacity of the area.”<sup>170</sup> An editorial in the *Daily Review* concluded that though backers of incorporation seem to think this would fix Russell City problems, this was instead “a case of a poor area trying to impose political and financial ties on a neighbor which is not rich enough to do the job.”<sup>171</sup> Ultimately, proponents of incorporation missed a deadline to move forward and the plan again failed to solve the water and sewer needs of Russell City.<sup>172</sup>

### *Federal Urban Renewal*

After incorporation failed, the city and county again began to move forward with redevelopment. At a Hayward city council meeting, Councilperson George Oakes noted that “The Russell City people

<sup>167</sup> Russell City Merger Plan Starter Told, *Daily Review*, 8/15/1959, p. 1.

<sup>168</sup> Editorial: Ambition in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 8/18/1959, p. 11.

<sup>169</sup> Benefits' Loss Seen in Scheme to Incorporate, *Daily Review*, 8/21/1959, p. 15.

<sup>170</sup> Minor Changes Made in Move to Incorporate, *Daily Review*, 9/4/1959, p. 13; Merger Plan Backers Cut down Scope, *Daily Review*, 9/10/1959, p. 11; Editorial: Poor Plan for a City, *Daily Review*, 9/10/1959, p. 14.

<sup>171</sup> Editorial: Poor Plan..., 9/10/1959.

<sup>172</sup> Club to Ask Russell City Union Status, *Daily Review*, 11/10/1959, p. 5 .

once felt quite militant about Hayward interference in their area. And let's not go in there like a bunch of do-gooders because those people don't think they're do-badders.”<sup>173</sup> To address the plight of Russell City, Hayward city council recommended utilizing the federal urban renewal program.<sup>174</sup> The city’s plan was to have the county name the city as the urban renewal agency; the city, under the guise of the agency, would then create plans for redevelopment, clear the lots, and sell them as industrial sites. Under the city’s plan, the displaced residents would be provided public housing or privately financed tracts on the Bay. The county ultimately approved an urban renewal plan in 1961 and set about gathering the needed data to apply for urban renewal aid.<sup>175</sup>

County authorities quickly got to work seeking urban renewal funds. The Board of Supervisors appointed a representative as well as the county planning director to work out a plan to meet the requirements of the federal grant and planned to provide one-third of the cost of the funding of the area. The county further sought to provide residents with federal mortgage assistance, by permitting families to purchase homes costing \$10,000 on a 40-year mortgage.<sup>176</sup> The preliminary report from the county estimated the cost of buying land, absorbing tax loss, creating roads, and providing utilities to be more than \$2.5 million. The county report noted that the area cost the county \$91,330 in public welfare for 57 cases, which consisted of 248 people, 160 of them children.<sup>177</sup>

The report further described the difficulties with redevelopment in the area, writing that the legal owners of the 1,124 lots in the area would have to be searched and located.<sup>178</sup> Further, the report argued that if the residents were not relocated, “strict enforcement of county building codes will probably bring about the disappearance of Russell City within a few generations.” The report described how when property sells, the property must be rehabilitated to code before renting; and because the county has a freeze on permits in the area and residents cannot rebuild to county specifications, many of the properties lacked tenants entirely. Once someone moves, according to the report, their home could not be sold or rented again, and thus, Russell City faced imminent decline.

Relocation soon emerged as an important issue with regards to federal urban renewal, first emphasized by George Herron, head of the county’s public works department in July 1961.<sup>179</sup> If the county accepted federal urban renewal funds, they would be bound by federal requirements to relocate residents. An overview of federal urban renewal notes that federal authorities

considers that an effective local government relocation program entails a relocation office in or near the project area; a family-by-family survey of the area to determine relocation needs and qualifications; family interviews to discuss rehousing possibilities; concerted efforts to find adequate housing vacancies; inspection of housing that site occupants find unassisted,

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<sup>173</sup> Russell City Tossed into Spotlight Again, *Daily Review*, 8/23/1960, p. 9.

<sup>174</sup> Dual Action Proposed on Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 11/24/1960, p. 93.

<sup>175</sup> Russell City Uplift Plan Under Way, *San Francisco Examiner*, 3/15/1961, p. 10; County to Seek Federal Aid for Renewal of Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/15/1961, p. 18; County Seeks Renewal for Blighted Area, *Daily Review*, 3/15/1961, p. 16.

<sup>176</sup> County Seeks..., 3/15/1961.

<sup>177</sup> Relocation plan: Russell City Report Set, *Daily Review*, 7/9/1961, p. 1; County Team to Give Report on Russell City Blight Study, *Oakland Tribune*, 7/12/1961, p. 56.

<sup>178</sup> Russell City Development Cost Cited, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/28/1960, p. 77.

<sup>179</sup> Agencies to Discuss Redevelopment of Blighted Russell City, *Daily Review*, 7/12/1961, p. 6.

with offers of relocation aid if that housing is not "decent, sanitary and safe"; and the use of eviction proceedings only as a last resort.<sup>180</sup>

Accepting federal urban renewal funds meant that the county would need a plan for the relocation of residents that would be overseen by the federal government. In October 1961, the county unveiled a new plan for redevelopment, this time entirely county financed, and while this would prove controversial, ultimately, the county decided to forego urban renewal funds and self-financing the project with local public agency funds.<sup>181</sup> The county report on redevelopment noted that the "major disadvantages" of federal funds were the "heavy restrictions placed upon land use and development, the local agency many not dispose of the redeveloped lands in bulk to a private developer, and must install elaborate and extensive public improvements."<sup>182</sup>

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors plan for redevelopment began by naming itself the redevelopment agency.<sup>183</sup> Planned to take place over the next four years, at a cost of \$2.25 million, the project outlined a 198-acre area bounded by Southern Pacific Railroad between W. Winton Avenue and Dunn Road, affecting 350 homes.<sup>184</sup> The plan estimated a cost of \$575,975 for road improvement, as well as \$320,770 for sewer and water lines.<sup>185</sup> To finance the project, the Board of Supervisors loaned the agency \$700,000 that had been set aside for the purchase of voting machines, and planned to have the project "pay its own way" entirely in the end by a program of "increment financing...whereby increases in tax revenues routed to redevelopment are used to repay cash grants and grants in aid."<sup>186</sup> George Herron was named executive director of the project, and a budget for the remainder of the fiscal year was adopted.<sup>187</sup> The plan advised that the redevelopment should consist of acquiring the property, provide minimal improvements to the area and then the area should be "disposed of speedily in bulk."<sup>188</sup> The cost of providing sewer and water to the area would be provided by the city of Hayward, while the county would provide new roads. In response to the plan, Chauncy Pryor, the chairperson of the Russell City Community Services District, said that residents would resist mass relocation, but did want some sort of redevelopment to benefit the community. Russell City would finally receive water and sewer services from the city of Hayward, but it would come at the cost of the residents.<sup>189</sup>

While the Board of Supervisors tried to address the relocation problem in part through self-funding the plan, the approach was not without controversy. Shortly after the plan was unveiled, the Alameda County Mayors Conference—composed of the ten area mayors—released a resolution "firmly opposed to a supervisors' plan to redevelop Russell City without the use of federal urban renewal funds."<sup>190</sup> The vote on the resolution was nearly unanimous, with a 9 mayors in favor and one opposed—the mayor of the city of Hayward.<sup>191</sup> The mayors noted that they were not against

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<sup>180</sup> Johnstone, Quintin. 1957. "The Federal Urban Renewal Program." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 25, 301.

<sup>181</sup> Russell City's End Near in Renewal Plan, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/4/1961, p. 1.

<sup>182</sup> County Acts on Changing Russell City, *Daily Review*, 10/4/1961, p. 14 .

<sup>183</sup> County Acts..., 10/4/1961.

<sup>184</sup> County Acts..., 10/4/1961; Few Tears Shed in Doomed Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/8/1961, p. 8.

<sup>185</sup> Relocation plan: Russell City Report Set, *Daily Review*, 7/9/1961, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Renewal Plans Advance, *Daily Review*, 11/18/1962, p. 3; County Acts on Changing Russell City, *Daily Review*, 10/4/1961, p. 14.

<sup>187</sup> County Acts..., 10/4/1961; Few Tears Shed..., 10/8/1961.

<sup>188</sup> County Acts..., 10/4/1961.

<sup>189</sup> See city of Hayward city council minutes from [3/26/1963](#),

<sup>190</sup> Russell City Plan Rapped, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/14/1961, p. 2 .

<sup>191</sup> Russell City Plan Protest Up to County, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/10/1961, p. 28.

clearance of the area but opposed to doing so without the use of federal funds. For the Alameda County Mayors', the issue was also one of resident relocation, but unlike the residents they were not opposed to relocation per se, but rather the impact of county financing on relocation. Critique of the county plan was especially vociferous from Oakland Mayor John Houlihan, who reported that the supervisors did not want federal funds because they did not want to relocate residents, and that Oakland taxpayers would shoulder 45% of the cost.

In response, county supervisors defended their plan.<sup>192</sup> Supervisor Francis Dunn, from Hayward, said that Houlihan "goes into the Mayors' Conference every couple of months and sounds off" and that the county was "following the successful example of San Leandro as compared with the unsuccessful example of Oakland in scorning federal aid." Another supervisor indicated that the mayors had not even attended public hearings on the matter, and at a board meeting, supervisors complained that only one city—Hayward—had checked out the staff report on Russell City which the Board used to make its decision.<sup>193</sup> In response to Houlihan's accusation that the county could do redevelopment for 'free' with federal money, Vice Mayor Vernon Bilchfeldt of Hayward said that "federal and state money also are the people's money." Mayor Arthur Philips further charged that "waiting for the federal government might be waiting for the subsidy on bomb shelters." The supervisors issued what was described as a "curt request" to the mayors to be more specific in their opposition to county plans.<sup>194</sup>

In response to county opposition, some in the Mayors Conference voted to send the redevelopment proposal to a committee to study.<sup>195</sup> Houlihan objected, saying he would not participate in the "social and study groups" and reportedly threatened to walk out of the meeting if they rescinded the resolution.<sup>196</sup> In response to the county, Houlihan outlined six objections: 1. the cost burden would fall mostly on the cities; 2. it was an estimated \$2 million loss to taxpayers; 3. with federal participation, cities would not have to pay entire cost; 4. industrial use plan would compete with other cities and undermine the tax base of surrounding areas; 5. annexation to Hayward was unfair and preferential; and 6. it was further "unfair that the county does not assume responsibility for the relocation of the occupants of the 278 dwelling units...since federal participation requires relocation."<sup>197</sup>

In a statement read by County Administrator Earl Strathman, the board took issue with Houlihan's charges.<sup>198</sup> Strathman noted "pointedly" that Oakland had no record of "expressing an interest in the source of funds solicited from the county for construction of a sports stadium" and denied that funding would come from property tax revenues.<sup>199</sup> Instead, the county was planning to loan the plan money and then do a quick resale to make up the cost.<sup>200</sup> For services like roads, the county was planning to rely on "an apportionment from the State Highway Users Tax Fund" to pay for roads in the area, from which the county noted that Oakland itself gets \$700,000 a year. The county

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<sup>192</sup> Support For Russell City Plan Arises, *Daily Review*, 10/16/1961, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> Support For..., 10/16/1961; Russell City Stand: Mayors' Thinking Unclear, *Daily Review*, 11/8/1961, p. 10.

<sup>194</sup> Russell City Stand..., 11/8/1961.

<sup>195</sup> Redevelopment Plan: Mayors to Restudy Idea on Russell City, *Daily Review*, 12/9/1961, p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> Mayor Raps Motion on Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/9/1961, p. 1; Redevelopment Plan..., 12/9/1961.

<sup>197</sup> Russell City Plan Protest Up to County, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/10/1961, p. 28.

<sup>198</sup> Mayor Given Answers on Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/12/1961, p. 1; RC Project: Houlihan's Stand Lambasted *Daily Review*, 12/13/1961, p. 21.

<sup>199</sup> Mayor Given..., 12/12/1961.

<sup>200</sup> RC Project..., 12/13/1961.

argued that the deficit in the project will be closer to \$44,000 than the \$2 million charged by Houlihan, and that \$24,000 of the deficit would be “prorated from the general or bond funds.” The idea that redevelopment would compete with other cities was “somewhat obscure”, and the supervisors said there was always competition with proposed development regardless of who has jurisdiction over the space. The county also said that Hayward was assuming some of the project cost and must support the in-tract developers once the city annexed the area. Finally, the county said it would provide for relocation of residents, and thus, Houlihan’s charge that the county was doing this to avoid the cost of relocation was incorrect. Supervisors and Hayward city councilpersons further called Houlihan “completely irresponsible”, “confused and mistaken”, and charged he was making “politics out of poverty.”<sup>201</sup> Further, the county noted that the plan breaking even was based on a resale of the land at \$10,000 an acre, but that was likely an underestimate as other areas sold for \$17,000 an acre.<sup>202</sup>

In response, the Mayors’ Conference “reaffirmed its stand that the Board of Supervisors should give full consideration to the use of federal urban renewal funds.” With a unanimous vote, the Mayors’ passed a three-point policy: that they had no valid objection to redevelopment for industrial purposes; that they had no objection to annexation by Hayward “providing the burden of redevelopment is not carried by other Alameda County cities”; and 3. should defer fiscal commitments until “analysis of the alternative of federal redevelopment is made and presented publicly.”<sup>203</sup> The Mayors proceeded to meet with federal authorities to discuss the possibility for urban renewal funds.<sup>204</sup> The federal urban renewal expert cited “four major flaws” in the Russell City redevelopment plan: the time frame of 2-4 years was too short; there was no program for relocation of residents; land would likely sit idle given the “soft” market for industrial land; and that there would be hidden costs.<sup>205</sup> In particular, federal authorities noted that the county would have to carry out a relocation program, granting each family \$200 to relocate.<sup>206</sup>

Relocation was again at the heart of the conflict between the mayors, particularly Houlihan, and the county. Houlihan noted that it was likely Oakland would not only be burdened by shouldering the largest portion of the cost of the project, but that the residents of Russell City would move to West Oakland and “we’ll get all the problems of Russell City.”<sup>207</sup> Instead, Houlihan advised the county to focus projects in incorporated areas, which paid most of the county tax revenues. In response to Houlihan’s claim that residents would come to Oakland, the Supervisors noted that residents could go anywhere in the county they could find rents, ignoring the history of racial exclusion and segregation that created Russell City in the first place. But, given the high cost of rent, increasingly appeared unlikely that these would be the places immediately surrounding Russell City.

Houlihan continued to denounce Oakland residents paying for redevelopment, arguing that they were paying as much for the redevelopment of Russell City as they were for projects in Oakland.<sup>208</sup> Supervisors fired back that Oakland redevelopment was on a “disastrous course”:

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<sup>201</sup> RC Project..., 12/13/1961; Houlihan Hit By Hayward, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/13/1961, p. 15.

<sup>202</sup> RC Project..., 12/13/1961.

<sup>203</sup> Mayors OK Policy for Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/13/1962, p. 7.

<sup>204</sup> County Termed overly Hopeful on Russell City, *Daily Review*, 1/25/1962, p. 13; Russell City plan Flaws Told Mayors, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/25/1962, p. 15.

<sup>205</sup> Russell City plan Flaws..., 1/25/1962.

<sup>206</sup> County Termed..., 1/25/1962.

<sup>207</sup> Mayor Calls Russell City Deal Phony, *Oakland Tribune*, 2/7/1962, p. 1 .

<sup>208</sup> Mayor Hits Russell City Project Cost, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/13/1964, p. 16.

With reference to the latest attack by Mayor Houlihan on Russell City, we had a serious blighted slum area and we have cleared it. We have undertaken an orderly, efficient, and economical clearance program and are well on our way to converting a slum into an industrial park which will return not only all of the money spent, but by increasing the assessed valuation of the property, will benefit all of the taxpayers of the county, particularly the City of Oakland. What else would the mayor have us do, follow his own disastrous course and enmesh the whole redevelopment program in confusion and costly delay as he has done?<sup>209</sup>

The battle between Houlihan and the supervisors reveal the fault lines that shaped the redevelopment project. While Houlihan's critique of relocation could be seen as siding with the residents desire not to be relocated, it in fact revealed how Oakland, the City of Hayward, and the County all favored industrial development over the desires of residents and were all reluctant to relocate residents to their communities.

The redevelopment survey indicated that only about 35% of families in the area wanted to relocate to Hayward; yet, George Herron, executive director of the agency, noted that "I don't believe the number of people who want to relocate in Hayward can be accommodated there" as "there aren't many homes available."<sup>210</sup> However, Herron thought that anyone desiring location assistance (estimated to be just 15-20% of people in other projects) would could be assisted "within the legal requirement that their new homes be 'safe, decent, sanitary,' (and) reasonably convenient to their employment and other needs, and at prices or rents within their means." Harold Davis, the relocation supervisor, noted that residents had to be relocated within the county and could "go anywhere their pocketbooks will permit" and that for the "aged on pensions, there are special sections of the welfare code which will help finance relocation."<sup>211</sup>

### **Redevelopment commences: From Russell City to an industrial park**

Despite objections from the residents, the mayors and federal urban renewal authorities, the county proceeded with self-financing the redevelopment of Russell City into an industrial park. Though reports throughout the prior decade had repeatedly deemed Russell City a "slum", the "shame of Alameda County", and an area of "blight", the Alameda County Planning Commission made it official with a formal finding that Russell City was a blighted area in February 1962.<sup>212</sup> In addition to the executive director of redevelopment, the county also hired Harold Davis, of Oakland, as a relocation supervisor.<sup>213</sup>

The county also began the formal proceedings necessary for redevelopment. Protests to inclusion in the project were scheduled, as were formal public hearings on the project.<sup>214</sup> County workers began surveying Russell City residents to determine their housing needs and the board moved to appoint a

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<sup>209</sup> Supervisors Hit Renewal Program, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/14/1964, p. 1.

<sup>210</sup> Redevelopment: Russell City Idea Pushed By Hayward, *Daily Review*, 11/6/1962, p. 13.

<sup>211</sup> Hearing Held on Russell City Plan, *Daily Review*, 11/9/1962, p. 7.

<sup>212</sup> Russell City Labeled Blighted Area, *Daily Review*, 2/20/1962, p. 13.

<sup>213</sup> Russell City Relocation Chief Chosen, *Daily Review*, 1/24/1962, p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> Redevelopment: Supervisors Order Russell City Study, *Daily Review*, 3/21/1962 , p. 15.

15-member Citizens' Advisory Committee.<sup>215</sup> Each supervisor was able to name 3 members to the committee, and only one of the members—C.D. Pryor—appeared to be from Russell City; all the rest of the members were from Livermore, Union City, Newark, Hayward, Oakland, Berkeley, and Piedmont.<sup>216</sup> The task of the board was defined as a cross between a “liaison and watchdog to serve as buffer between the Russell City community, the rest of the county and the board of supervisors, to help develop a reasonable relocation program, to see that the redevelopment is handled in such a way that the county can recover its investment, and to keep a watchful eye on it so that it doesn't get out of hand.”<sup>217</sup> Part of the committee's responsibilities included keeping residents informed, by creating information sheets and hosting public meetings.<sup>218</sup> Shortly after forming, the committee made four recommendations for the project: to “override the general objections to the project from those who would maintain...status quo” and proceed with zoning it industrial; “careful consideration” of exclusion requests; property prices should be based on independent appraisals; and the committee should “continue its services as liaison” to the people of Russell City. The citizen's committee did not present any opposition to the redevelopment plans.

However, public meetings revealed that opposition to the project continued to be strong. A public meeting in spring 1963 had 230 attendees and filled the supervisors' chambers; the meeting had to be stopped after 45 minutes and rescheduled to accommodate the overflow.<sup>219</sup> At the follow-up meeting, for which a transcript of the meeting is available, residents and property owners questioned relocation plans, payments for properties, as well as whether some areas could be excluded from redevelopment, such as properties that were not substandard or industrially zoned land north of Winton Ave.<sup>220</sup> Two Oakland landlords said that there was “no compatibility” between their lots and Russell City “proper”, and that their land had access to sewers and water and thus should be excluded from redevelopment.<sup>221</sup> Residents spoke of the hardships that relocation presented, from the cost of new housing to replacing the community ties that they had built with their neighbors. Many revealed that they did not know where to go. Floyd Hughey's response to relocation was quoted in the *Daily Review*:

I came by it honest...I've worked hard, like a slave all my life, and raised a pretty good sized family...eight children...and now I'm getting to be an old man. I don't want to sell. I don't know where to go and I'm too old now to think about getting into debt. I don't want nobody to relocate me no place. I'm man enough to hunt my own place. If they want my land and just got to have it, let them pay me enough to locate where I want to.<sup>222</sup>

Robert Kennon noted that the project was being “undertaken on the basis of what's good for industry, when the primary consideration should be people”, while Hiawatha Robert called the boards' actions “closing the barn door after the horse was stolen.”<sup>223</sup> Another critic of the plan

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<sup>215</sup> Russell City Plan Sent to Supervisors, *Daily Review*, 4/24/1962, p. 9; Board to appoint Russell City Unit, *Daily Review*, 5/3/1962, p. 33.

<sup>216</sup> Board to appoint..., 5/3/1962; Russell City Committee Will Be 'Charged', *Daily Review*, 7/11/1962, p. 7.

<sup>217</sup> Russell City Committee..., 7/11/1962.

<sup>218</sup> Russell City Details Readied for Mailing, *Daily Review*, 9/20/1962, p. 8; Russell City Group Sets 2 Meetings *Daily Review*, 10/18/1962, p. 13.

<sup>219</sup> Big turnout at Russell City Airing, *Daily Review*, 1/9/1963, p. 7.

<sup>220</sup> Hearing Held on Russell City Plan, *Daily Review*, 11/9/1962, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup> Hearing Held..., 11/9/1962.

<sup>222</sup> Protests to Russell City Plan Voiced, *Daily Review*, 1/16/1963, p. 7.

<sup>223</sup> Board Hears Russell City Plan Critics, *Daily Review*, 1/23/1963, p. 13.



simply called out the racial power animating the project: “Too many Black people are losing too much property too cheap in this area.”

Despite this clear opposition to relocation and the proposed plan to turn the area into an industrial park, the meetings did not change the course of redevelopment and the razing of Russell City continued apace. Indeed, the plan was “‘warmly and enthusiastically’ received” by the city of Hayward, the public hearings were deemed a “legal requirement” to be met prior to implementation, and the plan to relocate residents was seen as a “major achievement” of the board.<sup>224</sup> After the public hearings, the board met as the redevelopment agency to approve the redevelopment plan in February 1962.<sup>225</sup> At the meeting, there were reportedly 25 residents in the audience, many of whom had “raised a long string of objections at two public hearings”, but the board approved anyways. Attempts to remove areas from the boundaries were unsuccessful, and the plan was unanimously adopted. The board planned to begin purchasing the property in May.<sup>226</sup>

### *Relocating Russell City residents*

By 1962, the population of Russell City had declined in part due to the inability of people to obtain permits to upgrade their homes, and the impact this had on tenancy.<sup>227</sup> The redevelopment agency put the population of the area at 1,150 people, down from an estimate of 1400 in 1957, with 40% Black residents, 40% Latinx, and 20% Caucasian.<sup>228</sup> 650 residents were 19 years or younger, and the assessed valuation of the redevelopment area was \$225,075; in 1960, it returned \$19,446 in taxes.<sup>229</sup> A survey carried out by the redevelopment agency found that in 1962, 32% of families living in the area owned their property “free and clear”, while another 8% were in the process of buying.<sup>230</sup> That left 60% of families as renters.

The redevelopment agency also surveyed 345 adults and found that 39% were fully employed with a median weekly wage of \$85; 8% were employed part time, 15% were unemployed, and the rest were “retired, disabled, or receiving public assistance.” A preliminary report on relocation identified \$91,330 in public welfare costs to the county, for 57 cases that covered 248 people, 160 of whom were children.<sup>231</sup> The survey also described the “80% substandard” conditions that existed in the area, including contaminated and lack of water, as well as a high volume of fire calls from the area. According to the redevelopment agency, redevelopment would displace 205 families, 33 individuals, 13 businesses and 7 churches.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Supervisors to Discuss Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 11/21/1962, p. 20; BOS meeting: January 2, 1963, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/12/1963, p. 22.

<sup>225</sup> Russell City Renewal Gets Board's OK, *Oakland Tribune*, 2/5/1963, p. 77.

<sup>226</sup> Supervisors Adopt Russell City Plan, *Daily Review*, 2/6/1963, p. 9.

<sup>227</sup> Russell City Development Cost Cited, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/28/1960, p. 77.

<sup>228</sup> Renewal Plans Advance, *Daily Review*, 11/18/1962, p. 3.

<sup>229</sup> Relocation plan: Russell City Report Set, *Daily Review*, 7/9/1961, p. 1.

<sup>230</sup> Renewal Plans..., 11/18/1962.

<sup>231</sup> Relocation plan..., 7/9/1961.

<sup>232</sup> Renewal Plans..., 11/18/1962.

To relocate the residents of the area, the redevelopment agency carried out a survey of available housing in the county, finding that “there are or will be, available within the county an adequate number of permanent housing units to accommodate displaced” residents, and that that housing was “decent, safe, sanitary”, affordable, and convenient.<sup>233</sup> To provide for the relocation of Russell City residents, the approved redevelopment plan said simply that it would “carry out a feasible plan...with a minimum of hardship.”<sup>234</sup> This provided for “

relocation payments to or with respect to persons, families, business concerns and others displaced from the project area. Such payments shall be for moving expenses and direct losses of property for which reimbursement or compensation is not otherwise made, and in such amounts and under such conditions as the Agency may proscribe.

The redevelopment plan then describes the survey that found there were enough housing resources in the area and concludes that the housing families will find will be “decent, safe, sanitary, reasonably convenient, and at rents or prices within their financial means.”

Despite the official plan and redevelopment agency assurances, the specter of Oakland loomed over redevelopment.<sup>235</sup> At one hearing, Reverend Eugene R. Wolfe of the Oakland Citizens’ Committee for Fair Housing noted that Oakland was facing its own housing shortage; in response, Harold Davis said they did “not intend to concentrate displaced in Oakland.”<sup>236</sup> Oakland Mayor Houlihan continued to warn Alameda County that “there is no room in Oakland for families...displaced by redevelopment of Russell City.” While Davis told supervisors there was “adequate and sufficient housing in Oakland”, Houlihan noted that he was “hardpressed” to find “suitable housing for our own people who are being displaced by our own redevelopment projects...”<sup>237</sup> He further noted that if Davis was able to find suitable housing in Oakland, he’d be “happy” as he could “put one of our families in it.” Supervisor Chairman Kent Pursell responded to Houlihan, by saying that very few families wanted to move to Oakland, and that residents could “locate any place in the county...that their financial ability permits.”<sup>238</sup>

Supervisors repeatedly tried to address concerns about where residents would be located after redevelopment. Supervisor Leland Sweeney “put the board on record...with a guarantee that Russell City families will not be removed from one slum area to another.”<sup>239</sup> At a subsequent approval meeting, supervisors “reaffirmed stand that residents be relocated from the area will not be moved into a racial ghetto.”<sup>240</sup> Reverend Wolfe challenged the supervisors on this, noting that the relocation plan was “no solution whatsoever” and given that “89%” of all low-income rentals are in Oakland and northern Alameda County, “where are they going to relocate if they’re not going to relocate in northern Alameda County?”<sup>241</sup> Hiawatha Roberts, attorney for the NAACP, reinforced this point noting that there was little low-cost housing in the south of the county and that “what there is will

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<sup>233</sup> Renewal Plans..., 11/18/1962.

<sup>234</sup> Redevelopment Agency of Alameda County. (1963). The Redevelopment Plan. Alameda County. Located at Alameda County Recorder Office, Digital Reel, Book 1905, page 435, pp. 12-13.

<sup>235</sup> Houlihan Angered By Housing Claim, *Daily Review*, 1/25/1963, p. 6.

<sup>236</sup> Board Hears Russell City Plan Critics, *Daily Review*, 1/23/1963, p. 13.

<sup>237</sup> No Housing Surplus—Houlihan, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/24/1963, p. 15.

<sup>238</sup> Supervisor Chief Blasts Houlihan, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/25/1963, p. 15.

<sup>239</sup> Supervisors Adopt Russell City Plan, *Daily Review*, 2/6/1963, p. 9.

<sup>240</sup> Rebuilding of Russell City Asked, *San Francisco Examiner*, 2/17/1963, p. 29.

<sup>241</sup> Russell City Plan Under Fire Here, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/27/1963, p. 14.

not be open to displaced Russell Cityans 'because of their race and ethnic background.'"<sup>242</sup> This point was also made in a special series of articles in the *Oakland Tribune* on the redevelopment of Russell City.<sup>243</sup> The article wrote about how Black residents "would like to stay in the suburban atmosphere" and were familiar with Black communities in Oakland but "prefer to live elsewhere." The article also noted that if the project had proceeded under federal urban renewal, housing for residents would have been mandatory, but "Nobody, except the Negro residents, wanted a public housing project built in Southern Alameda County."

Despite the supervisors' assurances that residents could locate anywhere in the county, area cities were not welcoming of Russell City residents. As noted previously, the city of Hayward did not think that there would be enough affordable units to relocate residents to their town; Oakland also said that it lacked available housing. Newark refused to answer when asked by Redevelopment Committee member Carl Horsey whether it "would look kindly towards receiving 200 families to be resettled from the...area."<sup>244</sup> Supervisors had "strong resistance" to creating any type of public housing program, with Supervisor Robert Hannon arguing that "public housing breeds ghettos any way you do it" and that they would have to locate it in an unincorporated area, thus resulting in residents being "isolated once more in their own ghetto."<sup>245</sup> The supervisors continued to emphasize that they were not "driving" anyone into Oakland, that residents would not be forced into any specific area, and that the county was only offering relocation assistance. Harold Davis further accused Wolfe and Roberts of "selling Russell City residents short on their ability to pay their own way."

Amidst these objections, the onset of redevelopment was delayed by several weeks. During that time, it was noted that Davis could not relocate families until final approval of redevelopment plans.<sup>246</sup> Davis indicated he had 50-75 homes available for relocation but could only offer counseling and ideas about relocation areas. Davis estimated that already 15-20 families had left the area independently and 80 families indicated they wanted assistance in resettlement. Davis did expect some resistance to families due to racism, but said that they

do not intend to operate as block busters; we do not want to put people in embarrassing situations. In our survey of available housing, we are also trying to determine neighborhood attitudes, racial makeup in given neighborhoods, and we have a pretty good idea where we can put our families most comfortably for the best adjustment.<sup>247</sup>

Relocation assistance included not just an assessment of "comfortable" areas and places for relocation, but also assistance with negotiating house sales, help with loan qualifications and other bureaucratic hurdles, and up to \$200 for the transportation of goods. Davis also promised follow-up surveys to determine if "they really have bettered themselves through the project."

To move ahead with the project, the county retained appraisers for \$29,500 to evaluate the 200 acres of homes and properties. The estimate was that the county would spend \$1.85 million to buy land, install utilities, and make improvements under the redevelopment plan; \$1.423 million of this total

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<sup>242</sup> Board Considers Proposition on Russell City Slum Clearance Program, *Daily Review*, 3/27/1963, p. 9.

<sup>243</sup> Where to Live But Russell City?, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/23/1963, p. 4

<sup>244</sup> Committee Man on Resettlement, *The Argus*, 3/20/1963, p. 3.

<sup>245</sup> Board Considers Proposition on Russell City Slum Clearance Program, *Daily Review*, 3/27/1963, p. 9.

<sup>246</sup> Success Seen in Placing Families, *Daily Review*, 3/31/1963, p. 8.

<sup>247</sup> Success Seen..., 3/31/1963.

would go to just land purchases.<sup>248</sup> Alameda County also hired Marvin Casalina and Company of Oakland to act as land purchase agents, who would receive \$55 for each of the 580 parcels closed (a later article noted that Casalina received \$105/parcel).<sup>249</sup> In November 1963, the purchase of land in the area finally had begun, and the board started with approving 8 properties for sale for an agreed upon \$34,000.<sup>250</sup> In the first three months of the project, the redevelopment agency purchased 46 properties from owners and an additional 35 under delinquency tax proceedings.<sup>251</sup>

By September 1964, fewer than 100 families remained in the Russell City area.<sup>252</sup> 153 families had left the area, and out of these 153, the Redevelopment Agency tracked or checked 138 of these families. Of the families, 55 had relocated in Hayward, 32 in East Oakland, and 20 out of the county. Other families located in North Oakland, Central Oakland, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Union City, Castro Valley, Fremont, Newark and Livermore. Despite this tracking, however, in February 1965, the redevelopment staff “discovered 20 more families and businesses...than it thought were there.”<sup>253</sup> George Herron, executive director of the agency, had reported 47 families and businesses at the end of December, but field surveys showed 67 families and businesses remaining. Herron noted that many of these were people who were on the property to prevent vandalism and was not “obliged” to offer relocation aid but would do so. By February 1964, 86 families had relocated in Hayward, 38 in East Oakland, and 28 in North Oakland. Remaining families relocated in Fremont, Castro Valley, Livermore, Newark, San Leandro, and Union city, as well as San Lorenzo and outside of county. The cost of acquiring the Russell City land ultimately cost the county \$2,442,000.<sup>254</sup>

From our collection of the records from the Board of Supervisor meeting minutes during this time, we were able to account for 96% of the reported property cost in payouts to owners in the area. Based on our review, we estimate that the median payment per deed owner was \$2,133.33. Many owners, such as the case we detail next, received considerably more while some owners received as little as \$250. A per lot calculation resulted in a cost per lot range of \$107.14 to \$4750, with a median price paid per lot of \$1,356.83.

### *Santucci Hog Farm*

Perhaps the highest profile property acquisition was the Santucci Hog Farm, which had the highest purchase amount at \$510,000.<sup>255</sup> Only one other property appears to have reached into the six

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<sup>248</sup> County hires Russell City appraisers, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/29/1963, p. 19; Hog Ranch: Negotiations said proper, *Daily Review*, 7/10/1964, p. 1; Redevelopment Agency of Alameda County. (1963). The Redevelopment Plan. Alameda County. Located at Alameda County Recorder Office, Digital Reel, Book 1905, page 435.

<sup>249</sup> County Hires Buying Agent For Russell City Renewal, *Oakland Tribune*, 7/4/1963, p. 10; Hog Ranch: Negotiations..., 7/10/1964.

<sup>250</sup> Agency to Buy Properties in Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 11/6/1963, p. 15.

<sup>251</sup> Russell City Land Bought, *Daily Review*, 1/2/1964, p. 11.

<sup>252</sup> Russell City Population Shrinking, *Daily Review*, 9/24/1964, p. 13.

<sup>253</sup> New Russell City Residents Found, *Daily Review*, 2/18/1965, p. 14.

<sup>254</sup> A search of property transfers between the Redevelopment Agency and Russell City property owners generated over 361 unique deeds, transferring hundreds of parcels of land. Exact payment for all properties could not be located. However, based on media records, resolutions from the board of supervisors, and some legal documents, payments for properties ranged in price from \$250 to \$510,000. Using the board of supervisor records, we were able to account for \$2,339,431.25 paid to property owners, 96% of the amount paid to property owners in the area. Most properties were not paid anywhere near \$510,000 and most received just a few thousand dollars, often for multiple lots of properties. A detailed breakdown of payments and property owner estimates is provided.

<sup>255</sup> Hog Ranch: Negotiations said proper, *Daily Review*, 7/10/1964, p. 1.

figures, and that was the Jose Mateos farm property which a judge ordered the redevelopment agency to pay \$100,000 to acquire in 1966.<sup>256</sup> The Santucci hog farm put a “spotlight on government spending...at a time when the cost of buying the Russell City land is far exceeding original government estimates.”<sup>257</sup> This editorial also asked for the “supervisors to make public all the prices paid for land”, but this was not found.

Of particular concern with the Santucci hog farm was that the county had assessed the value of land and improvements for tax purposes at just \$24,075, and “more than half of that was personal property not covered in the \$510,000 purchase.”<sup>258</sup> An investigation by Oakland Tribune noted that agency records showed that negotiations for the property started on November 21 and ended on November 26; which according to the article, undermined the county’s claim that several offers and counteroffers happened before acceptance of the final price. The appraisal for the land placed the value of the land and improvements at \$550,000, with replacement value at \$413,000 and depreciated to a final value of \$186,000, including the personal property that could be relocated. This valuation was in “sharp contrast” to the estimated \$44,000 market value identified by the Alameda County Assessor, and far in excess of the \$11,250 assessed valuation for the land, and which was the rate on which the owners’ paid taxes and which the county used to determine the bond capacity of the area. While assessments are often lower than market value, and the *Daily Review* indicated it should be about 25% of market value, the valuation of \$11,250 with a purchase price of \$510,000 suggests that the property had been undervalued on the county’s tax rolls and could have helped the area to support a larger tax bond valuation. While the District Attorney denied that the purchase was the target of a grand jury investigation, the board of supervisors did appear before the grand jury for two hours for a “routine overview of project.”<sup>259</sup> The Redevelopment Agency defended the sale and said that the operation of a hog farm was “unique” and that the owners would have “difficulties...in relocating it.”<sup>260</sup>

By July 1964, the county was already up 33% over the first estimate for acquiring the property, and in the end, ended up spending \$2,442,000 to acquire all the land, compared to an initial estimate of \$1,423,000. The Santucci purchase represented 21% of this total amount. The purchase was also part of a controversy related to former Hayward Mayor Rudolph Dettenrieder. Dettenrieder helped negotiate the sale of the hog farm and received \$35,810 for his role in the sale.<sup>261</sup> George Herron noted that Dettenrieder “approached him on several occasions asking when the agency planned to start negotiations with the Santucci’s.” Dettenrieder was ultimately arraigned on tax evasion charges for his involvement.<sup>262</sup>

Though the county bought the hog farmland in November 1963, by 1965, the business was still located in Russell City. In April 1965, they were granted a two-week extension for removing the operation to the new location in Brentwood.<sup>263</sup> They continued to operate 36 acres past that date, as a “central hog fueling station,” and in April 1969, the permit for the ‘hog slop’ was shortened from 5

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<sup>256</sup> Judge sets \$100,000 Value on Lercara Land, *Daily Review*, 7/2/66, p. 20.

<sup>257</sup> Editorial: Open Sesame, *Daily Review*, 6/28/64, p. 12.

<sup>258</sup> Hog Ranch: Negotiations said proper, *Daily Review*, 7/10/1964, p. 1.

<sup>259</sup> Grand Jury: No Comment on Hog Ranch Deal, *Daily Review*, 10/9/1964, p. 1.

<sup>260</sup> Ex-Hayward Mayor to Face Tax Charges, *Daily Review*, 12/29/1966, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> Ex-Hayward Mayor..., 12/29/1966.

<sup>262</sup> Ex-mayor's tax charge arraignment, *The Argus*, 1/23/1967, p. 10.

<sup>263</sup> Extension Granted Hog Ranchers, *Daily Review*, 4/15/1965, p. 7.

years to 2 years when the industrial developers complained.<sup>264</sup> The permit allowed the Santucci's to use the area as a place to transfer food waste from local restaurants into hog slop, which was then fed to their animals in the Brentwood location. The industrial developers—Cabot, Cabot and Forbes—had requested that the permit go to a year-by-year permit, with an “absolute termination by the end of 1970.”<sup>265</sup> Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes were upset that the operation was “in plain view of the tract”, which the board called “awful” and “terrible.” Supervisor Emanuel Razeto declared:

We spent a lot of tax money to clean up slum conditions and imposed strict regulations and restrictions on Cabot, Cabot, & Forbes. Then the first thing we do is give their neighbors a permit to haul wet garbage for transporting to a hog farm. We're creating the same kind of conditions we tried to clean up. We shouldn't blame Cabot, Cabot, & Forbes if they didn't exercise their option...<sup>266</sup>

The Santucci's lawyer responded that they should be subject to a “inverse condemnation”, but Supervisor Razeto responded that “Santucci got a heck of a high price for his hog farm...and now we're revealing ourselves as an easy tough by continuing his non-conforming use at the expense of Cabot, Cabot, & Forbes.” Ultimately, a two-year extension was passed, and in response, the Santucci lawyer promised the operation would “be beautified with some greenery over the next two years.” Like water and sewer service, it took industrial development to get the county to more forcefully regulate polluting industries in the area.<sup>267</sup>

#### *Property demolition and the fires that destroyed Russell City*

In March 1965, the first demolition of the homes in Russell City was scheduled to begin within two months.<sup>268</sup> Local arsonists had other plans. By the end of the property acquisition stage of redevelopment, arsonists had destroyed more than 100 structures in the area, eighteen in a single night.<sup>269</sup> One article described these events writing “During the redevelopment agency's lengthy program of acquiring property in the area, Russell City has remained a playground for vandals who have set fire to one dilapidated building after another.”<sup>270</sup>

Fires in the Russell City area started even before the redevelopment plan was finalized. In January 1963, when the public hearings on the redevelopment plan were taking place, an arsonist struck the area with the sixth fire in a week.<sup>271</sup> Fires regularly impacted Russell City as previously discussed, but the rampant arson in the area coincided with the advent of redevelopment. Sometimes the houses were abandoned, but other times, it destroyed people's entire homes with all their belongings, as in the case of the Stinson family of 11 that was forced from the home they rented by fire in March 1963.<sup>272</sup> In 1964, an abandoned home on Louisiana street burned entirely to the ground; in response,

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<sup>264</sup> Extension Granted..., 4/15/1965; Hog Farm Irks Developers, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/18/1969, p. 13 .

<sup>265</sup> Hog Operation Permit Shortened, *Daily Review*, 4/18/1969, p. 13.

<sup>266</sup> Hog Operation..., 4/18/1969.

<sup>267</sup> See further city of Hayward documents [12/17/1963](#), [5/28/1964](#), [8/13/1964](#), [10/8/1964](#), [4/8/1965](#), [6/17/1965](#), [4/10/1969](#), [1/22/1970](#) and [3/10/1970](#).

<sup>268</sup> Russell City Demolition to Start Soon, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/3/1965, p. 16.

<sup>269</sup> Russell City Requiem... Few mourn its death, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/22/1966, p. 19.

<sup>270</sup> Russell City Soon to be Marketable, *Daily Review*, 12/27/1966, p. 17.

<sup>271</sup> Same Arsonist Hinted: Another Russell City Fire, *Daily Review*, 1/14/1963, p. 3.

<sup>272</sup> Family of 11 Escapes Blazing Home, *Daily Review*, 3/13/1963, p. 1.

the fire marshal said that they found crumpled paper in the rooms, indicating arson. He further noted that a fire was happening every night in the area.<sup>273</sup>

During the redevelopment period, the local newspapers covered fire after fire in the area. Fire destroyed the Russell City Country Club, which was part of a string of nine arson fires in ten days, all set in abandoned buildings.<sup>274</sup> A smoldering automobile was found in a home attacked by arson, and a fire was set at Wheat's Auto Wreckers.<sup>275</sup> Arsonists sprayed flammable liquids around two abandoned homes, but as appeared to be the case with the other fires during this time, luckily no one was hurt.<sup>276</sup> The Miramontes family home was destroyed, along with three other homes and a restaurant in September 1964.<sup>277</sup> The day before, the Miramontes children were told by two unidentified youths that they met while playing that they should not be "surprised if your house is burning when you wake up tomorrow." Local authorities repeatedly emphasized that the fires were caused by arson, but the only people who were reported to be caught were the two young women. Authorities did see two people running from a fire in March 1965, but again, they were never caught.<sup>278</sup> At the time, the youths were likely planning more fires as fire accelerant was found on the floors of two additional houses. While immediate investigations were ordered in both cases, there was no further reporting on whether anyone was identified.

Investigators did identify two young women, 14 years of age, who were arrested for running away and confessed to setting three of the fires for "kicks."<sup>279</sup> This, however, was in May 1964, and the fires continued to be frequently set, at the rate of two houses per week in July 1964.<sup>280</sup> Indeed, this led the county to create a plan to demolish homes to combat the arsonists by invoking an emergency provision of the health and welfare codes. Another proposal sought to save money by allowing the fire department and civil defense crews to use the buildings for practice exercises. Harold Davis supported the idea saying that "practice crews could raze a building immediately after it is vacated instead of risking extension of the recent arson attacks on homes, which could jeopardize adjacent occupied dwellings."<sup>281</sup> Twenty fires happened in Russell City between January and April 1965, with five between the period of April 12 and 30.<sup>282</sup> One arson instance destroyed 16 buildings, all but two of which were vacant, in a fire that "roared" through three and half square blocks.<sup>283</sup> This blaze started as a grass fire, and the fire chief thought it was probably set by children. Just two months later, though, this fire was eclipsed in severity by one that burned 17 structures and blackened 23 acres.<sup>284</sup> Stiff winds at the time meant it was difficult to control. This blaze also meant that at this point, over 50% of Russell City had been burned.

While fires during the redevelopment period did not have injuries or death reported, they did cause considerable property damage. Hazel Singleton estimated the cost of her house destroyed (which

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<sup>273</sup> Fire razes House in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 5/20/1964, p. 11.

<sup>274</sup> Landmark destroyed in Blaze, *Oakland Tribune*, 5/25/1964, p. 16.

<sup>275</sup> Another Case of Arson, *Daily Review*, 6/8/1964, p. 6; Newark Fireman Injured; Russell City Fire Quelled, *Daily Review*, 7/5/1964, p. 3.

<sup>276</sup> Arsonists in Russell City Hit Twice, *Oakland Tribune*, 9/21/1964, p. 9.

<sup>277</sup> Russell City Fire Destroys 4 Buildings, *Oakland Tribune*, 9/24/1964, p. 15.

<sup>278</sup> New Blaze in Russell City Home, *Daily Review*, 3/3/1965, p. 17.

<sup>279</sup> 2 Girls Confess 3 Fires, *Daily Review*, 5/28/1964, p. 3.

<sup>280</sup> Plea Made to Raze 100 Homes, *Oakland Tribune*, 7/7/1964, p. 21.

<sup>281</sup> A Match For Russell City?, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/12/1965, p. 22.

<sup>282</sup> Another Russell City House Fire, *Daily Review*, 4/30/1965, p. 6.

<sup>283</sup> General Alarm Fire Ravages 16 Russell City Buildings, *Oakland Tribune*, 7/13/1965, p. 14.

<sup>284</sup> Russell City Fire Razes 17 Buildings, *Daily Review*, 9/2/1965, p. 15.

was rented by the Stinson family) at \$14,000; Norman Devine lost a \$1,500 house trailer to fire.<sup>285</sup> The local papers often reported several thousands of dollars of property damage at arson sites.<sup>286</sup> Fires also threatened and displaced families, as though most of the buildings were abandoned, many families and individuals still lived in the area. The 17-structure fire, amidst high winds, threatened two occupied buildings, one of which was a house occupied by twelve people. Another fire destroyed the Russell City Hotel, which was still occupied by five boarders.<sup>287</sup> Called the “do-it-yourself demolition program”, ultimately the series of fires destroyed more than 100 structures, with a record 18 in a single night, and forty in a single week.<sup>288</sup> The last family in Russell City—the Juana Feliciano family, who came to Russell City at its inception—were not spared the fire of arsonists. While they were moving some furniture from Russell City in January 1967, they returned home to find their house in flames. They lost their dog and most of their possessions, a loss of more than \$6,000.<sup>289</sup>

### *From Russell City to Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes Hayward Industrial Park*

By 1966, only 18 of the projects 205 acres were left to be acquired, and none of those acres contained buildings.<sup>290</sup> The remaining acreage continued to be negotiated but would be subject to condemnation proceedings; it represented 9% of the total area. Russell City would finally get water and sewer, as the city of Hayward was preparing to finally lay a water supply main to the project area, and a sanitary sewer line from its sewage treatment plant, at the cost of \$204,000.<sup>291</sup> A later city budget allocated \$302,000 for the project.<sup>292</sup> Juana Feliciano, 87 years old, and one of the original Russell City “pioneers” was the last family to leave the area.<sup>293</sup>

City and county officials were concerned about ensuring the area would be attractive to industrial developers and to the city of Hayward. Harold Davis noted that “industrial growth in the area should complement the growth of Hayward” and identified wrecking yards and a garbage dump as hurting the agency’s ability to find buyers.<sup>294</sup> Davis further recommended an oversight committee to ensure those businesses did not “degrade” the area. Like the hog farm, there appeared to be a greater willingness to consider the character of the community now that it was to be sold for industrial development than there did when people lived in the area.

To begin the process of converting the land to industrial use, the city and county began planning to put the area up for sale.<sup>295</sup> Anticipating annexation, the city of Hayward provided recommendations

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<sup>285</sup> Family of 11 Escapes Blazing Home, *Daily Review*, 3/13/1963, p. 1; Russell City Blaze, *Daily Review*, 5/10/1966, p. 7; Flames Take Russell City Landmark, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/4/1966, p. 24.

<sup>286</sup> Russell City Home Razed By Fire, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/27/1963, p. 1.

<sup>287</sup> Flames Take Russell City Landmark, *Oakland Tribune*, 3/4/1966, p. 24.

<sup>288</sup> Russell City Requiem.. Few mourn its death, *Oakland Tribune*, 12/22/1966, p. 19; Fire Delays W.P. Train, *Daily Review*, 5/21/1966, p. 2.

<sup>289</sup> Last Family Sees Home Burn Down, *Oakland Tribune*, 1/17/1967, p. 12.

<sup>290</sup> Russell City's Final Days, *Daily Review*, 4/24/1966, p. 1.

<sup>291</sup> \$2.3 Million Works Budget is Proposed, *Daily Review*, 4/23/1965, p. 11; see also city of Hayward documents [4/26/66](#), [6/28/66](#), [2/14/67](#), and [9/26/67](#).

<sup>292</sup> Nine Street Projects in City Budget, *Daily Review*, 7/22/1965, p. 13.

<sup>293</sup> Pioneer Last to Leave, *Daily Review*, 1/16/1967, p. 1.

<sup>294</sup> Watchdog Unit Proposed for Redevelopment, *Daily Review*, 6/29/1966, p. 15.

<sup>295</sup> Russell City Tops City-County Meet city of Hayward, Alameda County, *Daily Review*, 12/5/1966, p. 15.



to the county on how to develop the area.<sup>296</sup> In 1967, the property went up for sale, and the county wanted a minimum \$2.25 million “if cash investment in project is to be recovered”, although the county ultimately spent \$2,788,883 on redevelopment. \$2,442,000 was spent on property acquisition, with another \$159,373 for agency salaries and \$78,510 for maintenance and operation.<sup>297</sup> The board set the minimum bid at \$2.85 million.<sup>298</sup> That price, however, did not include the costs of road development or the costs of to the city of Hayward.<sup>299</sup> The entire project area was offered as a single package, but would be split into four parcels if no bids were obtained.<sup>300</sup>

The developer of the Hayward Air Terminal, and who ultimately ended up buying the Russell City area, was Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes.<sup>301</sup> The first bid was short of the minimum. In September 1967, the developers offered just \$1.6 million for the site and would spend an additional \$300,000 to redevelop the area.<sup>302</sup> The offer of \$8,000/acre for the entire parcel “was almost identical to the per-acre price it paid the city for the airport land” but well short of the \$12,500 estimate the Board thought it could get when redevelopment began.<sup>303</sup> If the area had sold at this initial bid, the loss to the redevelopment project would have been more than a million dollars.<sup>304</sup> After further negotiations, a new offer in November 1967 from Cabot, Cabot and Forbes emerged that the Board accepted: \$2.45 million, \$850,000 more than they had originally offered. This area would be bought in stages over the next three years, with \$1 million paid for the first 100 acres and \$1.45 million for the second, with an option to extend the purchase date on the second unit for three years. If the option was granted, the developers would pay property taxes on the area. This offer was still \$350,000 less than what was set by the board, but it was the only way, the developers said, to “work out where you can receive \$12,000 an acre for the land.”<sup>305</sup> Shortly after the offer, the city of Hayward “prezoned” the area for industrial development and the sale to Cabot, Cabot and Forbes was formally and finally approved in June 1968.<sup>306</sup> Hayward had first asked the Board of Supervisors to zone the Russell City area industrial in 1947, and just over twenty years later, this goal was finally accomplished.<sup>307</sup>

Despite the net loss of taxpayer money on the project, the county continued to defend it. County administrator Earl Strathman said the purpose had been “not to make money, but to eliminate a slum area” and that the county was already “reaping benefits in reduced police and health department expenses.”<sup>308</sup> Harold Davis concluded that it was still a savings to taxpayers as it did

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<sup>296</sup> Planners Set Limits for Industrial Park, *Daily Review*, 12/9/1966, p. 1.

<sup>297</sup> Bids on Russell City will open Tuesday, *Oakland Tribune*, 9/1/1967, p. 32.

<sup>298</sup> Russell City Soon to be Marketable *Daily Review*, 12/27/1966, p. 17; Russell City: Supervisors Bend on Bid Demand, *Daily Review*, 3/14/1967, p. 14.

<sup>299</sup> Price tag placed on Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/14/1967, p. 38.

<sup>300</sup> Supervisors Split on Land Disposal, *Daily Review*, 4/12/1967, p. 16.

<sup>301</sup> Russell City Site Bid By Developers, *Daily Review*, 8/17/1967, p. 1.

<sup>302</sup> Bids on Russell City will open Tuesday *Oakland Tribune*, 9/1/1967, p. 32.

<sup>303</sup> Bids on Russell City will open Tuesday *Oakland Tribune*, 9/1/1967; 9/1/1967, p. 32. County Termed overly Hopeful on Russell City *Daily Review*, 1/25/1962, p. 13.

<sup>304</sup> The Russell City Offer, *Oakland Tribune*, 9/11/1967, p. 16.

<sup>305</sup> \$2 million offered for Russell City, *Oakland Tribune*, 11/28/1967, p. 5; \$2.4 Million Russell City Bid Made, *Daily Review*, 11/29/1967, p. 13; New Era Ahead in Russell City, *Daily Review*, 1/12/1968, p. 12.

<sup>306</sup> Industry Zoning Approved for Land Near Hayward, *Daily Review*, 12/15/1967, p. 14; Russell City Sale OK'd by Board, *Oakland Tribune*, 6/18/1968, p. 48; see also City of Hayward City Council [12/15/1966](#), [1/3/1967](#), [5/29/1967](#), [7/20/1967](#), and [9/12/1967](#).

<sup>307</sup> “Industrial Zoning Asked for Russell City Area.” Newspaper clipping from [Russell City RC planned industrial area](#) files, Alameda Community Development Agency.

<sup>308</sup> Russell City Sale OK'd by Board, *Oakland Tribune*, 6/18/1968, p. 48.

away with special services in the area, including schools, health facilities, police and fire protection.<sup>309</sup> Davis also contended that a survey of the displaces were “almost all better off since the move.” Once the area was sold, the *Oakland Tribune* concluded that “Russell City now is the unobtrusive center in industrial growth.”<sup>310</sup>

By selling the redevelopment project area, the board could now transition back to other county projects. While the board originally borrowed the money for the project from an allocation for voting machines, local newspapers at the time, as well as board of supervisor records, indicate that the first payment from the redevelopment offer did not return to voting machines. Rather, the county used the payment to buy the land of what is currently the Santa Rita Jail Site.<sup>311</sup> This land housed a prison farm site and the original Santa Rita jail facility; the county had leased the land for the past twenty-five years from the federal government, who used it during World War II as a military base. As the *Daily Review* noted,

With the Russell City money in its pockets, the county will be in a better position to conclude its negotiations to buy the Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center portion of what was formerly the Camp Parks Air Force Base... The county's preliminary budget for next year provides for the financial transfer of receipts from the Russell City sale to the Santa Rita purchase.<sup>312</sup>

With the first payment from redevelopment, the county was able to purchase land that the federal government used as a military base, and which today houses the Santa Rita jail.<sup>313</sup> County administrator Strathman noted that the jail need was predicated by a “drop off in the county jail centers”, amidst a cited 50% caseload drop.<sup>314</sup> By 1972, the redevelopment project had been fully transferred into private hands, the area was now the Hayward Industrial Center, and Alameda County supervisors transitioned to new projects.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, our task as researchers was to ascertain what happened in the redevelopment of Russell City, and this is provided above. As we have noted throughout the recounting, however, there are key points where what happened to Russell City hearkens to a much larger story about race, capital and state power fought over land and its “redevelopment.” This story recurs throughout this history through three themes about the power of money and profit over people; about the ability of people, especially poor and non-white communities, to impact the political process in ways that are meaningful to the material conditions of their lives; and a story of both state neglect and state development, which, for the residents of Russell City, meant a story of state-induced early death from higher susceptibility to disease outbreaks, fire, and reduced living conditions. Indeed, faced with a public health emergency, repeated fires taking lives of residents, and concerted resident effort to gain services, time and time again surrounding communities, the city and the county refused aid.

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<sup>309</sup> Taxpayer Saving Reported on Sale of Russell City Despite Low Price, *Daily Review*, 6/26/1968, p. 10.

<sup>310</sup> Russell City Site Now Successful Industrial Park, *Oakland Tribune*, 9/10/1972, p. 46

<sup>311</sup> Bigger Tax Bite Looms for County, *Oakland Tribune*, 4/23/1968, p. 1; Hearing Slated June 18 on Russell City Area Sale *Daily Review* 5/29/1968, p. 18.

<sup>312</sup> Hearing Slated June 18 on Russell City Area Sale, *Daily Review*, 5/29/1968, p. 18.

<sup>313</sup> 2 Projects Will Have Big Impact, *Daily Review*, 12/29/1968, p. 1; Russell City, Santa Rita Will Have Great Impact, *The Argus*, 12/30/1968, p. 6.

<sup>314</sup> 2 Projects Will Have Big Impact, *Daily Review*, 12/29/1968, p. 1

Though residents fought relocation, the city and county declared an intention to industrially zone the area in the 1940s—and did not seem to ever entertain any other ideas than resident relocation and industrialization. Residents sought multiple legal areas to improve their community and were hampered at almost every turn by the industrial aspirations of the city and the county. This happened amidst a redevelopment project that ultimately did not recoup its expenses; the amount it did not recoup could have been used to provide water and sewer lines to the residents. The fact that it did not is a testament to the power of profits over people and the grip of white supremacy on the foundations of urban development.

## Appendix

### 1. Research sources

The above recounting of redevelopment is based upon our research into this time period and represents specifically our understanding of the roles that the city of Hayward and the county of Alameda played in the conditions that led to the redevelopment of Russell City. Given our research focused on publicly available records, we do not provide in this recounting the many stories that residents and their descendants likely had about the area. This would provide another source of information about redevelopment, and would provide greater context to the events we document in this report. Below, we detail the various sources we consulted to locate the records used in the historical narrative of redevelopment we provide about Russell City. Researching Russell City entailed several difficulties in locating records, and thus, before we begin, we discuss our research process and why our research represents only a partial accounting of the likely records that existed at the time of redevelopment.

Currently, there is no centralized location for Alameda County records, such as a county archive. As such, our search for records entailed consulting a range of agencies. For property records, we consulted with the Alameda County Clerk-Recorder and Assessor offices. Alameda County Clerk-Recorder assisted us with locating records relative to the redevelopment agency, and it was here that we located all of the deeds and property legal records submitted to the city of Hayward at the conclusion of this project. We consulted the Assessor office on the advice of the AC Clerk-Recorder office to try and determine prices paid for the transfer of property, which would provide insight into the total price paid for the property. Unfortunately, we were informed the Tax Collector's records only go back until 1970 and there is no information to determine property payments on the deed transfers.

To locate further Alameda County redevelopment records, we also consulted a range of libraries and archives, including UC Berkely Law Library, Alameda County Law Library, Alameda County Library, City of Hayward Library, Oakland Library Special Collections, Hayward Historical Society, California Archives, the National Archives, and the Association of Bay Area Governments Librarian. We additionally contacted the Alameda County Planner, Grand Jury, and city administrator's office, as well as the general customer service of Alameda County. While everyone we consulted was eager to help, few could help us locate redevelopment records. For instance, we contacted the Alameda County Grand Jury office to obtain the Grand Jury Report from 1956 that officially labeled Russell City a "blighted area", necessitating urgent redevelopment. The office noted that their records only went back to 1960 and that the California Archive would have them; when we contacted the California Archive, they indicated that they were not in possession of these records and that the requirement for counties to submit to the state did not happen until after 1960. This was confirmed in subsequent follow-ups with the grand jury office, who indicated they were not clear on where to find the 1956 report.

Likewise, the Association of Bay Area Governments was very helpful, but their records only date until the 1970s. The Hayward Historical Society has records related to Russell City, but these are primarily a photo database and all documents are already available on their website. Further, the California Archive had no other records related to Alameda County and redevelopment during the period impacting Russell City. We also consulted the National Archives, who were extremely helpful in locating records related to Alameda County. As we detail above, Alameda County ultimately

decided against pursuing federal urban redevelopment/renewal funds, and thus, did not have to submit documentation to the federal government that would be housed at the National Archive. The only records that existed at the National Archive were related to an initial inquiry into federal redevelopment submitted by Alameda County; no further records were located by National Archive staff.

The available records primarily locate residents who were property owners, as the original redevelopment records have not yet been located. Instead, the research below relies on three primary sources: the Alameda County Clerk-Recorder office where we located property deeds transferring ownership to the Alameda County Redevelopment Agency (ACRA); Board of Supervisors' (BOS) Clerk's office, where we located records of property payments; and a historical media search, using various databases available through local libraries. The BOS Clerk's Office also contacted the community development agency on our behalf, to see if they could locate the redevelopment records, and we were provided an additional set of documents related to Russell City. We detail next those sources and what we found.

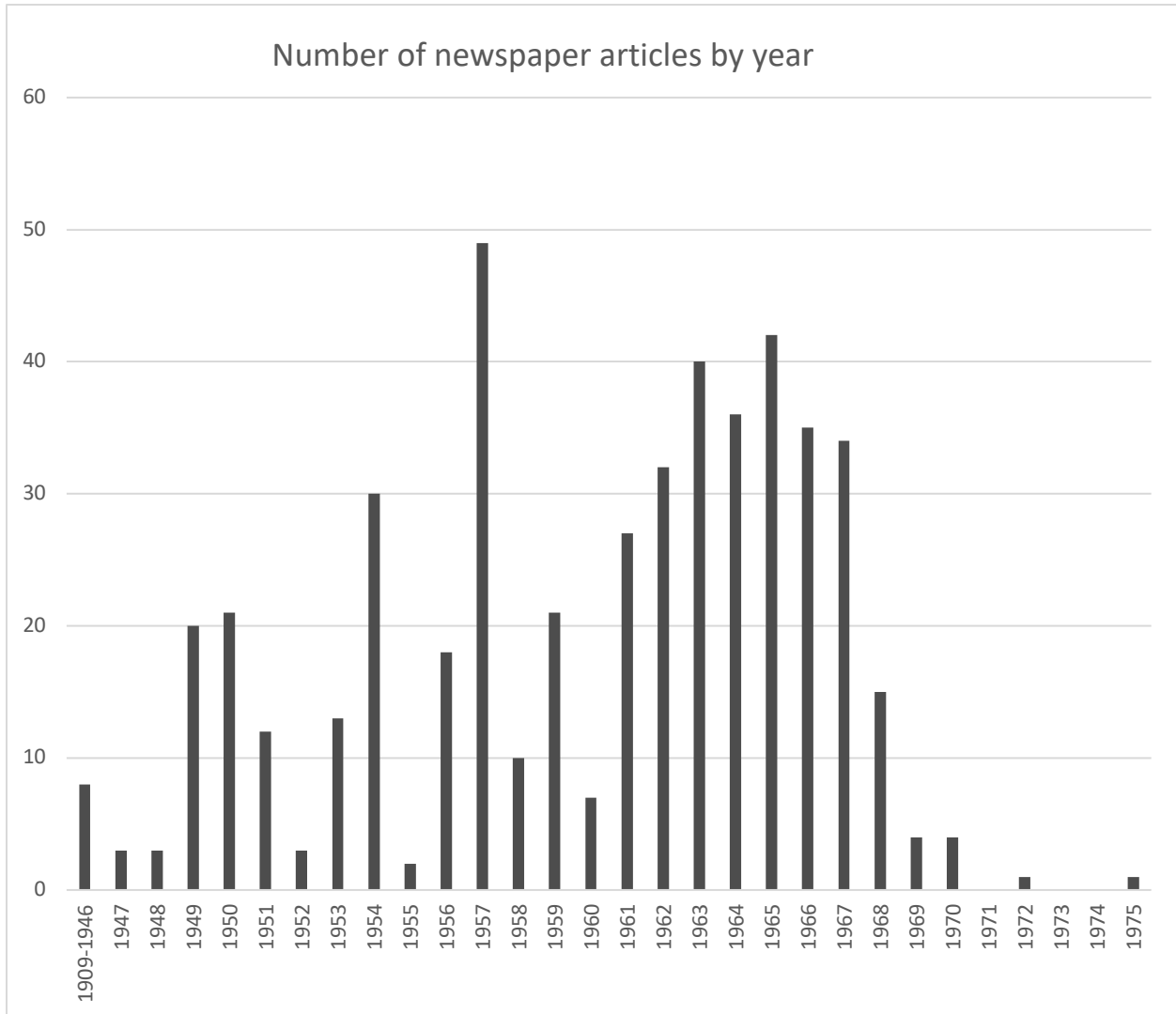
#### **a. Historical media search**

The bulk of sources used to create the historical narrative of Russell City redevelopment came from our historical media search of local newspapers, primarily the *Daily Review* from Hayward and the *Oakland Tribune*. To conduct this search, we accessed historical newspaper databases available through the city of Oakland library: Newspapers.com and Newspaperarchive.com. In addition, we also searched the California Digital Newspaper Collection, though their holdings are not as extensive as the other sources and resulted in primarily *Oakland Tribune* articles prior to 1960. These records were searched using the term "Russell City."

Our search resulted in tens of thousands of records at each site, sorted by relevancy; however, upon review, we found that relevant articles were much less, and that much of what was returned was advertisements, people with the last name of Russell, and other non-Russell City related material. These articles were excluded from our search. In addition, there were articles related to key historical moments that were not directly related to redevelopment—in particular, these include school annexation and Mayor Dettenrieder's case. For these topics, we collected a sampling of articles in the case of school annexation and those that mentioned redevelopment in the Dettenrieder case (there were a number of articles on sentencing that did not connect to redevelopment that we did not collect). Since our focus was on redevelopment, we did not do an extensive search of school annexation and collected only a sampling of articles under this topic. Further, there were many articles about fights or illegal activity at the Russell City Country Club; many of these articles we reviewed and collected, as they sometimes mentioned area residents. Ones that did not mention area residents and were just a few sentences long we excluded from our search.

As a result of our search, we collected 491 total articles about Russell City, the precursors to redevelopment and its final implementation. Each of these articles were collected, reviewed, summarized, and provided with keywords based on the primary ideas in the article. The length of summary generally reflects the length of the article—articles with longer summaries are longer form articles, and articles with shorter summaries often were articles that did not contain much information. Articles were found between 1909 and 1975, with the majority of articles located during the redevelopment period, and the single largest number of articles in a year found in 1957.

| <b>Newspaper</b>        | <b># of articles</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Daily Review            | 290                  |
| Oakland Tribune         | 181                  |
| San Francisco Call      | 4                    |
| San Francisco Chronicle | 1                    |
| San Francisco Examiner  | 11                   |
| The Argus               | 4                    |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>491</b>           |



These articles also served a second purpose other than the retelling of one version of redevelopment in Russell City: the identification of area residents. Since we were unable to locate the original redevelopment agency records, we also had difficulty locating any residents in the area who were not property owners. To partially account for this, we also collected the names of residents in the area who were mentioned in local newspapers. This meant that these names were often sampled from people who experienced local traumas—an injury, a fire to their home, or some other calamity.

Other names came from those who were active in the community and may not reflect the average resident who was unable to fight for water and sewer access. From this search of articles, we collected 199 residents’ names; 79 of these residents did not seem to be related to any property deed, and another 70 who had the same last names as a deed owner but a different first name.

| <b>Does the identified resident have a deed with same last name?</b> |            |
|--|------------|
| No   | 79         |
| Yes  | 50         |
| Yes, but different first name  | 70         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>199</b> |

One complication with the list of residents is that these names appear from the late 1940s into the 1960s so cover a large area of time in Russell City. Additional options for collecting potentially non-property owning names in the area:

- A list of three newspaper columns of names submitted for the Oro Loma Annexation petition in 1951<sup>315</sup>
- 1950 Census schedules that list name and address for every person counted by the census in 1950
- List of 236 residents who signed petition in 1957 to rezone area residential found in Alameda County Community Development Agency file “RC petition against redevelopment”

Documents provided to the city of Hayward in this category include:

- Spreadsheet containing source, date, page number, title, keywords, and summary of each article
- PDF or JPG images of each source
- Spreadsheet containing list of residents, source of identification, and address if provided

**b. Grant deeds from property owners to ACRA**

To located property owners in Russell City at the time of redevelopment, we utilized the “Digital Reel” database located at the public research room in the Alameda Clerk-Recorders’ Office. This database contains images of the historical property records from this time. The search function of the database is limited, as one can only search by keywords, and the search cannot be limited further. Thus, searching “Russell City” brought back every property transfer that happened in Russell City; limiting to the search terms “Redevelopment Agency of the County of Alameda” brought back grant deeds exclusively related to the Russell City property transfers. Using this search term, we located 734 records related to the redevelopment of Russell City; all the records were from the years 1963-1967, the period of redevelopment of the area prior to its sale.

From this search, we located 365 unique deeds, as well as 34 eminent domain lawsuits, 18 other legal documents, and a Board of Supervisor (BOS) record of tax deeded properties purchased for the

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<sup>315</sup> Petition for annexation of RC to Oro Loma Sanitary district, *Daily Review*, 11/19/1951, p. 15.

redevelopment agency. Of the 365 unique deeds, 353 reference private individuals; 8 others reference churches (one church had two deeds), 3 businesses, and 1 government agency.

BOS tax deeded property record generated another 39 deeds related to properties in Russell City. These records contain the deed number, parcel number, the date the property was deeded to the state, the delinquent tax year, and the price paid for the property. All these properties were deeded to the state between 1943 and 1962, and prices paid for the property ranged from \$45 to \$900, with a median price of \$67. Other legal documents included quitclaim deeds, orders approving compromise for demand against estates, executor documents, orders of condemnation, and several other document types. Nine of these documents indicated the prices paid for the property.

The documents collected from this research inform the creation of a map by the city of Hayward, which identifies the owners of the parcels at the time of redevelopment. This map is intended to be complemented by location data identified in other areas, as well as the self-reported accounts from former residents and descendants being collected by the city.

As part of this research, we were able to identify several records that led us to believe that though our records likely cover 96% of property transfers in the area, there are still some outstanding records. For instance, in our historical media search, a judge ruled that the heirs of the Jose Mateos property were to be paid \$100,000 for their ranch in the Russell City area by the redevelopment agency. A deed transferring this property to the ACRA was not located despite using the original search term, as well as the search terms of the owner. Additionally, once the map is completed, there may be other properties that have not been identified or collected in the documents we found.

This is the case with the Charles and Isabel Sanders property, which has documents submitted by Antoinette Wynn. None of the documents supplied by Ms. Wynn are similar to the documents collected in our research; however, using those documents we were able to locate a final order of condemnation that served a similar function as grant deeds for the purposed of property transfer. Despite using the search term on the document used in the original search, this search did not turn up the Sanders final order of condemnation until we searched using information in the document (lot description) provided by Ms. Wynn. Further, there were 15 property owners and parcels listed in BOS records that did not match a located deed; further search of these property owner names revealed an additional 4 deed records and 1 eminent domain lawsuit. Given this experience, we are not certain that our search has located every possible document related to Russell City redevelopment property transfers and thus, other documents may still be possible to be found once further former resident documents are received by the city. Given the extensive number of documents we found, however, we expect any missing deeds to be low.

Documents provided to the City of Hayward in this area include:

- Spreadsheet containing list of all deeds by owners name, with year, book and page number, as well as property description; this spreadsheet also contains
  - A second tab with a spreadsheet containing list of 34 eminent domain lawsuits located by named owners, with year, book and page number, as well as named properties



- A third tab with spreadsheet containing list of 18 other legal documents, identified by name, year, book, and page number with a description, and if provided, amount paid for property (if available)
- Images of all listed deeds, lawsuits and legal documents named by “last name year book and page number”
- Digital copy of 1907 Russell City map deeds are based on

**c. Board of Supervisor meeting minute records**

As discussed in the narrative recounting of redevelopment in Russell City based on the historical media search below, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors was also the governing body for the redevelopment agency. During their meetings, they would “sit” as the redevelopment agency to do redevelopment business. Thus, the meeting records from the Board of Supervisors during this time provide some insight into the county’s approach to redevelopment. Unfortunately, the BOS meeting minutes do not provide a transcript of the meetings and provide very limited information about items in meetings. For example, an agenda item related to the redevelopment agency from 1963 says simply, “Executive Director, Redevelopment Agency—recommending payment in the sum of \$150 to Title Insurance and Trust Company for services in the Russell City Project Area—approved and referred to the Auditor for payment.” No other record information is provided, and thus, the minutes provide little information about what was said in BOS meetings.

What the BOS meeting minutes do provide, however, are what are called “authorize payments” resolutions. These resolutions authorize payments to the title companies that facilitated the property transfers; the records do not list individual properties, but rather provide a group of properties with a total amount (see example image below). This appears to be the price paid for properties to the owners, as it does not reflect payments that are listed in minutes like the example provided above. Instead, these resolutions are the only place where the property owners and these large amounts are listed in the BOS minute records.

\$11,620.00 to TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY for

| <u>Parcel No.</u> | <u>Name of Owner(s)</u>          |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 439 45 6, 7       | Ana Marie Torres aka Anna Torres |
| 439 45 51         | John Gonsalves                   |
| 439 45 59         | Pete Morales                     |
| 439 45 71         | Alverta McCluskey                |
| 439 48 19         | P. R. Hines and L. Hines         |

These records provide a window into what owners were paid for properties by the redevelopment company, but do not provide exact amounts except in a few cases. Using these records, however, it is possible to calculate a per lot and per square footage average price paid for the properties in each group. To determine this rate in the case above, there are 6 parcel numbers representing 9 lots; we divided \$11,620 by the 9 lots, to determine a rate of \$1,291/lot. This was then used to estimate a per

owner price for the property. A per square foot price is awaiting the finalization of a map by the city of Hayward, that will allow for this calculation. Per lot payments were not estimated for properties that were not based in the Russell City grid system given these were often large, irregular lots. Estimate square footage likely would provide a more accurate payment for these lots.

This method also allowed us to identify the price paid for some properties. In the next example, both Title Insurance and Guardian Title are listed as payees; in these cases, we identified the title company that processed the property transfer from the deed. This allowed for two benefits: (1) in cases where there was only one property owner who was processed by a title company, we were able to determine the price paid for those properties; and (2) split the group of property on the authorize payment resolution into two groups to determine per lot payment—one for those paid by Title and another for those paid by Guardian. For the example below, we were able to identify that Waldo and Lily Rivers were the only people paid by Guardian, and thus, we assigned a \$650 price to the payment for their property.

**\$11,300.00 to TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY and**

**\$650.00 to GUARDIAN TITLE COMPANY for**

| <u>OWNER(S)</u>         | <u>PARCEL NO.</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Millie E. Garron        | 439 51 104,105    |
| Felix and Anna Franklin | 439 51 134        |
| Waldo and Lily Rivers   | 439 57 58         |

As a result of this search, we found 83 “authorize payments” resolutions, and identified 297 payees, with a total payout of \$2,235,681.25. With two records identified from the other sources (Jose Mateos land and additional 5 lots at \$750 each), this puts the total amount of payments identified at \$2,339,431.25. Further, we also used a handful of records located in other cases—legal documents, newspapers—to further narrow down the groupings used for the average.

We did not find records for every deed transfer. Initially, we searched for all board of supervisor records during the time period, paging through each microfiche page one-by-one, as that is the only way to search the records. We were guided in part by a search of the *Oakland Tribune* for “Board of Supervisor” and “Russell City” records. We also found that our searching of the microfiche resulted in more records than we found entries for in our *Tribune* search. Given this, we searched all board of supervisor records for the bulk of the time periods that payments were made to owners: 1963-1966. Additional records were located using the *Oakland Tribune* search.

Once we collected the records, we reconciled this with the list of deeds and found 22 deeds were unable to be matched to a payment in the Board of Supervisor records; likewise, 11 Board of Supervisor payments were unable to be matched to a collected deed, though 5 of the payment record owners were listed in eminent domain lawsuits. To try to locate the missing payments, we reviewed the records collected to see where there were meetings or time periods where no records of property transfer existed; we then returned to the microfiche records and carefully examined

these particular gaps. Unfortunately, this process did not yield any additional records. To check a final time, we did another Board of Supervisor and Russell City search, this time concentrating on only “authorize payment” transactions; this again did not yield any additional records.

These missing payments and deeds impacted the estimated calculations for the property owners on the Board of Supervisor records. If we were unable to locate a deed for the payment, we were unable to determine what the property corresponded to and thus, could not complete the calculation. This impacted all the properties listed on the respective BOS resolution since inability to determine the title company or property impacted the calculation. For instance, in the below image we were unable to locate a deed for John D. and Hilda Boitano. In addition, three of the properties were processed by title and one by guardian, and it is unknown which title company processed Boitano’s transfer. Thus, for these properties, we were unable to calculate a per lot estimate.

**\$6,800.00 to TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY and**

**\$16,800.00 to GUARDIAN TITLE COMPANY See**

| <u>Owner(s)</u>           | <u>Parcel No.</u>     |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| John D. and Hilda Boitano | 2435 25 13            |
| Arthur and Mary Dokes     | 439 45 37             |
| David and Elizabeth Sims  | 439 51 14, 15, 16, 17 |
| William and Ora Crady     | 439 51 77             |
| Estate of Sabina Leal     | 2439 57 38            |

In some cases, the missing property is listed in an eminent domain record, so we are able to match the parcel to the eminent domain lawsuit and determine property values; this occurred only in cases where all the properties identified in the BOS record were processed by one title company. If we did not have a deed, and the property was not listed in any eminent domain lawsuit we uncovered, as is the case with the Boitano property above, then we were unable to calculate a per lot amount.

From the Board of Supervisor records, we were able to find \$2,235,681.25, 96% of the reported property payout during redevelopment. Of this amount, we were able to estimate a per lot calculation for \$1,711,575.25 of the payout, 77% of the amount paid for property transfers. From this, we calculated an average payment per owner listing in the BOS records of \$4,904.23 and a median payment of \$2,133.33. Per lot estimates ranged from \$107.14 to \$4750, and the average estimated cost per lot was \$1,524.91, with a median of \$1,365.83.

Documents provided to the city of Hayward in this area include:

- Spreadsheet containing overview of Board of supervisor payments
  - Records on this spreadsheet are grouped by when they appear in an “authorize payments” resolution

- Records are identified by date, as well as reel and image number on microfiche of Board of Supervisor records available at the Alameda County Clerk Office
- Records identify the parcel number and name of owner on the BOS record<sup>316</sup>
- Lots used for grouping
- Total prices paid for grouping
- Per lot estimate for grouping
- Per lot estimates for each owner on BOS record
- Highlighted records are those for which there is no corresponding deed
- Spreadsheet containing an overview of tax deeded properties and prices paid for each
- PDF images of BOS authorize payment resolutions (83 images in total)
- PDF image of tax deeded properties resolution (6 pages in total)

#### **d. Other government document searches**

In addition to we attempted to locate various government documents related to redevelopment. For Alameda County, though we consulted local libraries, besides the deeds and we only located the final redevelopment plan approved in 1963. The city of Hayward has a much more extensive online records availability, and here we found city council minutes and records used to bolster the historical understanding of redevelopment discussed in this report. Finally, we also consulted census records for the area.

Documents provided to the city of Hayward in this area include:

- Spreadsheet titled “RC assorted documents”
  - One tab provides names, years, types and short descriptions for all resident sourced materials sent to the researchers
  - One tab provides overview of all files contained in the folder “community development agency” files and provided by the Alameda County Community Development Agency
  - One tab contains list of city of Hayward council minutes and descriptions of the topic the minutes addressed
- Images and files for all documents on the first two tabs of spreadsheet (city of Hayward are linked to the Hayward repository)
- Alameda County ‘Redevelopment Plan’, 1963
- Alameda County Statement of Institution of Proceedings to Redevelop the Russell City Redevelopment Project Area (1963)
- Census records
  - 1940 census tract map including Russell City area
  - 1950 census tract map including Russell City area
  - 1960 census tract map including Russell City area
  - 1940 census schedules
  - 1950 census schedule
  - 1960 data table overview

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<sup>316</sup> Listing of owner found in the deed office can vary slightly from the owner listed on the board resolutions; in these cases, we’ve listed the deed and any other variance in a “notes” column at the end.

## 2. Potential future research avenues

Given the lack of direct records currently available about the Russell City redevelopment project, we were unable to provide an extensive recounting of who the residents in the area were, beyond the approximately 40% of whom were likely listed on property transfer records. Below, we provide a few suggestions as to where future research might locate additional information about Russell City:

- Steering committee members requested a list of all property transfers in the area from 1948 forward. An initial search yielded over 3300 records, almost five times the number of property transfer records reviewed and collected for this report. Continuing this research could tell people more about who lived in the area, and who was likely forced out, prior to redevelopment.
- Steering committee members requested a search of all vital records for those who were born, died, or married in Russell City from 1948 forward. Birth records are available to the public starting from 1940, death records from 1960 and marriage records from 1971. To search records, a name and date is needed. A marriage certificate from one of the Russell City steering committee members also revealed that the certificate did not list “Russell City” despite being in that area of town; instead, it listed Hayward. A manual search would then need to use street names to find relevant vital records.
- Yearbooks for San Lorezno School District, in which Russell School was located, are available back to the 1960s. It is unclear if Russell School in particular has any such yearbooks, as we were unable to follow up on this. For future research, one could potentially follow-up in this area.
- Genealogical research could be undertaken in order to identify additional residents by starting with the residents that are already known. There is an extensive library of digital vital records offered by the Church of Latter-Day Saints, which may be a starting point. We recommend if going this route to consult with a research who specializes in genealogy to understand more what this would entail.
- The local Church of Latter-Day Saints Temple in Oakland houses old bay area phone books; this may be one option for further research.
- To provide the most complete accounting of redevelopment, ultimately, the original redevelopment agency files should be located. From our research we found that this agency was located at the W. Winton Avenue county location; this location continues to exist and houses the current Planning Commission.
- Reconcile property map and list of non propertied residents with other lists of residents contained within the community sourced material file “RC 2023.2.13 Russell City Residents”