2018-01-01

From Concordia to Lincoln Park, An Urban History of Highway Building in El Paso, Texas

Miguel Juarez

University of Texas at El Paso, migueljuarez.soha@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd

Part of the Ethnic Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation


https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/1459

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.
FROM CONCORDIA TO LINCOLN PARK, AN URBAN HISTORY OF HIGHWAY BUILDING IN EL PASO TEXAS

MIGUEL JUÁREZ
Doctoral Program in Borderlands History

APPROVED:

_________________________________________
Paul Edison, Ph.D., Chair

_________________________________________
Yolanda Chávez Leyva, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Bradley J. Cartwright, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Howard Campbell, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Max E. Grossman, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Davarian L. Baldwin, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Charles Ambler, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my familía,
to my wife Ramona Padilla-Juárez
and to my late parents
Miguel Vela Juárez and María Guadalupe Gallardo Juárez
and to my siblings:
Teresa Santa Cruz, Martha Hermosillo
Eduardo Juárez, Francisco Juárez
Laura Teran and Cecilia Juárez
FROM CONCORDIA TO LINCOLN PARK, AN URBAN HISTORY OF HIGHWAY BUILDING IN EL PASO, TEXAS

by

MIGUEL JUÁREZ, B.A., MLS, M.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at El Paso in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2018
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Edison, Associate Professor in the Borderlands History Department, who acted as my dissertation advisor, for supervising this work and making sure I stayed on task. Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Howard Campbell, Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department and a member of my dissertation committee, who recommended I pursue doctoral studies way back when. I would also like to thank the remainder of my dissertation committee, including two of my instructors in the Department of Borderlands History at the University of Texas at El Paso, Dr. Bradley J. Cartwright and Dr. Yolanda Leyva, as well as two other external committee members, Dr. Max Grossman from the UTEP Department of Art and Dr. Davarian L. Baldwin from Trinity College, whom I met through an Organization of American Historians Travel Award in 2016 and who kindly agreed to serve on my committee.

I would also like to recognize my professors in my doctoral journey who helped shape my historical research interests; they include: Dr. Charles Ambler, Dr. Adam Arenson, Dr. Ernesto Chávez, Dr. Julia Schiavone-Camacho, the late Dr. Maceo Dailey, Dr. Keith Erekson, Dr. Yasuhide Kawashima, Dr. Cheryl Martin, Dr. Charles Martin, Dr. Jeffrey P. Shepherd, and Dr. Michael Topp. I would also like to thank professors whom I have worked under in the classroom or who have supervised my work while in the doctoral program: Dr. Ignacio Martínez, Dr. Manuel Ramírez, Professor Diana Martínez and Dr. Gary Kieffner. I would also like to thank Dr. Louis Woods from Middle Tennessee State University for sharing his insights on the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. His work regarding redlining was a crucial piece of my dissertation since it proved divestment in El Paso’s communities. Dr. Will Guzman from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University also shared
his information regarding NAACP members in El Paso in the 1920s and 1930s. He was also very generous with his knowledge of El Paso’s African American community including his research for his book on the late Dr. Lawrence Nixon, who coincidentally also conducted house calls in East El Paso and in the Lincoln Park community. Dr. Selfa A. Chew was also supportive of my work and offered great suggestions for getting through the program. I would also like to recognize my cohort in the Borderlands Program, most who have graduated: Dr. Susannah Aquilina, Dr. Dennis Aguirre, Dr. Michael K. Bess, Dr. Joanna Camacho, Dr. Aaron Margolis, Dr. Melani L. Martínez, Mario Matus, Dr. Lina Maria Murillo, Dr. David D. Romo, Dr. Roland Rodríguez, Jaime R. Ruíz, and Juan Sybert-Coronado.

Thanks also goes to my activist-scholar friends who make up Raza Organize and the Chicano History Project: Rosemary and Joseph “Clavo” Martínez, and attorney and friend Ray Eli Rojas whose article “Lincoln Center and La Roca” in Newspaper Tree initially piqued my interest in this topic and who has been a tireless supporter of my work. Ray was also instrumental in filing two important Freedom of Information requests against the City of El Paso to shed light on decisions regarding the planned demolition of Lincoln Center. Special mention goes to researcher and supportive friend Laurie Cooper.

I would also like to thank the members of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC), the Latin Pride Car Club and Hector Gonzales and Gabriel Gaytán, as well as Corinne Chacón and Hector Gutíerrez Jr. and community members Rosa Guerrero, former El Paso City Representatives Lily Limón and Eddie Holguín and hundreds more who supported our efforts against the demolition of Lincoln Center. LPCC is also deeply indebted to State Senator José Rodríguez and State House Representative Joe C. Pickett who have supported efforts against the demolition of Lincoln Center since 2011 and kept the possibility of re-opening Lincoln Center
alive. I would also like to thank the following narrators who allowed me to interview them for their remembrances of Lincoln School, Lincoln Park and highway building in El Paso: the late Manuel F. Aguilera, Joe Cardoza, Carlos Callejo, the late Tom Diamond, Joan Cunningham Estrada, Gabriel Gaytán, Hector Gonzales, Rosa Guerrero, Mateo and Lydia Hinojosa, Martha Hinojosa-Arriola, David Prieto, Dalia “Dolly” Prieto Rivero, Francisco Prieto, Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas, H. L. Scales, Mrs. Oralee Smith, Rebecca Valdez Sterling, Cynthia and Federico Villalba, Dan White and Henry Williams.

I received several travel awards from the UTEP Graduate School which supported presentations of portions of this research at conferences, provided funds for research and helped defray some of the costs for finishing my degree. A special thank you goes to Dr. Olivia García, formerly with the Graduate School, to Dr. Isela Ocegueda, formerly Assistant Dean of the Graduate School and Olympia Caudillo, M.Ed. Director of Enrollment. Also Mrs. Olga Rodríguez was extremely helpful with the paperwork for graduation-gracias! Paseño and colleague Dr. Hector Carbajal formerly from DePaul University in Chicago also reviewed an early draft and offered suggestions for revisions. Author Stephen T. Vessels also looked at several chapters and suggested revisions. At the 2016 OAH I attended an Activist Scholar Roundtable where I met Dr. Heather Ann Thompson from the University of Michigan. The highly-spirited discussion at the roundtable encouraged us to seek positions where we could have a voice and not go back into our activist and social justice closets. Just like the voices of the inmates at the Attica Prison in Thompson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning work, this dissertation is part of remembering those whose histories have been forgotten.

Credit also goes to Dr. Roberto “Beto” Calderon at the University of North Texas who reminded me I needed to finish my degree and whose work teaching and mentoring students
inspired me to do so. Dr. Baltazar A. Arispe y Acevedo Jr., former executive director of the Cross-Border Institute for Regional Development [CBIRD] and professor at the University of Texas at Brownsville, who helped me rethink some issues in my dissertation, deserves my thanks, as does fellow history graduate student Pamela De Angeles who always made time to stop by my office in the Liberal Arts Building and discuss my work.

Leslie Bergloff, former Site Manager at the Magoffin Historic home site, was supportive when we were exploring nomination of Lincoln Center for the Historic Registry. In addition, the other members of Senator Jose Rodríguez’s District 29th Heritage Tourism Advisory Committee, including Chairs Attorney Carmen Rodríguez and Gary Williams, provided on-going contextual discussions via our monthly meetings on the importance of documenting El Paso’s history that helped forge my topic. Prince McKenzie also acted as an invaluable resource on El Paso’s early railroads in El Paso, Texas. Unfortunately, much of the El Paso Railroad Association’s archival collection was in storage when I was writing this dissertation which makes it imperative for them to secure a good home for their important materials. A special thank you goes to the members of the El Paso Railroad and Transportation Museum.

Having worked as a librarian and archivist, thanking librarians and archivists goes without saying. Anne Cook from the TxDOT Photography Library in Austin spent time discussing internal publications with me and provided excellent aerial photographs of El Paso. She also made time to discuss the history of the Texas Highway Department, which became the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Archivist Tony Black at the Texas State Library suggested I look at Frank Halla’s dissertation and as well as other highway collections. Allan Fisher, Archivist at the LBJ Library, provided me with an orientation for the use of the Lyndon B. Johnson Papers and identified additional materials; and Margaret Harman and Jacqueline
Thornburg provided their time for me to review LBJ’s photographs of his El Paso visits in the Photography Archives. Finally, UTEP Special Collections staff Head Claudia Rivers and Assistant Head Abbie Weiser, along with Eva Ross, a volunteer who processed the El Paso Planning Collection, and of course Juan Sandoval III all deserve my thanks for their assistance in locating important primary documents.

I would also like to give a shout out to my librarian and academic friends and mentors who encouraged me along my path: Cesar Caballero, Dr. Selfa Chew, Luis Chaparro, Katherine Brennand, Rebecca Hankins, Dr. Roberto C. Delgadillo, Oralia Garza de Cortez, Dr. Dolores Gross, Juan Sandoval III and Dr. John Ellison. I would also like to thank my mentors who encouraged me to stay on the path, the late Marta Amaya Arat, the late Alberto Bonilla, historian Elias Bonilla, Michael Mills and the late Ruth S. Ortego.

My late parents, Miguel Vela and Guadalupe Maria Gallardo Juárez, both had elementary educations in Mexico. They would have been proud to see one of their children obtain a doctoral degree. My mother always told me my father dreamt of earning his doctoral degree—this achievement is for them.
ABSTRACT

Located in West Texas, El Paso is where two nations (the United States and Mexico) and three states (Texas, New Mexico and Chihuahua, Mexico) meet. This work studies the events, communities and personalities associated with the creation of El Paso’s freeways, but it also explores a multi-ethnic urban history from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. My research is not just about building freeways; it details how the lives of El Pasoans were reshaped as a result of highway building.

El Paso as a borderlands city became synonymous with expanding nation states which encroached on people’s lives and properties and displaced them in the name of modernity. The history of El Paso’s freeways is told utilizing the following threads of history: borderlands history of the Southwest and changes that occurred in the built environment; city planning and transportation at local, state and federal levels; federal programs such as the Highway Act of 1956, urban renewal, and Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty; and historical memory.

Central in this work is the Lincoln Park community in South Central El Paso which experienced a process of rapid urbanization in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. This study seeks to uncover how El Paso’s freeways were built, who decided where they should be placed, who paid for them and what communities were moved to build them. Also, what were these communities like before the creation of the freeways and what happened to those communities after the freeways were built?

This dissertation covers events from 1840 to 2018 and includes the activism by the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) in reclaiming the neighborhood and fighting against the demolition of Lincoln Center. In the 1990s, the Lincoln Park neighborhood also became a living museum due to the creation of numerous outdoor murals and annual activities.
that made it into a site of Chicano/a identity, culture and resistance. The effort to re-open Lincoln Center continues to this day.

Using archival sources and oral histories, this work seeks to recover the voices which have been silenced by the reconfiguration of space in a city whose citizens were not part of the decision-making process. It is also informed, influenced and inspired by local activism and participant observer research, and aims to become part of a larger conversation about the impact of displacement during a time of urban planning, mapping and reconstruction.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**DEDICATION** ............................................................................................................................... iii

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ................................................................................................................ iv

**ABSTRACT** .................................................................................................................................... ix

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** .................................................................................................................. xii

**LIST OF TABLES** ............................................................................................................................ xv

**LIST OF FIGURES** ........................................................................................................................... xvi

**INTRODUCTION**

- I-1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
- I-2 From Concordia to Lincoln Park ............................................................................................... 3
- I-3 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................. 8
- I-4 Primary Sources ....................................................................................................................... 10
- I-5 Literature Review .................................................................................................................... 12
- I-6 Chapter Summaries .................................................................................................................. 23

**CHAPTER 1: CONCORDIA IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

- 1.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 27
- 1.2 Concordia in the Mexican Period, 1821-1848 ..................................................................... 28
- 1.3 Concordia During the Civil War Era and Reconstruction ...................................................... 35
- 1.4 Arrival of the Railroads, 1881 ............................................................................................... 44
- 1.5 Railroads and Cattle ............................................................................................................... 49
- 1.6 Concordia Becomes Part of El Paso ....................................................................................... 51
- 1.7 Highway 80 (The Bankhead Freeway) .................................................................................... 53
CHAPTER 2: TWENTIETH-CENTURY LIVES IN LINCOLN PARK

2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 59
2.2 Lincoln Park: An Emerging Neighborhood ................................................................. 61
2.3 Lincoln Park School .................................................................................................... 62
2.4 El Calvario (Filial Church of Calvary) Catholic Church ............................................ 71
2.5 The Great Depression and Its Effect on the Housing Market .................................... 74
2.6 Redlining El Paso ........................................................................................................ 77
2.7 El Paso’s East Side ...................................................................................................... 86
2.8 Jim Crow and Urbanization ....................................................................................... 91
2.9 The Lincoln Park Neighborhood Before the Freeways ............................................ 92
2.10 Three Generations of Lincoln School Students ....................................................... 108
2.11 A Chicago Family in Lincoln Park Community ....................................................... 112
2.12 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 114

CHAPTER 3: LINCOLN PARK, THE INTERSTATE, AND HIGHWAY BUILDING

3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 116
3.2 Trans-border Perspectives on Highway Building ....................................................... 117
3.3 National Perspectives on Highway Building ............................................................. 118
3.4 State Issues on Highway Building ............................................................................ 124
3.5 Local Issues and Historical Agents on Highway Building ........................................ 125
3.6 Tom Diamond, Texas Highway Department Right-of-Way Engineer .................... 128
3.8 District Engineer Joe M. Battle, Builder of El Paso’s First Highways ..........133
3.9 Manuel F. Aguilera, The Spaghetti Bowl and US 54 .................................134
3.10 Representation During Highway Building .............................................140
3.11 The El Paso Highway Council ............................................................143
3.12 Charting the Path for Interstate 10 .......................................................146
3.13 The Costs of Building El Paso’s Highways ............................................149
3.14 Conclusion ............................................................................................153

CHAPTER 4: DEMOLITION, DISPLACEMENT, AND SUBURBANIZATION, 1954-1975

4.1 Introduction ............................................................................................154
4.2 Population Growth, Housing and Suburbanization ..................................156
4.3 Urban Renewal and Blight in El Paso .......................................................161
4.4 The Workable Program ..........................................................................168
4.5 LBJ’s War on Poverty and Project BRAVO ............................................170
4.6 Creating a Green Space: Lincoln Park ....................................................173
4.7 The Spaghetti Bowl and the Demolition of El Calvario Catholic Church .....176
4.8 Purchasing Property for El Paso’s Highways ..........................................183
4.9 Building US 54 (the North-South Freeway, the Patriot Freeway) ............186
4.10 The Chamizal Settlement and Its Freeway (The Border Highway) ..........188
4.11 Resistance to Relocation and Psychological Effects of Highway Building and Displacement ............................................................198
4.12 Lincoln Park School’s 75th Year Alumni Reunion ..................................202
4.13 Local Leaders in the Community ...........................................................204
4.14 Conclusion ................................................................. 205

CHAPTER 5: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: LINCOLN PARK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 207
5.2 The Closure of Lincoln Center and the Evolution of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) ................................................................. 208
5.3 LPCC’s Campaign to Save Lincoln Center from Demolition .............................. 214
5.4 Engaging Community: The “Do What’s Right” Rally .......................................... 220
5.5 The I-10 Connect Project .................................................................................... 224
5.6 Lincoln Center Stand-Off, City’s Historic Injunction and Occupy Lincoln Center ................................................................................................. 226
5.7 Artistic Murals of Identity and Symbols of Resistance ...................................... 231
5.8 Art of Protest and Community Mobilization ...................................................... 235

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION .................................................................................. 239

PRIMARY SOURCES ............................................................................................... 243
SECONDARY SOURCES ............................................................................................ 255
GLOSSARY .................................................................................................................. 275
VITA ............................................................................................................................. 276
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. African Americans by Year (1900 to 1970) in El Paso, Texas…………………..…61
Table 2.2. El Paso Teachers’ Salaries from 1927 to 1929…………………………………...….68
Table 4.1. State Highway Department property purchases between 1950
and 1970 by subdivision…………………………………………..…..184-85
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1. Map of Juan and Jacinto Azcárate Land Grant, El Rancho de Azcárate ...............28

Fig. 1.2. Concordia in lighter-shaded area, with Montana Street as the northern boundary, the Río Grande as the southern boundary, Stevens Avenue as the western boundary and Marr Street as the eastern boundary. Detail from Benson Map of El Paso, Texas, 1943 .........................29


Fig. 1.4. Map adapted from the map drawn in 1852 by the Joint Boundary Commission in Frank Louis Halla Jr., “El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico: A Study of Bi-Ethnic Community, 1846-1881,” PhD diss. The University of Texas at Austin, December 1978, 15-16 .......................33

Fig. 1.5. Camp Concordia (in lighter-shaded area south of the cemetery) consisted of present-day Stevens as the eastern boundary, Frutas Street as the southern boundary, Bowie Street as the western boundary and the southern edge of Concordia Cemetery as the northern boundary. Detail from Benson Map of El Paso, Texas, 1943 .........................................................37

Fig. 1.6. Illustration of the Concordia Post in 1868, based on an image titled “Fort Bliss, 1869,” from a painting by Col. A. J. Fountain, in Joseph H. Toulouse and James R. Toulouse. Pioneer Posts of Texas. San Antonio, TX: Naylor Company, 1936 .................................................................39


Fig. 1.8. Plat map of the Lincoln Park Addition. City of El Paso Planning Department, Open Records Request #W051920-022318, by the author, March 6, 2018 .........................................................52

Fig. 1.9. The Bankhead Freeway (Highway 80) ran through Alameda Street in 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas ...54

Fig. 2.1. 1940 Map of El Paso, Texas with Concordia Cemetery in the center ..................62

Fig. 2.2. Grandview School, later renamed Rusk School (top) and Lincoln Park School (bottom) were built at the same time and using the same building design and construction. Courtesy El Paso Public Library. Graphic by the author .................................................................64

Fig. 2.3. Various articles from the El Paso Herald-Post (Illustration created by the author, accessed various dates): available from Newspaper Archive .........................70
Fig. 2.4. *Templo Del Calvario* (Calvary Catholic Church) was located south of Lincoln School on the 4000 block of Durazno Street. *Insurance maps of El Paso, Texas* (Pelham: New York, Sanborn Map Company, 1956) ..............................................................71

Fig. 2.5. El Calvario (Calvary) Catholic Church opened on January 1, 1933. Images courtesy of Teresa Orozco..............................................................72

Fig. 2.6. Hand-carved Calvary from El Calvario (Calvary) Catholic Church, now housed at Guardian Angel Church, 3021 Frutas Street. Photograph by the author .......................73

Fig. 2.7. El Paso “Residential Security” map, Record Group 195: Records of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, 1933 - 1989, Box 154, Folder for El Paso, Texas. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland......................................................85

Fig. 2.8. Detail of 1943 Benson Map of El Paso, Texas. Alamogordo Street is located on the northern edge of Concordia Cemetery labeled as “Cemetery” in the center of the map. In addition, El Paso’s East side is denoted by the broken yellow line. Graphic by the author.....87

Fig. 2.9. Two unidentified Southern Pacific Railroad Sleeping Car Porters load food and beverages on a dining car in the 1940s. The El Paso Union Depot can be seen in the background. Photographer unknown. Photograph with permission of Roy Platner Collection ...........89

Fig. 2.10. Members of “The Charms.” Photographer unknown. Photograph with permission of Mrs. Oralee Smith, El Paso, Texas.................................................................93

Fig. 2.11. Photographer unknown. September 1964. Photograph of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s visit to El Paso with unidentified residents. Photograph with permission of El Paso Times .................................................................95

Fig. 2.12. Lincoln Park Community in 1953. Banes Aerial Photograph. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation Photograph Archives. Illustration created by the author........96

Fig. 2.13. Mauro Rosas (b. 1925) Rosas served as El Paso’s first Mexican American State Representative during the Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh Texas legislatures (1959-1962).....101

Fig. 2.14. Photographer unknown. Saxophonist Martin Fierro playing at the Alameda Festival, May 1967, Mexico, D.F. Photograph with permission of Teresa Orozco, Fierro’s sister......106

Fig. 2.15. Advertisement for Fats Domino & His “Goin’ Home” Orchestra at Rusty’s Playhouse, 3208 Alameda. *El Paso Herald-Post*, Wednesday, October 19, 1955, 22.................107

Fig. 2.16. Photographer unknown. The Prieto Family at Lincoln Park, Christmas, 1958. David is the youngest child on the left-hand side of his father, Francisco Prieto. His father attended Lincoln School up to the fifth grade. Photograph with permission of David Prieto..............110
Fig. 3.1. Photograph of Lower Valley farmland, 1953 by Banes Aerial Photography. Hosmer W. Hill referred to the sand hills (upper left-hand side) as the area he recommended where the Interstate-10 be built. The sand hills are actually part of the Continental shift which occurred to oceanic activity. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation…………………………126

Fig. 3.2. Banes Aerial photograph of the Lincoln Park community in 1953. Banes Aerial Photography. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation Photographic Archives………………129

Fig. 3.3. Photographer unknown. Texas Highway District 29 (El Paso) Office, 1969 standing in front of maquette of “Four-Level Highway Interchange” (termed the Spaghetti Bowl). Photograph with permission of Manuel F. Aguilera………………………………………137

Fig. 3.4. The Major Thorofare Plan (1962) used the 1925 Kessler Plan as a base map. It placed secondary arterials (in red) and major arterials (highways) (in blue) throughout the city, MS 204 El Paso Planning Department, Collection, Box #59, Folder 32, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso, 51. Courtesy of C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso……………………………148

Fig. 3.5. Photographer unknown. Aerial photograph Bassett Center, 1961. Photograph with permission of the El Paso Times…………………………………………………………………………150

Fig. 4.1. Lincoln Park, 4001 Durazno Street, El Paso, Texas. Photograph by the author………..174

Fig. 4.2. Photographer unknown. Demolition of El Calvario Catholic Church in 1970. Courtesy of El Paso Times…………………………………………………………………………179

Fig. 4.3. Photograph by Teresa Orozco. Church services being celebrated where El Calvario Catholic Church once stood, underneath freeway pillars, 1970. Photograph with permission of Teresa Orozco………………………………………………………………..182

Fig. 4.4. Plat Map of Cordova Island, Mexico. City of El Paso Planning Department, City of El Paso Planning Department, Open Records Request #W051920-022318, by the author, March 6, 2018. Courtesy of the City of El Paso………………………………………………………………………192

Fig. 4.5. Plat Map of Rio Linda Subdivision. Established in 1946. City of El Paso Planning Department, Open Records Request #W051920-022318, by the author, March 6, 2018. Courtesy of the City of El Paso………………………………………………………………..193

Fig. 4.6. “La Compra Del Derecho De Vía” (the purchase of right-of-way) was printed by the El Paso City Planning Department in conjunction with the Texas Highway Department, n.d………198

Fig. 5.1. Painting of “El Corazón de El Paso” mural for Lincoln Park Day, 2009. Photograph on the left by the author. Photograph on the right courtesy of Gabriel Gaytán……………………………………213
Fig. 5.2. “Do What’s Right Save Lincoln Center from Demolition,” Photographs and graphics by the author

Fig. 5.3. “Last Stand for Lincoln Center,” May 16, 2014. Photograph by the author

Fig. 5.4. “Last Stand at Lincoln Center,” Photograph with permission by Federico Villalba, whose family was displaced by the North-South Freeway

Fig. 5.5. The Alternative 8-2 plan proposed by TxDOT would have demolished Lincoln Center

Fig. 5.6. Images of community members protesting contractors who were brought in to demolish Lincoln Center. All photographs courtesy of Federico Villalba

Fig. 5.7. The author speaks before the Texas Department of Transportation meeting at the University of Texas at El Paso on October 30, 2014. Photograph with permission of Ana Reza, El Paso, Texas

Fig. 5.8. Ceremony in celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Cuauhtémoc Tlazocamati at Lincoln Center, El Paso, Texas, February 22, 2014. Photograph by the author

Fig. 5.9. Lincoln Park in El Paso mirrors of the Chicano Park in San Diego, Calif. Photograph by the author

Fig. 5.10. Lincoln Park Conservation Members Hector Gonzales (left) and Gabriel Gaytán (right) with Artist Carlos Callejo (Center) in 2014. Photograph with permission by the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee

Fig. 5.11. Murals that would have been removed as a result of the first TxDOT proposal for the I-10 Connect Project. Photographs and graphic by the author

Fig. 5.12. Posters created for the “Save Lincoln Center” campaign. With permission by Artist Zeke Peña

Fig. 5.13. “Save Lincoln Center” Panel in October 12, 2013, at Café Mayapan, 2000 Texas Street, El Paso, Texas. From left to right, Attorney Ray Rojas; Retired Attorney J.B. Ochoa (nephew of Cleofas Caheros); Corinne Chacón, then with Senator José Rodríguez’s office; Hector Gonzalez, Lincoln Park Conservation Committee; Dr. Mariana Chew; the author; and Guillermo Glenn, La Mujer Obrera. Photographer unknown
INTRODUCTION

Before the freeways came, my barrio was full of homes as far as you could see. El Calvario [Catholic Church] stood on that corner before they knocked it down. Little by little, the life of my barrio faded.

Teresa Orozco, former Lincoln Park Resident

In 1963, thirteen-year-old Elizabeth Gaxiola was a seventh-grader at Lincoln Park School.¹ She was the school’s spelling bee champion. Her favorite subjects were English and math, and she hoped to become a teacher. However, five years later, with the arrival of Interstate 10, the Gaxiola home and their street, Stephenson Street, were demolished and they were forced to move.

Lorena Martínez, a former teacher and administrator, said the Chamizal Settlement and Freeway devastated her family. Not only were properties close to the Lincoln Park neighborhood affected but also areas near downtown El Paso and Segundo Barrio. Her grandfather “Tata” Juan Aguilar lost his frutería/verduría (fruit and vegetable stand) which was located on Stanton Street. Because Aguilar was a renter, relocation services paid him only for the loss of his merchandise and gave him less than a month to close his store. He did not open another one. Lorena also said her Aunt Maria lost her house nearby. Her uncle and aunt moved to Ciudad Juárez out of disgust over their experiences. They did not feel comfortable living in a country which could displace them at a moment’s notice. Juan Aguilar’s displacement worsened his family’s living situation.

Lorena writes:

It literally changed the destiny of my mother’s familia. The location I remember was a little cuartito (a small room) that my Abuelito (grandfather) rented out. It never made money according to my Tíos. They had friends who they followed to

begin working in the fields in Sacramento, then the canneries, and finally in construction.²

Highway construction and relocation changed and often eliminated micro-economies like Aguilar’s fruit and vegetable stand, as well as other businesses in El Paso’s close-knit communities. Kinships and familiarity among residents were altered and sometimes destroyed by the building of El Paso’s freeways.

This dissertation was first born by the need to research the history of Lincoln Park School, the original occupant of a 100-year-old building in South Central El Paso that was threatened with demolition in 2011. After studying the history of the building and the community, it became evident to me just how much El Paso was reshaped, erased and displaced as a result of highway building. Interstate 10, which was completed in 1968, sliced the city in half, from one end to the other.³ This dissertation details how the creation of I-10 and subsequently El Paso’s other freeways created surgical-like scars on the land and on its people. The process of building El Paso’s freeways came at a time when communities could not protest their creation as they do so today. Urbanization efforts came at a grand loss for all communities affected by highway building in El Paso.

Although many neighborhoods in El Paso suffered the consequences of freeway building, Lincoln Park was unusual. All of El Paso’s first freeways converge at Lincoln Park, including Interstate 10, Highway 110, US 54 and the Chamizal freeway. Interstate 10 entered El Paso at a diagonal, following the Rio Grande, and then through the heart of the Lincoln Park community and East El Paso, displacing homeowners and splitting the historic community in half from north to south. Soon afterwards, the construction of US 54 split Lincoln Park from west to east.

² Author’s Facebook chat with Lorena Martínez, August 26, 2016.
Highway infrastructure thus divided the historic core of the community into four parts. In the final blow, in 1970 its community church El Calvario (Calvary Catholic Church), located across the street from Lincoln Park School, was demolished to make way for Highway 110, which connected US 54 to the Bridge of the Americas Port of Entry. The area’s interdependence with Mexico initially created Concordia which later became the Lincoln Park community, it also destroyed it with the state’s need to connect the highways which were built over the community such as the Spaghetti Bowl and Highway 110 which connected to the Bridge of the Americas (BOTA) leading to Mexico.

The research questions which guided this study include: (1) who built El Paso’s freeways; (2) who decided where to build them; (3) who paid for them; (4) what communities were displaced by them; (5) what were these communities like before the creation of the freeways; (6) what happened to those communities after the freeways were built; (7) where did the people go; (8) and how did people on the ground see themselves in the story of highway building?

**From Concordia to the Lincoln Park Community**

The Lincoln Park community was one of the first mixed African American and Mexican American areas in Texas and in the Southwest.\(^4\) It began as a place named Concordia or

---

Stephenson’s Concordia Ranch in the 1840s, just north of the Río Grande. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, following the U.S.-Mexican War, it became part of the expanding United States. After the discovery of gold in California and continuing through the Civil War, Concordia became a respite for travelers and hosted a mercantile store for wagon trains heading West. In 1868, part of Concordia was leased to the U.S. Army and became Camp Concordia or the third Fort Bliss. Garrisons of Buffalo Soldiers were stationed there. After the arrival of the railroads in El Paso in 1881, the community provided a home for both African American and Mexican workers and their families. The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, brought an influx of people. A nineteenth-century outpost had evolved into a twentieth-century cluster of subdivisions (East El Paso, and the French, Lincoln Park and Government Hill additions) whose historical and cultural significance have been overlooked. This tightknit multicultural community, like similar communities in El Paso, was deeply affected by the Great Depression. The largely ethnic neighborhoods faced deportation and redlining. As people abandoned their lives in the United States and repatriated to Mexico, their properties were devaluated. Nevertheless, residents found ways to survive and take care of their families.

The Interstate Highway System was a network of freeways which were built from coast-to-coast as mandated by the Highway Act of 1956. A chain of other legislative events such as the Fair Housing Act in 1949, the Urban Act of 1949, Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty in 1964, and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968, as well as the efforts of cities towards slum clearance, created the legal framework to build highways. The Highway Act of 1956 allocated

---

5 Richard F. Weingroff, “Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System,” in *Public Roads*, Summer 1996, Vol. 60, No. 1, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 1. Weingroff writes in his essay titled “A Vast System of Interconnected Highways: Before the Interstates,” “In a presidential election year of 1956, a Congress controlled by Democrats combined with a Republican President to give the country a national highway network which President Dwight D. Eisenhower later spoke of as one of the greatest accomplishments of his 8 years in office... it is now named in his honor: The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.”
funds to the states to purchase properties and required states to create an Interstate freeway system within 15 years or by 1972 as mandated by Congress or they would lose the funding to build them.6 Housing programs such as the Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act in 1968 helped to provide a mechanism for homeowners to move to other neighborhoods.7

During the 1960s minorities were particularly impacted by highway routes throughout the United States. The late urban historian Dr. Raymond A. Mohl described the destruction that communities endured due to highway building in the postwar period:

American cities experienced dramatic changes in the decades after the Second World War. These changes include the massive de-concentration of the central city population, the shift of economic activities to the suburban periphery, the deindustrialization or redistribution of modern manufacturing and racial turnover of the population that left many of the largest American cities with a majority black population well before the end of the twentieth century. Various government policies contributed to these large-scale changes, such as tax and mortgage policies, public housing programs, and urban redevelopment schemes. Closely connected to these great urban transformations was the construction after 1956 of the national interstate highway system, a 42,500-mile network of high-speed, limited-access highways that linked cities across the country.8

Mohl describes how the Interstate system systematically wreaked havoc on minority communities throughout the United States.

By 1968, Interstate 10 and Highway 54 ran through the heart of Lincoln Park, changing its fabric as well as the character of other El Paso neighborhoods. These freeways, together with Highway 110, the Chamizal Freeway, and the Chamizal Settlement (1963-1964), displaced

---


7 Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act in 1968 prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

thousands of people in El Paso. All these freeways converge at present-day Lincoln Park. The creation of a large reservoir north of Interstate 10 tore down several additional blocks of homes.

Some residents in El Paso accepted the changes created by the building of freeways because, it can be argued, as a part of the “greatest generation” that fought in World War II, they believed it would have been un-American to do otherwise. Others felt they had no choice but to sell their homes. Not everyone felt they were justly compensated for their property’s true value. Not everyone was in favor of relocating, but during this period the law was against them and individuals had to take the offers they were given or face condemnation of their properties. Homes were acquired whether homeowners were willing to sell or not.

This is the first study to analyze how El Paso’s freeways were created, who benefitted from their creation and which communities were displaced. This study required the analysis of space in a specific urban social geography rooted in the historical and legal borderlands. It describes how technology, politics and economics facilitated the creation of El Paso’s freeways and transformed an important part of what is today Central El Paso. Several arguments guide the work. My first argument is that highway building in El Paso, which erased multi-ethnic

---


communities on a large scale, has not been researched extensively until now. My intervention in the scholarship uses sources which have not been utilized before to interpret the history of a community on the U.S./Mexico border. This study creates unique opportunities to examine trans-border urban issues in technology, transportation, economics and politics. El Paso’s unique trans-border location created Concordia, as well as the Chamizal.

My second argument is that the Great Depression, deportation and repatriation contributed to the housing and rental crisis in El Paso, which gave birth to redlining. The same thing happened in other cities: affected communities were divested of their properties and their equities in one generation. In the Lincoln Park community and other El Paso neighborhoods with African American and Mexican residents living alongside each other, properties were redlined by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) using the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) *Underwriting Manual* as early as 1933 and as late as the 1960s. Because these properties were devalued, they were inexpensive to purchase, which made it easy to run highways through them.

Finally, I argue that Lincoln Center and the Lincoln Park community, which was the site of the third Fort Bliss, has been overlooked as a historical site. It was not until 2014, because of pressure from the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee, that Lincoln Center was taken into consideration as a cultural heritage site. In 2018, it is being considered for historical designation by the National Registry of Historic Places.
Theoretical Framework

My interest in researching highway building grew out of my work as a member of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC), a grass-roots organization that worked to counter the demolition of Lincoln Center (formerly Lincoln Park School) beginning in 2009. Lincoln Park School was created in 1916, not long after the neighborhood had been incorporated into the City of El Paso. With the coming of the highways, the school closed in 1969. The City of El Paso reopened it in 1977 as the Lincoln Park Cultural Arts Center, which first provided offices for cultural and social agencies and subsequently for the Parks and Recreation Department. After historic floods in 2006, the City vacated the building and returned it to the Texas Department of Transportation, which has kept it closed ever since. In spite of the closure of Lincoln Center and the City’s failure to recognize the structure’s historical significance, the building and surrounding park currently act as a heritage site, much like Chicano Park in San Diego, due to its large concentration of murals and annual cultural activities. The building itself has historically acted as an anchor to the lives of the people who built the school and attended it, as a staging center for highway construction, and as a site of memory and resistance.

In this work, I utilize Edward Said’s theoretical idea that “the role of the intellectual [is] to speak truth to power.” This dissertation also employs the interdisciplinary concept of “neighborhood space.” Randolph T. Hestor defines neighborhood space as “that territory close to home, including houses, churches, businesses, and parks, which, because of residents’

---

12 Randolph Hester, “Neighborhood Space” from Neighborhood Space (1975),” in Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald, The Urban Design Reader (USA: Routledge, 2007), 379. Neighborhood space played an important role in all aspects of a community’s existence and identification and how people self-identify. In El Paso, Texas, one of the first questions people ask each other is “What high school did you attend?” This question becomes the anchor concerning where people are from and how they define their neighborhood spaces.
collective responsibility, familiar association, and frequent shared use, is considered to be their ‘own’.” The exploration of the sociological aspects of race and the built environment in a borderlands context also inform this study. This research incorporates urban environmental history informed by borderlands literature with a focus on African American and Latino neighborhoods; as well as historical memory of an African American and Mexican American past; and art and social protest as a form of community engagement and mobilization.

Important aspects of this work are rooted in the theories of Henri Lefebvre and those created by his students such as the late geographer Edward Soja. Soja’s concept of “Third Space” uses new ways to think of space and social spatiality. He asks us to think of space based on how activities have formed it.14 Soja suggested we look at space both historically and through a sociological lens. In his book *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), he encourages us to “think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography.”15 Borderlands include all these aspects of space. Another scholar influenced by Lefebvre is Dolores Hayden who wrote *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (1995). Like Soja, Hayden defines space as an act of public places responding to the forces which changed them.16 Her book discusses the importance of cultural memory in the creation of the urban landscape.

---

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 1.
The present work benefits from interviews with both Black and Latino/a former residents of the French and Lincoln Park communities, engineers and planners involved in highway building, former tenants of Lincoln Center, and artists who aided in the reconstruction of the vibrant life of the community. This research discusses how Concordia, which later became the Lincoln Park community, evolved from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. It also details the efforts of grassroots organizations like the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee’s work in reclaiming cultural spaces after decades of neglect.

This study places El Paso in step with national narratives on highway building but does so within a trans-border, multi-racial context. It contributes to borderlands scholarship by examining the Concordia-Lincoln Park community. I use this community as a case study to describe the transformation of the villages which found themselves north of the Rio Grande after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1840, Concordia was located three miles from present day Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, Texas.

Primary Sources

The primary research for this study is based largely on local, state and federal archives, oral histories, photographs and newspaper articles. Archival sources include deed records, governmental documents, maps, photographs, plat maps, and school lyrics. These sources include materials from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso (including the City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, Collection MS 204, the Jonathan R. Cunningham Papers, Collection MS 287, the Upward Bound and Project Bravo Papers, Collection MS 001, and other smaller collections such as the El Paso Documents Collection, Acc. #880); the Texas State Archives, Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and
Building Library; the Texas Department of Transportation Photography Library; and the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Additional materials include the City Survey file and Residential Security map for El Paso, Texas from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) at the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. Additional archival materials are housed in privately held collections. They include the Teresa Orozco Papers; the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) Papers; the Ray E. Rojas Papers and selected manuscript materials (letters and correspondence) from the offices of Senator José Rodríguez, Texas Senate District 29, and the Texas House District 79 Member Joe C. Pickett.

Five Open Records requests were filed through the Freedom of Information.

Selected deed records from the El Paso County Records were used to compile numbers of homes displaced due to the highway building. Other primary sources include e-mail messages concerning Lincoln Center obtained through two Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests, internet sources, two documentary videos, and some social media communications. Newspapers featured important accounts of highway building in El Paso. They provided evidentiary details

---

17 Collections viewed: Texas State Archives, Texas Dept. of Transportation, “Texas Highway Department Historical Records,” approximately 1911-1993, Box 2002, Texas State Archives, Texas Highway Department. Highway Department Records, 1962-1975, Highway Commission minutes, 1963-1975; materials from the Texas Department of Transportation Photography Library; and manuscript materials in the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library: FG 170, Materials at the LBJ Library Pertaining to the Cities and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, WHCF Confidential File, Boxes 39, 40, 41, 182, 196, Office Files of White House Aides: Joe Califano, Boxes 80-83, 101, James Gaither, Boxes 14, 385, Matthew Nitmez, Box 14, Task Force Reports, Boxes 2, 3, 5, 7-9, TN Materials in the Johnson Library Pertaining to Transportation, Office Files of White House Aides, Cecil Bellinger, Box 30, Horace Busby Jr., Boxes 26, 44, Joseph A. Califano Jr., Box 75, James Gaither, Box 89, Charles Horsky, Box 134, Bill Moyers, Box 7, Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson. 3/2/66 Message on Transportation, Box 178, WE 9 LE/We 9, Materials at the LBJ Library Pertaining to the War on Poverty, Office Files of the White House Aides, Fred Panzer, Boxes 379, 394.

18 US National Archives, RG 195, A1 Entry 39, City Survey File, El Paso, TX.

19 Ray Rojas filed one in 2011 to the City of El Paso for any e-mails on Lincoln Center; he filed another one in late 2011 for “Any results of asbestos investigation or analysis performed after October 1, 2006 at the Lincoln Cultural Center located at 4001 Durazno that are not in the Sun City Analytical Inc.’s October 2006 Microbial Investigation”; I filed one to Brenda Porras, of the United States International Boundary and Water Commission (Agency) in 2016 for any information regarding the Chamizal; I filed a separate request to the El Paso Independent School District in 2017 for any documents on Lincoln School; and in 2018, I filed another request to the City of El Paso Planning Department for plat maps.
which expand on archival materials. Aside from the fact that newspapers are biased, newspapers provide details of actions, events and community discourse which impacted the Lincoln Park community and how other neighborhoods were affected by highway building. Newspapers used in this research include the *El Paso Times*, *Diario de El Paso*, *The El Paso Herald-Post*, *El Paso Inc.*, *El Fronterizo*, *El Continental*, *El Paso News*, *Frontera Norte Sur*, *Newspaper Tree*, *The Rio Grande Digital* and *The Desert Mountain Times*.

**Literature Review**

Few studies have focused on the multicultural urban history of the built environment of El Paso, Texas in a borderlands context so it then becomes an exercise of reading into the narratives to see how people’s spaces were impacted and explore the silences or what is not being said. This dissertation attempts to provide a history of how El Paso’s urban landscape was reshaped by technology, transportation, economics and politics. It uses a community known as Concordia as a case study, set against the historical development of El Paso. I draw upon several literatures for this study, including urban history, borderlands history, El Paso history, the history of the U.S. West, legal history, and transportation history.

Few historians have examined the Mexican American and Chicana/o experience in the context of urban history in the southwest and fewer have focused on El Paso. One recent exception is *Latino City: Urban Planning, Politics, and the Grassroots*, which provides a forty-year case study of Santa Ana, California, which is a majority Mexican community. Although it

---


does not treat Mexican Americans, another important study is *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000*, which details the experiences of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in New England’s first Latino-majority city.\(^{22}\)

In this study, I utilize David R. Díaz’s book, *Barrio Urbanism, Chicanos, Planning and American Cities*, as a foundational study to explore similar issues regarding Mexican American and Chicana/o space specifically in El Paso and in the Lincoln Park community. Díaz’s work presents the conceptual idea of Mexican American barrios as a basis for spatial foundations in Chicana/o urbanism in the southwest. Examples of Chicana/o urbanism include social activities such as “walking, communal relationships, sharing, active use of public space, taking time to talk, celebration of children, opening the home for food, play and socialization.”\(^{23}\) These activities occurred in the past in the Lincoln Park community and in present-day during events at Lincoln Park. Events presented by the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee at Lincoln Park embody a form a community building in a community which has changed. These foundations are found in other Chicana/o cities. Díaz presents a salient discussion of urban issues relating to barrios and spaces where Mexican Americans lived, worked and played, and how these spaces evolved over time.\(^{24}\)

My research also bears similarities to historian Lydia Otero’s book *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and the Urban Renewal in a Southwest City*.\(^{25}\) In *La Calle*, Otero writes about the destruction of Tucson’s Mexican *barrio* with the development in 1966 of the Pueblo Center

---


\(^{24}\) Ibid.

Redevelopment Project, the state’s first major urban renewal project which saw the destruction of 80 acres in Tucson’s densely populated area.\textsuperscript{26} In Tucson, in the nineteenth century, Mexicans outnumbered Anglos until 1920 when Anglos became the majority.\textsuperscript{27} The arrival of Anglos signaled a shift in power in all aspects of Tucson life, from business to politics to space.\textsuperscript{28} Technology’s role in reshaping Mexican space became evident with the arrival of the railroad. Otero states railroads undermined and disrupted economic patterns. They caused an economic shift that benefitted Anglos.\textsuperscript{29} A similar history occurred in El Paso. Tucson’s largely Mexican American downtown communities experienced displacement due to changes in planning and zoning ordinances beginning in 1938.\textsuperscript{30} The city’s urban renewal efforts were spurred on by federal legislation which provided funds for cities to engage in urban renewal, largely at the expense of African American and Mexican American communities.\textsuperscript{31}

In Tucson, heritage fantasies, first the Spanish heritage fantasy and later the Anglo history, were used by local boosters to substantiate the need to alter the built environment. The Tucson Chamber of Commerce used heritage to promote tourism and investment in the city, just as the El Paso Chamber of Commerce positioned culture in El Paso to the detriment of the city’s Mexican and Mexican American past. Part of deciphering the exclusion of historical pasts is reading into the silences and using the sources to identify what is not being talked about. In the \textit{El Paso Today Magazine}, the official publication of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce which reported on the creation of El Paso’s freeways, very few Mexican American surnames were included.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 2
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{30} Otero, 5.
\textsuperscript{31} The Federal Housing Act of 1949, the Federal Urban Renewal Act of 1954 and the creation of the federal Urban Renewal Office in 1954 all facilitated the creation of both state and city urban renewal efforts.
Likewise, the Spanish fantasy heritage is the idea of individuals enamoring themselves with European expansion most notably Spanish culture, as opposed to the reality where the borderlands are shaped by brutality and violence. Anglo fantasy tropes focused on issues of Manifest Destiny and perpetuated Old West mythologies. These tropes led to the erasure of the cities’ Mexican pasts. In time, Otero writes, “the Anglo fantasy heritage would morph into ‘truth’ narratives following the master narrative and history would be manipulated for financial gain.” These messages promoted narratives of the Wild West and supported settlers’ ideas that they had conquered a “barren land.” Reginald Horsman in his book *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* writes that Anglo settlers also perpetuated the idea that they were superior to Mexicans and that this idea helped transform the nation-state into an ethnic-based construct. The proliferation of the white narrative cemented the conquest of...
Like Otero, Eric Avila adds the layer of race fighting back into his work, *The Folklore of the Freeway, Race and Revolt in the Modernist City*. He discusses various issues affected by the creation of freeways, but he “aims to listen to the voices and see the perspectives of people who experienced highway construction firsthand, whose communities were ripped up, gutted, ensnared, isolated and altogether erased.” In contrast to the Mexican Americans in *La Calle*, who scaled back on their demands against the city’s efforts at urban renewal, communities in Avila’s book demonstrate a greater sense of personal agency to counter powers working against them. Avila also introduces his concept of the “folklore of the freeway” which he explains was “an unexpected consequence of the racial biases built into highway policy and practice during the Interstate years.” In his earlier book, Avila explored the suburbanization of Anglo culture and consciousness during the postwar period, and the “role popular culture played in the formulation of a suburban white identity and how identity was created, consumed, and contested by various social groups.” In his chapter focusing on urban sites of resistance, he profiles Chicano Park in San Diego and the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee in El Paso, Texas.

Both Otero and Avila agree that cultural and historical areas which were important to minorities were utilized by Anglos to dominate the landscape and that freeways provided a welcome mechanism to do it. Both authors agree that the creation of freeways “followed the

---

35 Horsman, 47.
37 Ibid., 4.
38 Ibid., 15.
spatial coordinates of power, money, and ideology,” and that the removal of historic areas was not by accident or happenstance but was part of a plan, either articulated or not.\textsuperscript{41}

This dissertation devotes considerable attention to race and the built environment. Several scholars have studied issues of class and race in the transformation and destruction of neighborhoods by highway building and urbanization. Labor in El Paso, Texas embodied a form of racialized space according to class structures, labor and ethnicity. Chinese men worked in restaurants and laundries and lived in El Paso’s First Ward in the 1800s. Thousands of Mexicans lived alongside a sizeable Black population who worked for the railroads. Historian Julian Lim writes “For black, Chinese, and Mexican men and women, the El Paso-Juárez border held a similar attraction of time, offering multiple peripheries that exposed the limitations of segregation laws, exclusion policies, and capitalistic desires for a captive workforce.”\textsuperscript{42}

African-Americans were also employed in numerous service occupations. Historian Will Guzman writes: “Not only did African Americans find work as barbers, laundresses, maids, janitors, school teachers, and mail carriers, but, as the town grew into an important transportation center, many Black families arrived as railroad employees.”\textsuperscript{43} African-Americans lived in both Segundo Barrio and El Paso’s Old East side, including the Lincoln Park community.

For highways to be built there needed to be the ingredients to create them. An important component of highway building was “urban renewal” which worked hand in hand with issues of blight, housing, redlining and shifts in populations.\textsuperscript{44} Not all communities took it upon

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{43} Will Guzmán, \textit{Civil Rights in the Texas Borderlands, Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and Black Activism} (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 33.
\textsuperscript{44} Important urban renewal titles which discuss urban renewal efforts, as well as efforts unique to Texas include: \textit{Urban Renewal for Texas} (Institute of Public Affairs, Austin: University of Texas, 1957); Martin Anderson, \textit{The Federal Bulldozer, A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1964);
themselves to counter freeway building, although there are numerous books which document citizens’ mobilization against sprawl and mobilization in their communities.45

Several dissertations and theses inform issues in this research.46 One is Gladys Hodges’ dissertation titled “El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, 1880-1930: A Material Culture...”


Study of Borderlands Interdependency.” In her work, Hodges explores the urban history of the city and urban projects in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, but not the creation of freeways.47 Several other dissertations important to this research include Nancy Gonzalez’s “Reinventing the Old West: Concordia Cemetery and the Power Over Space, 1800-1895,” Frank Halla’s “El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico: A Study of Bi-Ethnic Community, 1846-1881,” and “Sword and Plowshare: The Symbiotic Development of Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas, 1849-1918,” by Garna Loy Christian.48

Gonzalez’s work explores the formation of the communities next to Concordia Cemetery, including what later became the Lincoln Park community.49 Halla’s narrative about nineteenth-century El Paso is at the same time descriptive, poetic and illustrative of the emerging landscape of the northern Spanish frontier. He writes that El Paso was characteristic of other towns which “were specialized urban agglomerations which had little in common” and represented the emergence of urbanization.50 His work parallel’s Gonzalez’ dissertation, but she explores land acquisition and in many cases land plundering and how El Paso’s “founding fathers” exploited their racial dominance via inter-marriage and legal means against Mexican landowners in the nineteenth-century. Christian’s study details the development of El Paso as a frontier town, the origins of Ft. Bliss, Camp Concordia and the Buffalo soldiers who were garrisoned there.

Footnotes:

Another important dissertation is Ronald William Lopéz’s “The Battle for Chávez Ravine: Public Policy and Chicano Community Resistance in Postwar Los Angeles, 1945-1962.” Lopéz’s dissertation doesn’t concern itself with the El Paso region, but with the battle for Chávez Ravine in Los Angeles which is synonymous with displacement. Chávez Ravine was a power move by the city of Los Angeles which became a story of epic proportions which affected hundreds of Mexican American families, although the story is not well-known. The Chávez Ravine story resembles that of the Lincoln Park and French communities and the larger relocation of residents in the Chamizal Dispute and Settlement in 1963-64. Chávez Ravine fuses race-relations, immigration, urbanization, power politics and the spread of major league baseball, and shows the power of a city to segregate, seize land, and displace residents to make way for Dodger Stadium.


then the City of Los Angeles switched it, re-purposed its use, and then sold the land to the privately-owned Los Angeles Dodgers baseball club.\textsuperscript{55}

In cities like El Paso, Texas, from 1950 to 1960 African Americans and Mexican Americans experienced discrimination and segregation via racial covenants and redlining.\textsuperscript{56} At the same time, residents of those communities lacked the effective political power to mobilize and fight against the destruction of their communities.\textsuperscript{57} It was also an era when cities engaged in slum busting in minority communities, often towards furthering the goals of urban renewal tied to governmental funding.\textsuperscript{58} As Lópéz writes: “The racially motivated use of eminent domain to

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 21.


demolish poor and minority neighborhoods for ‘urban renewal’ – also called ‘Negro removal’ or ‘Chicano removal’ – was widespread in the late 1950s and 1960s.”

Exerting power over people’s lives often removes their voices and makes them into victims, yet Lopéz’s work does quite the opposite. He gives agency to the Ravine community members who were active participants in their history and who resisted their community’s destruction as they stood up to the forces which tried to evict them.

Another important dissertation is Maria Eugenia Trillo’s work titled, “The Code-switching Patterns of Rio Linda Community of El Chamizal in El Paso, Texas: An Emic Perspective of Syntactic Constraints.” The study includes an ethnographic section on the relocation of Rio Linda Residents due to the settlement of the Chamizal Treaty in 1963. Through autobiographical ethnography, Trillo describes the urban space of the Chamizal and the Río Linda neighborhood. The area was viewed as a middle-class neighborhood because it had a lower population density than neighboring Segundo Barrio and its homes were made of brick and owned by the residents, as opposed to being rental properties. The neighborhood was returned to Mexico as part of the land swap as a result of the Chamizal Settlement in 1964.

60 Ibid., 30.
62 Ibid., 23.
Challenging the notion that residents relocated willingly and that former residents continued support of their neighborhoods, I use the works of Robert D. Bullard and Glenn S. Johnson, *Just Transportation, Dismantling Race & Class Barriers to Mobility* and *Highway Robbery, Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity*. In *Just Transportation*, Bullard and Johnson argue transportation is a civil right because it plays a role “in shaping human interaction and human settlement patterns” and “highways freeways and mass transit systems do not spring out of thin air; they are planned.” Where freeways are placed then becomes a form of institutional racism. Their studies are an effort to question and talk back against “progress” and address a myriad of issues which are still problematic today.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 1: Concordia in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries is a work of historical recovery. This chapter contextualizes the Lincoln Park community by discussing its roots in Concordia, a ranch established by Hugh Stephenson and Juana Maria Azcárate de Stephenson in 1840. Following the arrival of the railroads in El Paso in 1881, Concordia’s agrarian economy continued to grow as the railroads fueled growth in cattle. I discuss the community’s proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border and how it was affected by militarization and stockyard economies in a period when cattle, cotton and copper were king. Concordia emerged as a suburb of El Paso on the edge of the city limits at the turn of the century.

---

64 Bullard and Johnson, *Just Transportation, Dismantling Race and Class Barriers to Mobility*, xiii.
65 Ibid., 1.
Chapter 2: Twentieth-Century Lives in Lincoln Park explores the lives of Mexican Americans and African Americans and their community networks. It also describes the creation of El Calvario Church, which became a nucleus of the community. This section also presents Lincoln School as a site of Americanization for the neighborhood’s Mexican students. Lincoln Park was an emerging neighborhood in El Paso’s East side located at the end of the city limits. The Great Depression in the 1930s created anti-Mexican sentiments throughout El Paso and spurred a decline of home ownership as thousands of Mexicans were deported or left the United States on their own. Redlining stigmatized these neighborhoods and they would not recover (if at all) until the 1970s.

Chapter 3: Lincoln Park, The Interstate, and Highway Building presents historical actors at the federal, state and local levels who shaped El Paso’s urban landscape via the creation of the city’s highways. The Highway Act of 1956 became the financial conduit to build the nation’s freeways, but decisions were largely in the hands of Chamber of Commerce members, developers and business boosters. Highway building also coincided with suburbanization during the Cold War, as communities decentralized due to nuclear attack scares. City planning departments worked hand in hand with state and federal agencies as highway building became a mandate. Citizens by and large did not have a voice in deciding where freeways would be built, although when possible they challenged the appraisals of their properties. Even large acreage owners in El Paso’s Upper and Lower Valleys were treated the same as individual homeowners: their properties were purchased at low-market values.

Chapter 4: Demolition, Displacement and Suburbanization, 1954-1975 details the costs of building El Paso’s freeways and land acquisition, appraisals, planning, zoning and ownership patterns. A section of the chapter discusses federal urban renewal efforts via the Workable
Program and how LBJ’s War on Poverty translated to local programs such as Project BRAVO, which took into account the economic issues surrounding the displacement of communities by the Chamizal Settlement. This chapter explores specific legislation which occurred at federal and state levels to channel millions of dollars to El Paso in order to build the highways. It also explores the public discourse of the creation of Interstate 10, as well as other freeways such as the North-South Freeway or Highway 54, Highway 110, and the Chamizal Freeway and how they affected their neighborhoods. In addition, the chapter presents the voices of those who have been displaced and what community memories of French/Lincoln Park remain. A common thread is the disruption of family lives, their displacement and the loss of family equity and histories connected to the communities which were the focal points of their lives.

Chapter 5: Speaking Truth to Power, Lincoln Park in the Twenty-First Century details recent events in the effort to keep Lincoln Center from being demolished. It presents the creation and evolution of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) and their activities working with stakeholders and politicians in their efforts to save a 100-year-old building from demolition. It presents actions LPCC took to initiate participation from community members and local politicians to aid in saving an important heritage site and its murals. It also details the I-10 Connect Project which seeks to connect Interstate 10 to Loop 375 and ultimately to the Americas Port of Entry, yet at the expense of communities throughout its route.

The Conclusion discusses the contributions the dissertation makes to the topic of highway building in a largely multi-racial community with a trans-border focus. It also details the development of the Lincoln Park community as a space defined by the people who have lived in the area and continue to claim Lincoln Center and Lincoln Park as a historic heritage site. Overall, this story presents a history of a community in the Southwestern borderlands.
CHAPTER 1: CONCORDIA IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURIES

This chapter investigates the urban history of Concordia in the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. The neighborhood that we know today as Lincoln Park, located in central El Paso three miles northeast of downtown, began as the village of Concordia and already had a long history when the highways arrived in the 1960s. While still part of Mexico, Concordia was a ranch and trading post, but it became urbanized in the second half of the nineteenth century in response to commercial needs and militarization. Concordia evolved in tandem with a military camp located within its boundaries, at the U.S./Mexican border. In 1864, when the Río Grande changed its course, a peninsula of Mexico developed inside the United States and in close proximity to Camp Concordia and the Stephenson Trading Post.¹

The creation of Concordia was a step towards urbanization based on kinship: Hugh Stephenson acquired the land by marrying Juana Ascárate. It first developed as a self-sufficient community in a rural/urban setting. As more people populated Concordia, and especially after the arrival of the railroads in 1881, it entered into an urban rivalry with El Paso. Later, in the early-twentieth century, the Concordia heirs sold parcels of land in order to create housing additions and the early suburbs of El Paso.

This research explores the multi-faceted history and transformation of Concordia. Prior to 1870, Concordia’s pioneers defined its space; after 1870, national politics changed its use; and after the 1880s, transportation transformed its economy. This research investigates how changes in the use of space affected the community and how new modes of transportation altered the built environment.¹

environment and the communal experience. This work also explores how the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy impacted the community and analyzes who prospered from it.

Concordia in the Mexican Period, 1821-1848

In 1840, Juana Azcárate de Stephenson and Hugh Stephenson acquired 900 acres of the Azcárate Land Grant; initially known as the settlement of Stephenson, the land was subsequently named Concordia Ranch and was situated on the north bank of the Río Grande, within Mexico (see Fig. 1.1). This settlement was one of the first of several communities to develop north of the Río Grande in West Texas; it would become the future neighborhoods of Lincoln Park and the French Addition.3

Fig. 1.1. Map of Juan and Jacinto Azcárate Land Grant, El Rancho de Azcárate.

Hugh Stephenson, who was born in Kentucky in 1798, arrived in the region in 1824 and settled in El Paso del Norte (later Ciudad Juárez). As one of the first Anglo-American settlers in

---

the region, Stephenson was a trapper and trader and later became a miner and merchant. In 1828, Stephenson moved to Corralitos, México to manage a silver mine belonging to Juan and Eugenia Azcárate, wealthy merchants from El Paso del Norte and owners of the Azcárate Land Grant, a large expanse of land (measuring 13,000 acres) awarded to the Azcárates by the Spanish Crown during the 1750s in appreciation for their military service. In the same year, Stephenson married Juana Maria Azcárate, daughter of Juan and Eugenia. After acquiring the 900 acres from Juan and Jacinto Azcárate, Stephenson and his wife established Concordia. Its boundaries roughly correspond to present-day Montana Street to the north, the Río Grande to the south, Stevens Avenue to the west, and Marr Street to the east (see Fig. 1.2).

Fig. 1.2. Concordia in lighter-shaded area, with Montana Street as the northern boundary, the Río Grande as the southern boundary, Stevens Avenue as the western boundary and Marr Street as the eastern boundary. Detail from Benson Map of El Paso, Texas, 1943.

---

4 González writes that “The Spanish government usually awarded land grants to soldiers who had served loyal, five consecutive terms, of five years each term, in the Spanish Army.” Nancy González, "Reinventing the Old West: Concordia Cemetery and the Power Over Space, 1800-1895“ (PhD diss., The University of Texas at El Paso, 2014), 28, n. 55.

5 The boundaries of Concordia are described by three surveys: F. Neve Survey no. 6, and E. H. Talley Surveys nos. 7 and 8.

According to Gladys A. Hodges, “Scattered thinly across the landscape of northern New Spain, three types [of communities] would serve the intended purpose: the mission, the presidio, and the civilian settlement.”

Since Concordia was established during the Mexican period, it can be considered a hybrid civilian settlement with a church. Concordia, like El Paso, may be defined as a “socio-spatial dialectic,” or “the antithesis between town and countryside.” Socio-spatial dialectic is how people used social space, as defined by the theories of Lefebvre’s meta-philosophy. In the case of Concordia and El Paso, Concordia was largely rural compared to El Paso which was becoming largely urbanized. Water also played an important role in where and how people lived. Like residents in other parts of what later became El Paso, Concordia residents relied upon the Río Grande. Hodges writes that generations of residents in the area used dams to direct water to their vicinities: “They and their ancestors had used diversion dams to direct water into their acequias (irrigation canals) since the beginning of the settlement’s [El Paso del Norte] existence.” These irrigation canals were crucial for growing crops and sustaining life in the harsh desert.

At the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the Río Grande as the new international boundary (see Fig. 1.3). The treaty caused the disruption of space all along the new U.S./Mexico border. According to historian Oscar J. Martínez:

Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States compelled Mexico to accept the 1845 U.S. annexation of Texas and also forced it to cede

---

California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Wyoming, Kansas and Oklahoma. The Río Grande became half of the new international boundary, with the rest consisting of an irregular line from El Paso del Norte (Cd. Juárez) to the Pacific Ocean.¹¹

Concordia and all other settlements north of the Río Grande became part of the United States and daily activities for people were impacted with the creation of a new border. Further, in 1864, the Río Grande changed course, leaving part of El Paso del Norte (present-day Ciudad

Juárez) in the United States. This peninsula near Concordia remained a point of contention between both countries until it was settled in 1964 with the Chamizal Settlement. In 1852, Josiah Frazier Crosby acquired part of the Ponce de Leon grant and established Coon’s Ranch (three miles west of Concordia) and Anson Mills subsequently platted it as part of the El Paso township in 1859. Meanwhile, in 1854, Juana Maria Azcárate de Stephenson petitioned the Catholic Church to establish San José de Concordia el Alto, the first private church north of the Río Grande. At the same time, the Stephensons designated the boundaries of the Concordia Cemetery. According to Cleofas Calleros, the church was served by “the parish priest of Our Lady of Guadalupe mission in [Ciudad] Juárez.” That a priest from the Juárez mission traveled to Concordia to offer services indicates the church served a congregation of considerable size. Calleros writes, “In 1881, it was abandoned because of the objections of the Juarez priests to a Catholic burial for suicide.”

A later rendering of the 1852 map by the Joint Boundary Commission shows the American settlements of Hart’s Mill, Coon’s Ranch, Magoffinsville, Stephenson’s Ranch and La Isla (Fig. 1.4). According to historian W. H. Timmons, these settlements “and the proprietors played roles of great importance in the development of the area.” The road connecting all these settlements followed the natural terrain, as would the paths of the railroad and highway later.

---

14 Ibid.
Frank Halla in his 1978 dissertation on El Paso described Concordia, Magoffinsville and *El Molino* as feudal lordships.\(^\text{16}\) By contrast, he depicted Coon’s Ranch (also known as “Franklin”) as a symbol of market-driven capitalism.\(^\text{17}\) According to Halla, by the early 1850s Stephenson’s Concordia Ranch was comprised of “several flat clay buildings and was distinguished by a chapel in the mode of a Spanish mission, sole Catholic edifice on the north bank, the ranch was focus of a substantial community.”\(^\text{18}\) He adds that “forty families and almost two hundred souls tenanted Concordia, all of whom either farmed small plots or labored for

\(^{16}\) Halla, “El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico,” 148-49.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Halla, “El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico,” 155.
Stephenson and the other three merchants, relatives and friends of the owner, who made it their residence.” Concordia acted as a rest stop for travelers and wagon trains heading west.

By contrast, according to the *El Paso Morning Times* in 1916, “When General Anson Mills first came to El Paso there were only three stores in the place, and about forty or fifty Americans living here.” Concordia was comparable in size to Franklin in the 1850s. John Russell Bartlett, who was contracted by the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission and wrote a personal narrative about his experiences, described the dwellings in El Paso in 1854:

> The houses at El Paso are all one story, and built of adobe, i.e., the mud of the valley formed into bricks from twelve to eighteen inches long, and four inches thick, and baked in the sun. These materials, with slight repairs, will endure for centuries. Sometimes chopped straw and gravel are mixed with it, which greatly improves its quality. The houses of the better classes are large and built in the form of a hollow square. The walls are from two to three feet thickness and have but few openings. When plastered and whitewashed they look very neat and make comfortable dwellings. All the floors are laid with mud, concrete, or brick. Such a thing as a wooden floor is unknown in this country.

Bartlett went on to state glass windows were non-existent except in finer homes; fires were seldom lit aside from cooking; there were a few respectable Spanish families and no middle class; and after describing the principal village of Magoffinsville, which was also the headquarters for the Boundary Commission during their stay in El Paso, he states: “A mile further east is a large rancho belonging to Mr. Stevenson [sic], around which is a cluster of smaller dwellings.”

Stephenson’s great grandson, James Magoffin Dwyer, Jr., describes the Stephenson family:

---

19 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 190-93.
Hugh Stephenson and Juanita had five children, Horace Stephenson, who married Elena Miranda; Margarate Stephenson, who married J. M. Florés from San Antonio, who later became a well-known merchant of Ciudad Juárez, México; Hugh Stephenson; Adelaide Stephenson, who married Colonel James Zabriske, a well-known attorney of San Francisco, California, and later of Tucson; and Benencia Stephenson, who married Captain Albert French, a California Cavalry Captain, who was born in Boston.23

The Stephenson children, particularly Benencia and her husband Captain Albert H. French and later her second husband County Judge J. B. Leahy, would later have a role in shaping the fate of Concordia. On February 6, 1856, a pet deer Juana Azcárate had raised as a fawn gored and killed her. She was first buried next to San José de Concordia del Alto Church but was subsequently moved to the family plot after her grave was vandalized.24

Concordia During the Civil War Era and Reconstruction

Stephenson had been sympathetic to the South and purchased Confederate bonds during the Civil War. Due to the passage of the 1862 Homestead Act, which forbade land ownership by anyone who had supported the Confederate Army, Stephenson lost his land holdings.25

According to historian Martin Donell Kohout, there are two accounts of how Concordia Ranch was repurchased for the Stephenson heirs: “One source says that these properties were thereupon purchased by Stephenson’s son-in-law, Albert H. French, while another says that Stephenson’s old friend William Wallace Mills repurchased them for Stephenson with money from the

---

23 James Magoffin Dwyer, Jr., “Hugh Stephenson,” The New Mexico Historical Review 29, no. 1 (1954): 3-4. James Magoffin Dwyer, Jr. was a great grandson of Albert H. French. He wrote his memories about his family and their activities after the Civil War.
25 According to Timmons, the California Column took possession of Ft. Bliss after the Confederates had abandoned it on August 20, 1862. They remained in occupation until February 1865, when the United States Army took over. Timmons, El Paso, A Borderlands History, 178. Because Stephenson bought war bonds and was supportive of the Confederacy, Concordia was confiscated by the federal government and his son-in-law Captain French purchased it at an estate sale and then divided it among his heirs.
Corralitos mines.” Historian Nancy Gonzalez presents a counter-narrative asserting that Stephenson’s sons-in-laws Captain Albert H. French and James A. Zabriskie were able to reacquire the land using the power they were entrusted with by the federal government in Washington D.C. 

In 1868, the Magoffinsville military post was flooded. Captain Albert H. French leased part of Concordia to the federal government to create Camp Concordia (the third Ft. Bliss). The camp was established over the old Río Grande river bed known as Río Viejo, where water often gathered, causing the troops to contract malaria. Dwyer indicates the barracks were located where the Mitchell Brewing Company now stands. Robert Neal Blake writes: “The Fort was known as Fuerte Azul because the outside woodwork was painted blue,” and was located at the site of McElroy Packing. In 1868, an elementary school, which would later become Lincoln Park School, was created in Camp Concordia to educate the children of officers.

Charles H. Harris, III and Louis R. Sadler, historians who have written on the history of Fort Bliss, substantiate the location of Camp Concordia:

About a year later the Army leased land on the Concordia Ranch, located 3 to 4 miles north of the old fort and on higher ground above the river. The military constructed two large barracks capable of housing 200 men each and officers’ quarters consisting of six adobe buildings. Camp Concordia had been renamed Fort Bliss by March 24, 1869.

---

27 Gonzalez, "Reinventing the Old West: Concordia Cemetery and the Power Over Space, 1800-1895.
28 According to Charles H. Harris, III and Louis R. Sadler, the first Ft. Bliss was built in 1854 and was located near the small settlement of Magoffinsville. It was abandoned by Union forces when Texas seceded from the Union in 1861. In 1862, it was burned by Confederate forces and rebuilt in October 1865. Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, Bastion on the Border: Fort Bliss, 1854-1943 (Historical and Natural Resources Report No. 6, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Directorate of Environment, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center, Fort Bliss, Texas, 1993), v.
29 Dwyer, Jr., “Hugh Stephenson,” New Mexico Historical Review, 4.
31 Harris III and Sadler, Bastion on the Border, 3.
In his application for a Texas State Historical Commission marker in 1981, Thomas Moore Carson delineates the boundaries of Camp Concordia as “present-day Stevens, Frutas and Bowie Streets and the southern edge of the Concordia Cemetery” (See Fig. 1.5).  

Fig. 1.5. Camp Concordia (in lighter-shaded area south of the cemetery) consisted of present-day Stevens as the eastern boundary, Frutas Street as the southern boundary, Bowie Street as the western boundary and the southern edge of Concordia Cemetery as the northern boundary. Detail from Benson Map of El Paso, Texas, 1943.

According to Allan W. Sandstrum, the Army book compiled in 1868 describes Concordia in the following way:

Camp Concordia is situated in the northwestern part of the State of Texas […] on the east side of the Rio Grande, and about 1,000 yards from its bank, with an elevation of 3600 feet above the level of the sea. The country is a level valley surrounded by large mesas, or hills of sandy and barren nature; these hills are known as “El Paso Mountains…” The nearest Post Office is in the town of El Paso 3 miles. Paso del Norde [sic], Mexico, is about 3-1/2 miles from the Post…the Post

---

32 Thomas Moore Carson, “Application to the Texas State Historical Commission for a historical marker for the Site of Camp Concordia and Fort Bliss Application,” (Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas, 78711). Marker Title: “Camp Concordia, Marker Number 4740, 4001 Durazno Street, El Paso, Texas,” approved June 8, 1982.
consists of three large buildings, (of adobe brick) two used as Men’s Quarters, and one as a storehouse of Quartermaster Commissary Stores and for Officer’s Quarters.\(^{33}\)

Other buildings necessary for the post were built by 1870.\(^{34}\) Sandstrum describes the fort as having a vegetable garden irrigated by an *acequia*; grass had to be brought from fifteen miles away; mesquite bush provided the fuel for heating and cooking; timber was scarce and required a one-hundred-mile journey to obtain; water was hauled in barrels from the Rio Grande.\(^{35}\) Camp Concordia was abandoned in 1877 when the military opened a new post at Hart’s Mill.

A caption accompanying a 1948 article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* features a drawing of the Concordia Post (See Fig. 1.6) and states the following:

The Concordia Post—In 1868 Rio Grande floods forced abandonment of Magoffinsville post and a new location, near present Concordia Cemetery, was chosen. New post was named Camp Concordia but following year name of Ft. Bliss was restored. In 1876 post was abandoned. Salt War brought troops back in 1878 but Concordia was uninhabitable, and quarters were leased in downtown buildings near Pioneer Plaza. Concordia post was located in east El Paso south and east of the present Concordia Cemetery. Until recently, remnants of some of the old buildings were still to be seen. The old Concordia post chapel ruins were in the Ziegler stockyards. Drawing was made by direction of Col. M.H. Thomlinson. It was based on a picture in “Pioneer Posts of Texas” by Toulouse and Toulouse, published by the Naylor Company of San Antonio. An early army surgeon, inspecting Concordia, was not overly impressed. He found malaria rife among soldiers.\(^{36}\)


\(^{34}\) Ibid., 122.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 124.

The army base of Camp Concordia created in 1868 became home to many African Americans. Welborn J. Williams, in his thesis “The Buffalo Soldiers’ Brush with ‘Jim Crow’ in El Paso,” states “Immediately after the Civil War, two companies of the 125th United States Colored Troops had been stationed at Ft. Bliss.” He continues, “And in the intervening years between the Civil War and 1900, the 25th and 24th Infantry Regiments and the Ninth Cavalry Regiment had served in El Paso.” By 1877, African American Infantry troops were well-established in the region and Blacks thrived in El Paso compared to in other southern cities. Williams states that one of the reasons Blacks flourished in El Paso was because upon their arrival there was a community they could immediately join:

According to Charlotte Ivy, these included the Bannecker Literary and Historical Society, which featured discussions and debates about timely topics; The Union Aid Society, designed to improve the welfare of the community; [the] Knight of

---

38 Ibid.
Pythias Lodge; and a Negro Masonic Chapter. As elsewhere, Black residents of El Paso showed a pride in the presence of black troops, attending their arrivals, visiting the post, and embracing them in the social life of the community. Additionally, there were many churches that the soldiers could worship in, such as the Second Baptist Church which was established in 1893.  

In 1866, African Americans came to the attention of Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, a Radical Republican, who opposed slavery. As Chairman of the Senate Military Committee he saw their potential as soldiers in the post-civil war era. Williams writes:

A company, 25th Infantry Regiment shared a common history with the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries and the 24th Infantry Regiment because all these units had been activated by the Reorganization Act of 1866. This act authorized six Black regiments as part of the overall organization of the Army. Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, Chairman of the Senate Military Committee, was instrumental in passing this legislation because he was convinced that the Negroes would make great soldiers. He had personally followed the performance of the 54th Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and their courage and effectiveness had impressed him. Indeed, as a result of the war the overall effectiveness of the Negro could not be denied; more than 180,000 had served in the Union Army and an estimated 68,178 had died during the conflict.

According to noted historian Quintard Taylor, “No group in black western history has been more revered or more reviled than the Buffalo Soldiers, the approximately 25,000 men who served in the U.S. Army’s Ninth and Tenth Calvaries and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantries between 1866 and 1917.” Williams states that members of the 25th were often sent to the frontier to ensure peace and stability and that their missions “were confined to stringing telegraph wire, escorting stagecoaches, building and repairing roads, and on occasion, fighting Indians.” In El Paso, Williams writes, Black troops were the norm due to a more tolerant racial atmosphere there than in other parts of the state.

---

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 2.
43 Ibid, 2-3.
44 Ibid, 7.
The end of the Civil War also brought former Confederate soldiers (including some who were African Americans) to El Paso. They traveled as wagon train escorts on their way to California and were required to take an oath of allegiance to the United States. A manuscript written by Willis Newton, who was 80-years-old in 1921, details the story of traveling and escorting a wagon train to California from Texas in 1865. According to Newton, “when they reached Franklin (El Paso) Texas, all the grown men (which includes the older teenagers) were required to sign an oath of allegiance at the Provost Marshall’s office.” By the 1880s, African Americans migrated to El Paso via the railroads. They worked as train workers in boiler rooms as well as porters and assistants to mechanics, etc. African Americans lived in Segundo Barrio (El Paso’s Second Ward) and a sizeable number moved into the Lincoln Park community.

Sociologist Douglas S. Massey has argued that “in urban society, socioeconomic advancement tends to be accompanied by spatial movement aimed at bettering personal or familial circumstances.” The same was true for African Americans moving to El Paso in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

An essay written by the late historian Maceo Crenshaw Dailey Jr., titled “Border Black: The El Paso Story,” situates the African American presence in West Texas within the urban and rural borderlands and suggests how it may have differed from that of other southern states. In El Paso, African Americans did not encounter the racism that was prevalent in other parts of the

46 Ibid.
country or in other parts of Texas for that matter. In West Texas they found a climate of acceptance.

Dailey states that “in migrating to the border region and specifically El Paso, individuals of African descent and African Americans sought their flight from oppression to opportunity, and in their new region of settlement endeavored to build communities and add their voices to the chorus for reform and positive change.” In the border, positive change was possible and West Texas represented a place where African Americans could be themselves, practice their religion and not fear oppression as in other parts of the country. Dailey states:

To hone in on border black life in Texas, and its city of El Paso in particular, provides an excellent purview into the lives of African Americans and, in a few rare instances, enclaves on the Mexican side of the border where those of African lineage existed somewhere between the markers of survival and salvation.

Dailey might have been talking about the liminality which existed for Blacks in Mexico like William H. Ellis and who sought to create an African American Colony in the late nineteenth century. Gerald Horne writes that in 1832 German visitor Carl Christian Beecher stated that Mexico’s blacks “are free in the Republic of Mexico; which is to say, they enjoy, intimately, the same rights as do the rest of the inhabitants of the state, which is not the case in the United States of North America, where, as a result of laws, or for prejudices, the blacks are humiliated and pressed down to the category of the lowest level of men.” Likewise, Dailey writes: “I am also using the term “border black” to connote the choice presented to African Americans of the region to accept or reject their heritage and culture (avoiding alienation and deracination) and to

52 Ibid.
behave on the basis of a positive self and cultural image of their African roots and African American possibilities.” For African Americans in El Paso, Mexico then became an arena of unimagined possibilities or a liminal space where in addition to race acceptance, the role of the military in peace keeping in El Paso becomes another unimagined benefit of being Black in the borderlands.

In the early 1890s, African American men also married Mexican women in both El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. During this period, Mexican women were classified as white and the enforcement of a Texas state law barring miscegenation would have challenged their marriages. In his book Civil Rights in the Texas Borderlands: Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and Black Activism, historian William Guzman details the “sentencing of Jasper Smith, an African American who was arrested for making an insulting proposal, against a white woman.” Guzman writes that in 1893, “Black men engaged in militant protest against enforcement of a Texas state law barring miscegenation, which would have complicated the lives of all those who had married women of Mexican descent.”

Díaz states “the growth of urban areas in the Southwest coincides with two major historical epochs, the termination of the Plains Wars with indigenous nations and the advent of the railroad era.”

---

53 Ibid., 308. According to Wellborn J. Williams, Black troops had served in El Paso since the end of the Civil War with two companies of the 125th United States Colored Troops which were stationed at Ft. Bliss; and between the Civil War and 1900, the 25th and 24th Infantry Regiments and the Ninth Calvary Regiment served in El Paso. Welborn J. Williams, Jr., “The Buffalo Soldiers’ Brush with “Jim Crow” in El Paso” (MA thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1996), 7.
54 Will Guzmán, Civil Rights in the Texas Borderlands: Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and Black Activism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 39, 40.
55 Ibid.
Arrival of the Railroads

The United States saw the growth of regional and national railroads from 1850 to 1890. Texas officials were anxious to build railroads. As part of their land grant program, officials would give the companies a certain amount of land as incentive to build. In 1880, Concordia played a significant role in providing land for rail lines. Between 1870 and 1890, state policy forced land owners to deed right of way to the railroads. Concordia lay in the designated rail corridor and land was deeded for railroad purposes (See Fig. 1.7).


According to Surveyor Terry Cowan, “A total of 35,777,038 acres of land, mostly in West Texas, was granted to 43 railroad companies.”\(^\text{57}\) Cowan states that in 1857, a corridor was created for railroad construction and “the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific Railway won the

---

concession from the state.” He states that “The ‘T&P’ [the Texas and Pacific Railway] underwent several bankruptcies and reorganizations, but finally completed the railroad across Texas, meeting an east-bound tract from California at Sierra Blanca on December 16, 1881.”

In 1880, El Paso was a sleepy town, yet with the arrival of the railroad in 1881, it blossomed into a major transportation hub, as historian Ricardo Romo writes:

Once the train came to El Paso, the city became the hub of an inland empire composed of north and west Texas, southern New Mexico and eastern Arizona. With capital accumulated through refining, storing and transportation of raw resources such as metal ores and farm products, El Paso improved its inter-regional transportation network and financed the type of expansion that attracted new industries. Compared to other Texas cities, the economy of El Paso was quite diversified, with refineries, construction, and commerce employing the greatest portion of the work force.

In comparison to Concordia, which was a resting spot for travelers embarking on their cross-country travels, El Paso became a central transportation and economic hub. Romo describes the transformation of El Paso as an industrial center, served by a regional transportation system which facilitated the delivery of products and that was supplemented by a large pool of labor. In May 1881, the Southern Pacific’s Chinese track-laying crews arrived in El Paso, Texas, making it a major rail crossroads, with direct access to routes connecting the Gulf Coast and Atlantic tidewater.

The arrival of the railroads helped develop El Paso’s local economy and turn it into a transportation and economic hub from the east to the west and later, the south to the north. In addition to the Southern Pacific, other rail lines arrived in El Paso; they included the Atchinson,

---

58 Ibid, 66.
59 Ibid., 67
Topeka and Santa Fe in June 1881, the Texas and Pacific Railway, also in 1881, and the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio rail line in 1883. The four railroad lines were joined by the Mexican Central Railroad from Mexico City in 1884.

The arrival of the railroads provided infrastructure to farmers in the region. Richard J. Orsi writes:

…the Southern Pacific subdivided and sold its lands quickly and generally at low prices, promoted small-farm settlement, and adopted many programs to assist farmers in its territory. The railroad also encouraged the development of modern agriculture in the West, particularly the founding of farm organizations, the spread of scientific farming, the expansion of agricultural colleges and experiment stations in California, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, and the general shift from frontier crops such as cereals and livestock to higher-value-fruit and specialty crops.

In its efforts to assist farmers, the state of Texas also recognized the need to build infrastructure and transportation over both water and land, to help farmers take agricultural products to market and support the ranching industry. As a result of these needs, according to the Texas General Land Office,

The most important of the grants for internal improvements were those made to railroad companies. Texans wanted a railroad system because they believed it would speed the development of the state and increase land values. In 1852, the state legislature charted eight railroad companies; each received eight sections of land for every mile of railroad track, but they also had to survey equal amounts of land. The land given to the railroad companies was to be sold by the end of 12 years.

The awarding of grants to railroad companies spurred the surveying of land for the development of railroad tracks but many of the surveys were poorly done so they had to be redone. Land was

---

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 16.
eventually sold to private individuals but at lower prices due to the flooding of the market by railroad companies, yet Native Americans and African Americans were usually barred from buying land. According to Alwyn Barr in his book *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995*, “Under republic laws (1836-1845) free persons of one-eighth Negro blood could not vote, own property, testify in court against whites, or intermarry with them.” Although Emancipation came to black Texans on June 19, 1865 when Federal troops landed in Galveston, property rights were not enforced until the creation of the Freedmen Bureau and even then, there were issues regarding land ownership.

Gregory Hooks and Chad L. Smith state “with the passage of Indian Removal Act (1830) …Native Americans were removed from their homelands and forced to reside in western territories.” Regarding land ownership by Native Americans, Hooks and Smith state:

By 1850, the Federal Government “owned” virtually all the land west of the Mississippi River. This ownership was based on the Louisiana Purchase and those terms imposed on Mexican at the end of the Mexican-American War. Effective control over these lands was realized through a series of Indian Wars that forced western tribes onto reservations on lands chosen by the United States. The United States donated and sold off the lands in its possession to promote the settlement and development of the West. In this manner, railroads were awarded vast tracts of land, both as a right of way for the railroad itself and to subsidize the costs of building and maintaining the railroad.

Removing Native Americans from their land has a dual purpose. One was once they were removed from their lands, railroads were given tracts of land by the federal government, so they could expand their routes. Secondly by sending Native Americans to reservations it removed the threat of conflict with settlers in those lands. Likewise, disenfranchisement of land ownership by

---

68 Ibid, 40.
70 Ibid.
African Americans would have a long-lasting effect on ownership patterns and would later have detrimental repercussions in activities such as redlining of El Paso neighborhoods like the Lincoln Park community.71

With the arrival of the railroads, El Paso boomed. Cd. Juárez saw its population rise to 12,000 in 1890.72 In 1880, there were 736 people in El Paso, by 1890, that number grew to 10,388 and by 1900, it numbered 15,906.73 Timmons writes: “during the four decades following the coming of the railroads to El Paso, a frontier town of fewer than 1,000 people was transformed into a modern western city with a total population of 80,000.”74 According to Hovious, the census for 1880 counted only “150 Anglo Americans, excluding soldiers.”75

The years after the arrival of the railroads saw El Paso incorporate several of its early additions: the Campbell Addition, the Magoffin Addition, the Satterthwaite Addition, the Cotton Addition, the Mundy Addition.76 In addition, Hovious writes,

Directly east of the Cotton Addition between the mountain, the river, and approximately present-day Piedras Avenue was the 320-acre tract of land known as [the] Bassett Addition. Joseph Magoffin in 1880 sold that tract to O.T. Bassett, a Midwesterner most recently from Fort Worth.77

Concordia was half a mile northeast of the Bassett Addition, on the outskirts of El Paso.

According to Díaz, El Paso was one of two large Chicano urban centers in the Southwest:

---

74 Timmons, El Paso, A Borderlands History, 116.
76 Ibid., 23-25.
77 Ibid., 25.
In the early 1890s, the two main Chicana/o urban centers were El Paso and San Antonio. San Antonio was historically the largest urban barrio in the Southwest. The city’s expansion was related to the railroads, manufacturing, and regional agriculture. El Paso, situated on the frontera, was the major point of entry for Mexicanas/nos arriving to meet the burgeoning labor requirements of mining, railroads, agriculture, and manufacturing in the Southwest. Both cities have traditionally maintained a significantly higher percentage of Chicana/o populace than all other major cities in the region due to their proximity to Mexico and to predominant immigration patterns.  

El Paso was one of the prime hubs for Mexican workers traveling north with the increased demand for cheap labor.

**Railroads and Cattle**

Sanborn maps from 1908 illustrate that homes and businesses in the Concordia community were still predominantly constructed of adobe and that residents heated their homes with petroleum. The community was at the end of the city limits, and it included semi-rural features such as the Union Stockyards, a *molino* (a corn mill), and a dairy.

The railroads also helped grow the cattle and copper industry in both El Paso County and Cd. Juárez. In her dissertation on El Paso and Cd. Juárez as a cross-border metropolitan economy, economics scholar Belinda Román states that prior to 1848, communities along the U.S./Mexico border engaged in “small-scale agricultural production and ranching and occasional inter-regional trade, which allowed the communities to remain self-sufficient.”  

The situation was much different by the 1880s. Historian Mario García writes that “The Lone Star commented in 1885 that in a nine-month period more than 60,000 head of cattle, horses and sheep had been

---

80 Ibid., 13.
transported through El Paso.” Román states the cattle industry operated as a cross-border market in the United States and Mexico with relations as early as the 1840s which continued to 1920. Historian Rachel St. John, in her essay “Divided Ranges: Trans-border Ranches and the Creation of National Space along the Western Mexico-U.S. Border,” describes the history of trans-national ranching:

... cattle were intentionally introduced in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, as part of an effort to transform the desert grasslands into a landscape of profits. The history of this process, from initial Spanish settlement to Mexican land distribution to the arrival of the railroads and the turn to U.S. markets, further contributed to the creation of a transnational ranching landscape which resisted any clear division of national space.

The ranching and cattle industry along the Western Mexico-U.S. Border defied definitions of border sovereignty. As St. John states, “the suppression of raiding and the arrival of the railroads provided prerequisites for the borderlands to become part of the cattle boom that swept across western North America in the late nineteenth century, integrating rangelands across the continent into a market-oriented ranching economy.” In El Paso, ranching and the cattle industry boomed, and numerous stockyards were built next to railroad lines, such as the El Paso Union Stockyard in Concordia. According to the El Paso Mission Trail Association, the Union stockyards began in August 26, 1902. Cross-border urbanization dramatically changed the population with the arrival of the railroads. As the economy grew, so did the population.

---

81 García, Desert Immigrants, 23.
84 Ibid.
In 1915, according to Orndorff, “thirty-two acres were converted into stockyards by the El Paso Union Stockyard Company.”\textsuperscript{87} In 1927, “more than one hundred thousand cattle were received in the El Paso Union Stockyards, the McElroy Union Stockyards, and various other smaller concerns.”\textsuperscript{88} In addition to cattle, Lane’s Dairy was established in 1930 by Mr. and Mrs. Fitch Lane with 400 cows on Reynolds Street.\textsuperscript{89}

The U.S. Congress passed the Reclamation Act on June 17, 1902 to encourage water project development and irrigation in the western states. The Reclamation Act brought much needed water to El Paso for the development of the agrarian economy. With the development of farmland came Mexican labor from Mexico. Many of these laborers moved into Segundo Barrio and Concordia.

**Concordia Becomes Part of El Paso**

A Texas Key Map of 1915 demonstrates the neighborhoods formerly belonging to Concordia became part of El Paso. The 900 acres of land Captain French purchased at the Fire Marshall sale became known as the French Addition. The survey of the subdivision was registered with the city of El Paso in March 1907. It was a portion of E.R. Talley Survey No. 7. The French Addition was north of the Lincoln Park Subdivision and south of the Government Hill Addition, registered in June 1906.

The Lincoln Park Subdivision (See Fig. 1.8) was a smaller part of Concordia and was located south of the French Addition. It was built south of Concordia Cemetery near Camp

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 92.
Concordia and next to Road 20, which later became Interstate 10. The subdivision was bordered by Concordia Cemetery to the north, Copia Street to the west, Raynor Street to the east and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks to the south. In 1909, the Lincoln Park Realty and Import Company registered the Lincoln Park Subdivision with the City Clerk's office. The Lincoln Park Addition, was located in Concordia School District No. 2. In 1915, Lincoln Park Realty listed 975 deeds sold.⁹⁰ Concordia Cemetery was previously larger than its present 52 acres.

---

Fig. 1.8. Plat map of the Lincoln Park Addition. City of El Paso Planning Department, Open Records Request by the author, #W051920-022318, March 6, 2018.

---

Highway 80 (The Bankhead Freeway)

The Bankhead Freeway (Highway 80) ran through El Paso from 1915 to 1968. At McNary, it dipped south and became Alameda Street. The freeway was named after John H. Bankhead of Alabama, who had been Chairman of the Post Office and Post Roads Committee of the Senate. The legislation to build Highway 80 was introduced by Chairman D. W. Shackleford of the House Roads Committee on June 6, 1916 as H.R. 7617 (the basic Federal-aid Highway Act) and Senator Bankhead acted as its major sponsor in the Senate. The Act was signed by President Woodrow Wilson on July 11, 1916 and it created Highway 80, which would later act as the foundation for the transcontinental freeway, the precursor to Interstate 10. In El Paso, Interstate 10 did not follow the route of the Bankhead Highway, but instead it was routed through the sand hills.

Before Interstate 10 was built in 1968, US 80 was the main route between Florida and California. The website “American Roads” states:

U.S. numbered highway 80 stretches between Savannah, Georgia (later Tybee Island) on the Atlantic and San Diego, California on the Pacific. Much of U.S. 80 was along the path of the earlier Dixie Overland Highway. In the west, U.S. 80 also followed the Old Spanish Trail, the Lee Highway, the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway, the Bankhead Highway, and the Lone Star Trail. In the state of California, US 80 received state recognition as a Historic Route on August 2006. The highway has been slowly decommissioned eastward, so that now 80 officially ends at Dallas, Texas. Much of the old road in the West still exists, however. U.S. 80 once traveled through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The highway was one of the first numbered highways planned in 1925. However, much of 80's roadbed already existed in many areas before that, since it followed well-traveled auto trails dating as far back as 1915.

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
US 80 came into El Paso along a diagonal route, parallel to the Rio Grande. At McNary (which is a small unincorporated area west of El Paso), US 80 splits into two routes: the northern section became Interstate 10 and the southern section was Alameda Street, also known as the “old highway.”

Fig. 1.9. The Bankhead Freeway (Highway 80) ran through Alameda Street in 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas.

The Interurban to Ysleta

According to Betty Pierce, Concordia “could be seen from the train which ran from El Paso to Fabens and was mostly farm land.” Concordia had been bypassed by the railroads but would be linked to El Paso through the emerging transportation technology of the period, first


the mule car and later the electric streetcar via the Interurban to Ysleta. The arrival of El Paso’s railroads fueled the development of commuter railways. As late historian Ronald E. Dawson shows, mule cars connected areas of El Paso County in the 1880s and 1890s.\(^98\) Dawson explores not only the development of public transportation but also the creation of suburbs emanating from downtown El Paso. He writes, “historians and writers, in the past, have found it too easy to credit the automobile with the fluidity and mobility of early twentieth century society, but a significant amount of credit for the growth of the suburbs and neighborhoods of El Paso should go to the development of the streetcar routes from 1902 to 1925.”\(^99\) They were replaced by bus routes in the 1930s and 1940s. Edward Weiner writes that “electric rail systems were the backbone of urban mass transportation by World War I with over 1,000 railway companies carrying some 11 billion passengers by 1917.”\(^100\) According to Dawson, the proposed route of the Interurban Street Car to Ysleta reached Concepcion Street via Alameda, which was two blocks south of present-day Lincoln Park.\(^101\) Dawson describes the Interurban to Ysleta route:

There were eight platforms and shelters built for stops. The regular stops were Val Verde, Bosque, Awbrey, Franklin, Porcher, Cadwallader, Cinecue Park, Valdespino, West Ysleta and Ysleta. Fares ranged from 10 cents to Val Verde for 30 cents for the ride all the way to Ysleta. Cars left on the hour from each end of the line between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. and passed each other at the midway point. There were four crews of two men each, one a motorman who operated the car and the conductor who collected the fares and was in charge. Residents along the way so appreciated the service, that mothers would often flag down a passing car to hand the trainman pieces of cake or pie.\(^102\)


\(^{99}\) Ibid., 77.


\(^{101}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 72.
The Interurban Street car to Ysleta was a method of transportation for the middle class and for citizens who could afford the fare. When it was built in 1913, the Interurban ran east from downtown El Paso along Alameda Street, which later became part of the Bankhead Freeway.

Historian Kenneth T. Jackson claims that “the cable car encouraged real-estate development.”¹⁰³ The establishment of the French/Lincoln Park neighborhood, as well as other neighborhoods, as Dawson has stated, was possible because of mule-drawn cars at first and later the Interurban Street car. Timmons writes, “By 1921 nearly 10,000 motor vehicles were driven on the streets of El Paso.”¹⁰⁴ According to Timmons, “hundreds of young people had discovered that the open touring car was a convenient contraption to drive to the movies to see one of Hollywood’s latest featured vampires in action, or for engaging in a little sparking on Scenic Drive on a moonlight night or for taking a ‘joy-ride’ across the river.”¹⁰⁵

Traffic issues were important in El Paso’s history as early as the 1920s. The city planning commission, the body which reshaped El Paso, was created in 1923. The creation of thoroughfares to address traffic issues was described in the Kessler Plan as early as 1925. Timmons states:

By 1925 the town of El Paso had reached a population of 100,000, and most of the community leaders saw a great future for the area. In 1923, a city planning commission was established by ordinance to make growth projections and guidelines for future development. Employed as a consulting plan engineer and landscape architect was German-born George Kessler, who brought an outstanding international reputation and forty years of experience as a consultant in some American cities, particularly Kansas City, Missouri, where he had worked for twenty-five years. Kessler engaged as a consultant to the newly created Plan Commission but died before he completed his report. At the time of his death, the commission was knowledgeable with his basic ideas. High priorities were

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
thoroughfares, the area west of the mountain, Rim Road, parks and recreational facilities, an international highway and bridge, the riverfront, and a civic center. Kessler, an experienced planning engineer, brought the concepts of creating thoroughfares which would be vital for the expansion of the city. Areas like Lincoln Park community developed in proximity to public transportation, utilizing streetcars and later bus service, etc.

The last known major road project through downtown El Paso before the creation of Interstate 10 was the Bataan Railroad, whose lines ran below ground level. Timmons states:

For more than sixty years these tracks had split the city up the middle and snarled automobile traffic in the downtown and Five Points areas. Leadership for the project was provided by Mayor Dan Duke, a railroad engineer, who loved to talk about the city’s democratic spirit which lifted him “from the deck of a locomotive to the highest office in the voters’ power to give.” The project, officially called Bataan Memorial Train way, was completed in 1950 at the cost of $5.5 million, split three ways among the city, the railroads, and the state highway department.

The Bataan Memorial Trainway was a major construction project in the postwar period before 1950. The construction project made it possible for traffic to move seamlessly through the center of the city.

Conclusion

Concordia in the nineteenth century experienced dramatic changes, first with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which created a new international boundary, then due to the arrival of the railroad. Land was platted, and El Paso’s housing additions were created. El Paso saw a rise in population due to increased opportunities and the creation of trans-border economics due to immigration from Mexico. Lastly, Mexican railroads brought laborers, raw

---

106 Ibid., 277-278.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 292.
109 Ibid.
materials, and cattle to the region. Concordia was molded by changing nation states and subsequently by the militarization of the border after the Civil War. Hugh Stephenson and Juana María Azcárate de Stephenson settled in the Concordia tract and opened a trading post known as Stephenson’s or the Stephenson Ranch. Azcárate de Stephenson established the first private church north of the Río Grande. After the Civil War, Stephenson lost his land due to his sympathies with the Confederacy, but it was purchased by his son-in-law Captain Albert French who purchased it at a Fire Marshall’s sale and subdivided it among its heirs.

The Civil War brought Buffalo Soldiers to the region, as well as Confederate African American soldiers who had to pledge their allegiance to the United States after the end of the Civil War, so they could escort wagon trains to California. Some African Americans in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez married Mexican women. Concordia continued to grow as the railroads fueled growth in cattle, copper, demographics and created an agrarian economy. The history in this chapter asks us to ponder why none of the Concordia landmarks besides Lincoln School and the remnants of Camp Concordia were preserved and survived into the twentieth century, but other buildings like Concordia’s Casa Grande (or Big House, as the Stephenson trading post was known as) and San Concordia del Alto Church and the adobe homes surrounding the Big House were lost.
CHAPTER 2: TWENTIETH-CENTURY LIVES IN LINCOLN PARK

Dolores Hayden follows Henri Lefebvre’s mode of defining space based on activities and social aspects which occur there.\(^1\) Towns and cities develop their spaces according to how they operate. Communities’ characters are based on how they function and where they are located. Hayden states “space is shaped for both economic production—barns or mine shafts, or piers, or a factory--as well as for social reproduction—housing for workers, managers, owners, a store, a school, a church.”\(^2\) In the previous chapter, these were the components which created Concordia.

This chapter presents the Lincoln Park community as an emerging and vibrant neighborhood in the first half of the twentieth century by uncovering its African American presence and the experiences of Mexican students during the era of Americanization. The chapter also describes the creation of El Calvario Church, the impact of the Great Depression on housing and space, and the effects of redlining on the area and other parts of El Paso. During this period, as Hayden states, class, racial and ethnic ties defined the Lincoln Park community.\(^3\) Lastly, the chapter presents several oral histories of residents in the community who bring the community to life through their memories of their former neighborhood.

**Lincoln Park: An Emerging Neighborhood**

---

3. Hayden, Ibid.
By the early-twentieth century, Anglo-Americans outnumbered people of Mexican descent in El Paso by two to one. In 1910, 13,000 people who were born in Mexico resided in El Paso. However, the Mexican Revolution would change the city. Historian Mario García states: “As increased fighting broke out in the north-central parts of Mexico between 1914 and 1916, thousands of Mexicans entered El Paso.” He adds: “In one June week in 1916 immigration officials admitted 4,850 Mexicans into the city.” This number was added to the thousands already living in El Paso in 1916.

The Lincoln Park neighborhood was also becoming home to more African Americans. Historian Bernadette Pruitt writes that the Great Migration occurred in various forms:

The Great Migrations occurred in multiple facets. Several hundred thousand (or several million if one counts those internal migrants leaving rural farms for small towns, rural industrial centers, and medium-sized cities) southerners abandoned their communities in the decades preceding World War I, for light to heavy manufacturing and personal service work in the urban South, West, and North.

The shortage of workers during World War I facilitated the movement of African Americans out of the rural south; some relocated to El Paso. Lincoln Park was at the edge of the city limits and numerous African Americans moved there as well as to Segundo Barrio. El Paso census records from 1900 to 1970 show African Americans in the following numbers:

5 Oscar J. Martínez, Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez Since 1848 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1975), 160.
7 Ibid.
8 Figures vary, but according to Historian Ricardo Romo U.S. sources reported in 1916 that 17,198 Mexicans immigrated to the United States and Mexican sources reported the number at 49,932. “Table 1, Mexican Immigration to The United States 1910-1930” in Ricardo Romo, “Responses to Mexican Migration, 1910-1930,” Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies, No. 2 (Summer 1975), 178. Accessed October 22, 2017. Available from the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. It is important to note that not all Mexicans who migrated to the United States via El Paso, stayed in the El Paso.
10 Interview with Mrs. Oralee Smith by the author, El Paso, Texas, October 1, 2016.
Table 2.1. African Americans by Year (1900 to 1970) in El Paso, Texas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of African Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>466 African Americans or 2.9 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,452 African Americans or 3.7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,330 African Americans or 1.7 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,023 males and 947 females or 1.9 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,281 males and 1,232 females or 2.6 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>2,207 males and 1,975 females or 3.2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>3,017 males and 2,927 females or 2.15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>5,422 males and 4,630 females or 3.12 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1920 El Paso City Directory listed five Black churches in the city, two of which were in the Lincoln Park community: Mount Zion Baptist Church, formerly at 3129 Durazno (Rev. William Green, pastor), and Phillip’s Chapel at 301 Tornillo Street (Rev. T.C. Cook, pastor). Dr. Lawrence Nixon created an El Paso Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1914. It was the first branch in Texas. Historian


Will Guzman’s analysis of member addresses reveals that many NAACP members lived in the Lincoln Park Community, on streets which were later removed due to the creation of Interstate 10 (see Fig. 2.1).\textsuperscript{14} Many NAACP members worked as laborers and railroad sleeping car porters. No doubt African Americans experienced racism in El Paso. Ann Gabbert writes that “by 1922, El Paso’s Frontier Klan No. 100 had a hardcore membership of least fifteen hundred, including former mayor Tom Lea, and they were able to sweep the school board elections.”\textsuperscript{15} After its short-lived two-year existence, the Klan disintegrated into opposing factions, but managed to elect members to the El Paso school board.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig_2.1.png}
\caption{1940 Map of El Paso, Texas with Concordia Cemetery in the center.}
\end{figure}

**Lincoln Park School**

Concordia School first opened as a one-room school in Camp Concordia in the Officer’s Quarters in 1868. According to Lillian E. Scott, who later taught at Lincoln Park School for


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
seven years, “it was furnished with long rough wooden tables and benches, and its pupils were children of military personnel.” Before long, “wisdom prompted the removal of the school to a one-room adobe building constructed nearby.” In 1880, the school expanded to a four-room adobe building, and at the turn of the century it reopened as a one-room brick building on Grama Street near the Franklin Canal. Its first school board consisted of “Captain A. French [co-owner with his wife, Benancia Stephenson French, of the land the school stood on], Mr. Colbert Coldwell [great grandfather of Judge Colbert Coldwell, current president of the El Paso County Historical Society], and Mr. P. E. Dunne.”

After the creation of the Lincoln Park neighborhood from 1909 to 1915, Concordia School District No. 2 purchased several lots on Martínez Street to build a new school. The red brick building had a basement and thirteen rooms, but because it was opened before being completed some classes had to be held at the nearby dairy. Dr. Max Grossman, former Vice-Chair of the El Paso County Historical Commission, stated that Lincoln School was built between 1916 and 1917 by the local architectural firm of Buetell & McGhee. The thirteen-room building was constructed of reinforced concrete and has survived. On July 11, 1922, the trustees of Concordia Common School District No. 2 (S. C. McVey, Charles R. Foster and Charles J. Mapel) sold the school to the City of El Paso for $7,469.10. Lincoln Park School

---

18 Ibid., 26-27
20 Ibid., 27-28.
21 Letter to Hector Gonzales and the author from Max Grossman, Ph.D., Vice-Chair, El Paso County Historical Commission, December 27, 2014.
was built at the same time Grandview (later renamed Rusk) School was built; they are exact replicas of each other (see Fig. 2.2). Rusk School, located at 3601 N. Copia, was named after the Republic of Texas hero and U.S. Senator Thomas Jefferson Rusk. It was built in 1916. On February 5, 2016, the school celebrated its 100 years with a day of festivities.24

![Grandview School, later renamed Rusk School (top) and Lincoln Park School (bottom) were built at the same time and using the same building design and construction. Courtesy El Paso Public Library. Graphic by the author.](image-url)

In 1923, Lincoln Park School was incorporated into the Independent School District of the City of El Paso. It was primarily a school for Mexican children. El Paso’s schools were categorized by their neighborhoods, which tended to reflect different income levels. Paul W. Horn in his 1922 study on El Paso schools stated: “It may be observed in passing that while these

---

races are not segregated by any order of the school board they tend largely to segregate
themselves on account of the districts in which the children reside.”25 In his report he states:

Is it right or wrong for the administration of the school system of El Paso to keep
in its mind this idea of two different cities, “North of the tracks” and “South of the
tracks?” One might hesitate to give a categorical answer to this question, but the
following qualified answer may be submitted without the slightest hesitation. It is
undeniably right and proper to keep this distinction in mind so far as it pertains to
the meeting of the different needs of the two sections. Where great masses of
children come to school with little or no ability to speak the English language and
with scant conception if any of American ideals, their needs are not the same as
those of children who have been reared in typical American homes and have spoken
the English language from their infancy. The course of study and the methods of
instruction ought by all means to be adapted to the special needs of these children.
It would be well-nigh criminal for this not to be done.26

Since Mexican Americans and “native born Americans lived in different neighborhoods,
according to Horn, they ‘segregated themselves.’ ”27 Spatial issues involving ethnicity were
apparent in El Paso’s schools in 1922 as evidenced by Horn’s report.

Manuel B. Ramírez in his dissertation on El Paso from 1920 to 1945 has argued that
feeder patterns and school boundaries created segregation of Mexican students.28 Ramírez states
“‘The Mexican schools included Alta Vista, Aoy, Alamo, Burleson, Beall, Bowie, Franklin, San
Jacinto, Lincoln Park and Zavala.”29 North Side schools included Vilas, Neill, Dudley,
Morehead, Bailey, Lamar and El Paso; East Side schools included Houston, Alta Vista,
Coldwell, Crockett, Rusk and Austin; South Side schools included Franklin, Aoy, Alamo, San
Jacinto and Bowie; Alameda District schools included Beall, Lincoln, Zavala and Burleson as
well as the high schools Austin, Bowie, Technical Institute and Adult Homemaking, and

---

25 Paul W. Horn. Survey of the City Schools of El Paso, Texas (El Paso, TX: Department of Printing of City Schools,
El Paso, Texas, Publications of El Paso Schools, 1922), No. 1. 8, (University of California, Contributor); (accessed
26 Ibid., 8-9.
27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
Douglass School.\textsuperscript{30} African American children attended Douglass School beginning in 1920 when it opened at 101 Eucalyptus street in Central El Paso.\textsuperscript{31} Douglass School was located less than two miles from Lincoln Park School. Lincoln Park School was considered a school in the Alameda District. At its peak in the 1930s, Lincoln School educated close to 700 children a year.

From 1916 to 1922, under Principal Demetra Stanfield, El Paso women’s clubs brought school penny meals for the children. The lunches consisted of “soup with bread, beans, and milk.”\textsuperscript{32} In 1975, Lillian E. Scott, who had been a teacher at Lincoln School, passed away. She left behind a small journal with notes about her years associated with the school.\textsuperscript{33} Mary Bowling transcribed the notes and with the assistance of the editor of Password, created a history of the school to 1951.\textsuperscript{34} In addition to the history, using Lillian Scott’s notes she wrote a fictional memoir titled “The Clock: A Fictional Memoir of Such a School,” as if she had been a student at Lincoln School in 1929:

> My first year at school, a new Principal arrived, extremely wiry and energetic, with pale blue eyes and hair already white. She was a natural-born fighter, and we children realized that she intended to transform us into Good American Citizens in accord with a mysterious vision of her own. Everything must be in English! Not a single word in Spanish in the classroom or on the playground—or there would be punishment! Each month, with squeaky pens and splattery black ink, we labored in “Palmer Method” to write invitations to P.T.A. meeting for parents who could not read English and would seldom attend. On Arbor Day, we planted trees that died in a few months.\textsuperscript{35}

Lincoln Park School in the 1930s and 1940s was rife with student activities and achievements, which were reported in weekly articles in the El Paso Herald-Post and the El Paso Times. Every

\textsuperscript{32} Bowling, “Lincoln Park School, 28.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 25.
Thursday, in the “Honor Roll in El Paso Schools,” the *El Paso Herald-Post* reported student achievements, projects, and new students, such as the following:


Not all students mentioned in the *El Paso Herald-Post* article were Mexican-Americans. The student population included Anglo students such as Willard Manley. Manley, who was born in 1921, took an interest in oratory while at Lincoln School. Willard, his sister Anne, and their brother Harry lived at 4111 Rosa Street with their stepfather Cusebio Rodríguez and their mother, Aurora.37 According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Manley had dropped out of high school a year before graduating so he could work as a baker.38

Bowling writes that instead of teachers giving the Lincoln students a penny for their lunches, they paid them by letting them run errands. Bowling’s memoir also describes the antics of some of the children towards their teachers, including bringing beautiful flowers for their teachers from the cemetery behind the school. She also details activities surrounding the building *El Calvario* Catholic Church.39 In one instance, in response to the inability of some children to bring in a quarter for school supplies, a teacher told them, “Your parents have money

---

37 The 1940 United States Federal Census (accessed December 10, 2016); available from Heritage Quest.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
to give to the church, but not for your education!” Evidently, economics was as important to school teachers even then.

In 1922, teacher salaries in El Paso ranged from 1,000 to 1,550 dollars per year. In 1928 and 1929, annual teacher salaries at Lincoln Park School were as follows:

Table 2.2. El Paso Teachers’ Salaries from 1927 to 1929.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teachers’ Salaries</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Per Capita Cost</th>
<th>Av. Size Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>$16,580</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>$41.34</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>$19,350</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>$39.97</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another list of salaries shows teachers were paid from $760 to 1,500 per year. As in today’s schools, the highest paid employees at Lincoln School were principals. In 1928, Principal Howard Lilly was paid $2,050 per year. Experienced teachers were paid $450 to $500 per year more than non-experienced teachers. There were fifteen principals at Lincoln School from 1914 to 1970, with an absence of Hispanic principals until the 1960s. Upon analysis, it appears that many of the Lincoln School principals worked at the school for one- to two-year intervals, except for three principals. Miss Demetra Stanfield worked at Lincoln School for seven years; Miss

---

40 Ibid., 32.
43 Ibid.
44 The principals at Lincoln School were: Miss Katherine Harper (1914-16); Miss Demetra Stanfield (1922-40); Miss Lily Howard (1922-40); Mr. Lamar Taylor (1940-43); Mr. Frank Pollitt (1944-45); None (1945-1947); Mr. Kermit Allen (1947-48); Mr. J. T. Johnson (1948-55); Mr. Joe McGregor (1955-56); Mr. Joe Karr (1955-58); Mrs. Edwina Vogan (1958-61); Mrs. Jane Peckham (1961-62); Mrs. Ellen Light (1962-64); Mr. Alfred Piñon (1964-65); P.A. Paredes, Jr. (1966-68); and Miss Elizabeth Bush (1968-70). El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) document, n.d. Open Record Request #2017.022.
Lilly Howard worked there for eighteen years; and Mr. J. T. Johnson worked there for seven years.

According to the El Paso Independent School District, the school was renamed Lincoln Park School in honor of President Abraham Lincoln. Bowling states:

In November 1940, it was proposed that the school change its name to Travis. The P.T.A. strongly objected, and a compromise was struck: the name was changed to Lincoln School (no relation to the present Abraham School in El Paso’s Upper Valley).

Clearly, the P.T.A., which had Mexican-American families as members, had a say in the name change.

Analysis of its curriculum and student activities shows that Lincoln Park School was a site of Americanization from its opening in 1923 to the end of school segregation in El Paso in 1955. Gilbert G. Gonzalez, who has written about Americanization, or the socialization and assimilation of immigrants and/or children to American ideals, states Chicano education can be divided into four periods. The first period, from 1900 to 1950, represents the era of de jure segregation when Americanization took place. According to Gonzalez, “during the second period 1950-65, the pattern of segregation remained, but without the deliberate official sanction of Mexican schools.” Chicano culture was viewed as an impediment to the adoption of Anglo

---

46 Bowling, “Lincoln Park School, A Brief History from Notes,” 29.
culture. The third period, from 1965 to 1975, was known as the militant and reformist era, and the fourth period spans from 1975 to present day.50

Gonzalez claims that historians have overlooked the Americanization of families. He states: “Educators perceived the Mexican home as a source of Mexican culture and consequently as a reinforcer of the ‘Mexican educational problem.’”51 Even though public schools were desegregated in 1955, the curriculum did not reflect it. Countless students who were profiled in the *El Paso Herald-Post* engaged in activities which did not reflect their cultural heritage. For example, an article from March 14, 1962 reported that students in Teacher Miguel Franco’s class at Lincoln School constructed a replica of California’s Sutter’s Fort (See Fig. 2.3).

![Fig. 2.3. Various articles from the *El Paso Herald-Post* (Illustration created by the author, accessed various dates): available from Newspaper Archive.](image)

---

50 Ibid., 2-3.
*El Calvario (Filial Church of Calvary) Catholic Church*

In the face of the Great Depression, Mexican Americans continued improving their community by building a Catholic Church beginning in 1932. The church acted as a satellite church of Guardian Angel Church, located at 3021 Frutas Avenue. *El Calvario* was located at the corner of Durazno and North Martinez Streets, across the street from Lincoln Park School (see Fig. 2.4).

![Insurance maps of El Paso, Texas](image)

*Fig. 2.4. Templo Del Calvario (Calvary Catholic Church) was located south of Lincoln School on the 4000 block of Durazno Street. Insurance maps of El Paso, Texas (Pelham: New York, Sanborn Map Company, 1956).*

*El Calvario (Filial Church of Calvary) Catholic Church reflected the life stages and ceremonies of the people from the community. Church services included baptisms, First Holy Communions, quinceñeras, weddings and funerals. The Church of Calvary was one of several new churches which were built to accommodate the growing population:*
On the 24th of July 1932, a letter from Bishop Schuler was read in all the Catholic churches in El Paso. Within the letter announcement was made of the plans for the building of two churches within El Paso, Calvary and Our Lady of Guadalupe.\textsuperscript{52}

The Jesuits built a few of the walls of the church in 1932, but eventually Father P. Francisco Pacheco, a Missionary Claritin from Spain, took over the completion of the church, and built it with the assistance of parishioners. Father Pacheco, the parishioners and volunteers from surrounding neighborhoods carried cement, sand and rocks to the building site and up the walls, until the church was completed on January 1, 1933 (see Fig. 2.5).\textsuperscript{53} It was blessed by the bishop three months later, on April 2.\textsuperscript{54}

Fig. 2.5. El Calvario (Calvary) Catholic Church opened on January 1, 1933. Images with permission of Teresa Orozco.


\textsuperscript{53} Church booklet, “75 Años de Historia (Iglesia del Santo Angel), 50 Años de Servicio (Misioneras Claretianos),” (Guardian Angel Church, 3021 Frutas, El Paso, Texas, 14-15, no date). See also: Blake, “Filial Church of Calvary,” in “A History of the Catholic Church in El Paso,” 98.

\textsuperscript{54} Church booklet, “75 Años de Historia (Iglesia del Santo Angel),” 14.
On April 30, 1933, parishioners began constructing a church tower; Father Pacheco suffered an accident when he fell 12 meters (approximately 40 feet) and dislocated his foot.\textsuperscript{55} The tower was completed in August 1940 at a cost of $45,000. Later, the church made other arrangements to house priests as well as indigents.\textsuperscript{56} The church’s seating capacity exceeded Guardian Angel Church which was built in 1898 and located a mile away from El Calvario.\textsuperscript{57} The central figure of the church was the main altar of the Calvary which was comprised of three life-sized hand-carved figures (see Fig. 2.6) purchased from Talleres Castellanos of Barcelona, Spain on May 25, 1933 for 20,655.00 Pts. (approximately US $146.25). It was blessed by the Bishop on September 10th.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Fig. 2.6. Hand-carved Calvary from El Calvario (Cavalry) Catholic Church, now housed at Guardian Angel Church, 3021 Frutas Street. Photograph by the author.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Church booklet, “75 Años de Historia (Iglesia del Santo Angel).”
Activities in the church guided communal life and established the norms of the neighborhood. Former Lincoln Park resident David Prieto in his oral history interview stated,

The whole community knew the tolling of the bells. The whole community knew when someone was getting baptized, so all the kids would go to the church and the godfather, it was a big custom then, they would throw what they knew back then as *la pastille* and the godfather would throw coins when they came out of church. There would always be about 30 kids waiting for the baptism to be over, so we would get coins and everything. During Christmas, it was also very important because Padre Pacheco was the priest there and we would have *posadas*. We would have *posadas* every night for twelve nights in a row. At the end of the night, he would give us a bag full of Mexican candy or a bag of oranges. It was a big deal for us. Once a year they would have a Kermes and all the community would go there. And they would have bingo, and fishing ponds and *gorditas*. It was a big deal because that was a big thing in our community, probably the only thing we had in the community.  

Services held at the church included three masses on Sundays and the administration of all the sacraments. The *Calvario* church registry housed at Guardian Angel Church, details the baptism of 5,764 children, 754 Holy Communions, 393 marriages and 670 funerals from 1942 to 1969.

The Great Depression in El Paso and Its Effect on the Housing Market

In the 1930s, three events had cataclysmic effects on El Paso’s Mexican population: the Great Depression, the deportation of Mexicans, and redlining. Historian Yolanda Chávez Leyva explores the period of the Depression in El Paso as an important case study. She states, “El Paso’s Depression-era Mexican population was heterogeneous, composed of both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants.” Chávez Leyva writes that during these years there were Mexican immigrants who defined themselves as temporary visitors waiting to return to Mexico,
and Mexican Americans who no longer used Mexico to define themselves.\(^{63}\) A year after the Stock Market Crash in 1929, El Paso was the home to a sizeable Mexican population:

In 1930, El Paso contained the third largest concentration of *Mexicanos* in the United States, surpassed only by Los Angeles and San Antonio. Furthermore, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez were the most populous cities on the U.S.-Mexico border. Although an active business community evolved early in El Paso’s history, usually providing services to the *Mexicano* community, the majority of Mexicans in El Paso were workers. With the advent of the depression, however, the once-welcomed *Mexicano* workers were often the scapegoat for El Paso’s economic ills.\(^{64}\)

Chávez Leyva explains that the economic crisis in the 1930s produced massive repatriation while the National Recovery Administration (NRA) “engendered a sense of being Americans.”\(^{65}\) According to the Texas State Historical Association, “With the deterioration of the United States economy after 1929, between 400,000 and 500,000 Mexicans and their American-born children returned to Mexico.”\(^{66}\) More than half of the Mexicans who left the United States departed from Texas.\(^{67}\) Historian Manuel B. Ramírez contends that the Crash of 1929 created insecurity and fear of immigrants, which in turn led to deportation and repatriation.\(^{68}\) “It is estimated that one-third of Mexicans living in the United States –approximately half a million– were either deported or repatriated during the Depression,” Ramírez states.\(^{69}\) He argues that the atmosphere fueling deportation and repatriation of Mexican immigrants was akin to the Red Scare.\(^{70}\) He writes that

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{65}\) Ibid. 4. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) was a governmental body created by Franklin D. Roosevelt to regulate employee rights. Deportation involved expelling someone who was seen as a foreigner based on illegal status or after having committed a crime, while repatriation is typically defined as the process of voluntarily returning to their place or country of origin.
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., 9.
\(^{70}\) Ibid., 15-16.
“the repatriation of El Paso Mexicans coincided with the deportation drive.”⁷¹ Deportations were focused on Mexicans with illegal status and on heads of households. They were aimed at removing Mexican workers to “reduce unemployment among Anglo workers.”⁷²

These pressures made an already precarious economic situation even worse. Ann Gabbert describes some of the economic realities Mexicans in El Paso faced during the 1930s:

City-wide, eighty-two percent of Mexicans (10,260 families) rented. The median rent was $10-14 per month, but over 4,000 families paid less than $10 per month for houses without adequate plumbing facilities or ventilation. Slum housing for 9500 families was concentrated on the south side below the railroad tracks, while another 500 families lived in “equally bad conditions” in the rest of the city.⁷³

El Paso home and rental prices were also dependent on earnings and Mexicans in El Paso earned very little. Gabbert also makes it clear that people’s public health was affected by where they lived.⁷⁴ The lack of healthcare stigmatized poor communities; in the 1930s redlining would function similarly, branding sections of the city in ways that would affect their property values for decades to come.

The Depression in El Paso caused a disruption in home ownership as Mexicans lost their homes as a result of being deported to Mexico but also due to failing businesses, including the First National Bank.⁷⁵ Communities like Lincoln Park and other Mexican areas experienced

⁷² Ibid.
⁷⁴ Gabbert, “Defining the Boundaries of Care,” 16.
plummeting real estate values. A 1936 snapshot of the housing market in El Paso from the Mortgage Rehabilitation Division of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) stated:

The deportation of so many Mexicans demoralized the real estate situation in the Mexican sections of El Paso. Vacancies were estimated at from 30% to 50%. There is virtually no sales of Mexican property and no financing. One real estate man said that under the present conditions there is no lending in Mexican sections ‘because it is cheaper for the Mexican to move today than to pay rent or make payments on his mortgage.’ 76

Even though the deportation of Mexicans created a difficult financing situation the report went on to state, “The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation refunded a large number of Mexican loans,” and “private enterprise readily handled the refinancing of those loans in the Mexican quarter considered to be good.” 77 Historians have noted that what helped get America out of the Great Depression was World War II, but the Depression left a stigma in redlined El Paso residential areas that some would argue still exists today.

Redlining El Paso

Historian Richard Rothstein argues that federal policies created during the New Deal Era promoted segregation. 78 Two federal agencies hampered the ability of minorities to purchase homes. The Public Works Administration (PWA) program was created in 1933 to provide housing to white low-income families, and a program created by the Federal Housing Administration in 1934 subsidized mass production of sub-divisions but prohibited the sale of homes to African Americans. Housing developments received bank loans on the condition they not sell homes to African Americans. African Americans could not buy homes in suburbs created

76 Ibid., 8-9.
77 Ibid., 29.
for whites and guidelines written in Federal Housing Administration manuals specified that those homes could not be resold to African Americans (which led to the creation of racial covenants). In 1926, the Supreme Court had stated that it was not unconstitutional to create restrictive covenants against African Americans, thereby upholding racial segregation. Rothstein therefore argues that housing segregation was not merely de facto but also “de jure: segregation by law and public policy.”

In 1933, the federal government made homeownership more affordable for white families, and more difficult for African American families. According to Rothstein,

To rescue households that were about to default, the administration created the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC). It purchased existing mortgages that were subject to imminent foreclosure and then issued new mortgages with repayment schedules of up to fifteen years (later extended to twenty-five years) … HOLC mortgages had low interest rates, but the borrowers still were obligated to make regular payments. The HOLC, therefore, had to exercise prudence about its borrowers’ abilities to avoid default. To assess risk, the HOLC wanted to know something about the condition of the house and of surrounding houses in the neighborhood to see whether the property would likely maintain its value. The HOLC hired local real estate agents to make the appraisals on which financing decisions could be based. With these agents required by their national ethics code to maintain segregation, it’s not surprising that in gauging risk HOLC considered color-coded maps of every metropolitan area in the nation, with the safest neighborhoods colored in green and the riskiest colored red. A neighborhood earned a red color if African Americans lived in it, even if it was a solid middle-class neighborhood of single-family homes.

The process of “assessing risk” caused neighborhoods in south and East El Paso, including Lincoln Park, to be redlined by banks who would then not make loans to individuals who wanted to purchase homes in those areas or who applied for loans to remodel their homes. Dan White, who owns several properties in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, said that in the 1960s several homes in the Lincoln Park neighborhood were offered to him and he could not understand why

---

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
he had been turned down by his bank for loans to purchase them since he had a good government job.\textsuperscript{81} The national ethics code Rothstein mentions was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) \textit{Underwriting Manual}, which guided appraisers or Valuators, as they were termed.

Racial provisions of the 1936 FHA \textit{Underwriting Manual} encouraged appraisers to assess neighborhoods based on racial homogeneity.\textsuperscript{82} Part II of the FHA \textit{Underwriting Manual}, from a section titled “Rating of Location” with the heading of “Protection from Adverse Influences,” stated:

The Valuator should investigate areas surrounding the location to determine whether or not incompatible racial and social groups are present, to the end that an intelligent prediction may be made by such groups. If a neighborhood is to retain stability it is necessary [sic] that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and reduction in values. The protection offered against adverse changes should be found adequate before a high rating is given to this feature. Once the character of a neighborhood has been established it is usually impossible to induce a higher social class than those already in the neighborhood to purchase and occupy properties in its various locations.\textsuperscript{83}

As evidenced by the statement above, Valuators were instructed to verify the social and racial classes of neighborhoods. Historian Louis Lee Woods II writes that the HOLC appraisal scheme “disadvantaged low-income and minority city-Dwelling residents from obtaining financing, and by mid-century they exacerbated the disproportionately sub-standard urban housing conditions endured by non-whites in the United States.”\textsuperscript{84} Redlining aggravated the mortgage and rental crisis created by the Great Depression and deportation in communities like Lincoln Park, East El Paso and \textit{Segundo Barrio}. All the El Paso HOLC Valuators were

\hfill

\textsuperscript{81} Conversation with Dan White outside his home by the author, 2017.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
interviewed for the “Confidential Report of a Survey in El Paso, Texas for the Mortgage Rehabilitation Division, Home Owners’ Loan Corporation,” and their summaries were included in the report. One of the HOLC Valuators was Ray E. Sherman who was Mayor of El Paso (1931-37) and the head of his real estate company, Leavell & Sherman.\footnote{Ibid.} In the report, Sherman stated:

> Our Mexican population is fully 50% of the whole and this gives us a problem. The Mexican people are easily oppressed and industry employing them has done this. The U.S. Immigration department has brought about the deportation of thousands of Mexicans during the last few years. This has demoralized real estate conditions in the large Mexican quarter of the city. The Mexicans are a burden to the community, requiring large outlays for health, sanitation, policing, education, etc. without affording a commensurate return in the form of taxes. The Mexican population is one of low earning power and, therefore, low purchasing ability. Actual statistics place El Paso in the 100,000-population class, but we do not attain that classification as an economic actuality. El Paso is a gateway to Mexico and we have suffered economically by trends of the last few years. The Mexican government’s instability and fact that Mexico has adopted laws requiring employment of Mexicans in Mexican enterprises across the border, has injured our city’s commercial standing.\footnote{Olson, “Confidential Report of a Survey in El Paso, Texas for the Mortgage Rehabilitation Division, Home Owners’ Loan Corporation,” Summary of Interview with Ray E. Sherman,” 1-A.}

Guided by the Federal Housing Administration, local Valuators identified communities with African American populations and devalued them according to FHA policies.\footnote{El Paso HOLC Valuators included: John O. Beckley, real estate and management loan firm of Coles Brothers; J. Page Kemp, senior partner in the Real Estate firm of Kemp and Coldwell; R.F. Miller, Vice President of Orndroff Realty Company, real estate brokerage and management firm; W.R. Piper, senior partner in the real estate, management and loan firm of Marr-Piper Agency; J.E. Rogers, of the real estate and brokerage firm of Rogers & Belding; and Ray E. Sherman, Mayor of El Paso and head of the real estate firm of Leavell & Sherman.} Another HOLC Valuator was W.R. Piper, a senior partner of Marr-Piper Agency, an El Paso management and loan firm. Speaking about “valuation shrinkage,” Piper stated:

> As a general proposition, values in El Paso shrunk about 45% from the 1929 level to the depression low point. Recovery of about 15% has been made. According to the grades of security shown upon your real estate map, attached hereto, the shrinkage and respective recovery by areas has been as follows: Area “A”, Shrinkage 35%, Recovery 15%; Area “B”, Shrinkage 40%, Recovery 15%; Area
“C”, Shrinkage 50%, Recovery, None; Area “D”, Shrinkage 60%, Recovery, None. 

Piper’s statement “your real estate map” means the HOLC report map or redline map. Based on the map, Area “C” designated neighborhoods labeled as “Definitely Declining,” and Area “D” were neighborhoods which were labeled as “Hazardous.” Based on Piper’s statement, real estate values in area D (Lincoln Park included) fell 60%. Adding to the mortgage crisis was the exodus of Mexicans who left their homes to return to Mexico, as well as those who were deported. The HOLC report also mentions the deportation of Mexicans from 1933-1936 in a section on “Rental Advances.” It states:

Mexican tenement houses were acquired by Americans for investment purposes several years ago. They were then profitable, requiring little upkeep. Since the deportations of the last three years the rental situation among Mexicans has become completely demoralized. Instead of advancing, rents in Mexican properties are generally lower. It is a common saying among real estate men that “it is cheaper for the Mexican to move than to pay rent.”

Mexican tenement houses or presidios usually had one central outhouse shared by all families in the same building. The upkeep of presidios by their owners was minimal. During this period Mexicans did not earn substantial income due to the prevailing anti-Mexican sentiment, the deportation of heads of households and being scapegoated as taking positions from Anglos. Like African Americans, Mexicans were typically characterized as risks for home loans.

Redlining would have a long-lasting effect on ownership patterns in El Paso neighborhoods. Lincoln Park, as well as south El Paso, the East Side, and the future path

88 Ibid, “Summary of Interview with W.R. Piper,” 2A.
91 Ibid., 11.
of Interstate 10 appeared on a redlining map from the 1930s.\textsuperscript{92} The HOLC report map valued and marked communities in the following categories and colors: neighborhoods labeled “Best” had designations from A-1 to A-4 and were colored green; neighborhoods labeled as “Still Desirable” were designated from B-1 to B-6 and were colored blue; areas labeled as “Definitely Declining” were designated from C-1 to C-4 and were colored yellow; areas labeled as “Hazardous” were designated from D1 to D7 and were colored red; and neighborhoods which were designated as “Business and Industrial” had diagonal lines drawn across them and were not colored.\textsuperscript{93}

In the HOLC report map, Lincoln Park in its entirety and areas around it were colored red and labeled “Hazardous.”\textsuperscript{94} Present-day Montana Street, two streets north of the cemetery, was considered the color-line; homes located there were deemed “Still Desirable.”\textsuperscript{95} A valuation chart assessing every neighborhood shown on the map labeled south El Paso with a D-5 designation and Lincoln Park with a D-1 designation, both “Hazardous” areas on the HOLC report:

D-1. This is entirely a Mexican residential section wherein the houses are very poor, mostly unfinished adobe.

D-2. This small area contains the heaviest concentration of Negros in El Paso; also Mexicans [sic]. The security therein is very poor.

D-3. This large area is the concentration of Mexican peons which constitute the largest class of Mexican laborers. All of the shacks therein are very poor and there is positively no demand of any kind for property in this section (sic). This area, as well as all other Mexican sections, is avoided by mortgage lenders.

\textsuperscript{92}Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (El Paso “Residential Security”) map, n.d.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid. It was as if someone took a marker and colored the HOLC report map by hand or laid colored acetates on it.
\textsuperscript{94}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95}Ibid.
D-4. This small area is also a Negro concentration point. It is also occupied by Mexican [sic]. There is little to distinguish adjoining D-5 except the fact that [sic] negroes have centered therein.

D-5. This is a Mexican tenement section. The district is occupied entirely by Mexicans and other foreigners. In this district are a large number of tenement houses, all cheap and in a bad state of repair [sic].

D-6. This strip along the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks is occupied by Mexicans, Negroes, and foreigners. The security is old and very poor.

D-7. This section is similar in every respect to D-6 from the standpoint of type of houses therein and the character of the occupants. 96

Sections D-1 through D-7 were “redlined” and thus deemed as “Hazardous” with respect to the “security” of lending practices. In other words, individuals in the “Hazardous” areas were viewed as loan risks for bankers and creditors who followed practices created by FHA Underwriting Manuals. Redlining in communities of color has played a large role in divesting minority neighborhoods like the Lincoln Park community. Woods has stated that HOLC redlining maps and FHA underwriting manuals stigmatized minority communities that then became targets for urban renewal projects including highway construction. 97

My contention is that Lincoln Park’s experience of a pattern of discriminatory land valuation and zoning made it easier to build several freeways through it. Redlining was apparent in the Lincoln Park community labeled as “D-1” in the legend of the redlined map: “This is entirely a Mexican residential section wherein the houses are very poor, mostly unfinished adobe.” 98 In the 1950s, properties in the Lincoln Park community were cheaper to purchase for

97 E-mail with Dr. Louis Woods, Associate Professor, Middle Tennessee University, March 21, 2017.
highway building than those in the Loretto Addition which included homes in Austin Terrace. The latter was described by HOLC in the following way:

A-4, This is Austin Terrace, the exclusive and highly restricted residential section of El Paso. It is zoned for high class construction. Houses therein, all built during the last fifteen years, range in price from $10,000 to $50,000.00.”

As evidenced by the HOLC report map, most of the neighborhoods through which Interstate 10 and Federal Highway 110 were later built, were redlined, including Latta’s Woodlawn community. Ironically, the homes and businesses in the Chamizal area did not show any color markings but they were characterized as “Definitely Declining,” based on their proximity to redlined neighborhoods to the north and Mexico to the south (see Fig. 2.7).

100 Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (El Paso “Residential Security”) map.
Fig. 2.7. El Paso “Residential Security” map, Record Group 195: Records of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, 1933 - 1989, Box 154, Folder for El Paso, Texas. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.
Redlining in the 1930s condemned neighborhoods like Lincoln Park to long-term decay by stigmatizing residents as loan security risks. As urban historian Eric Avila describes in his book *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight, Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*, “Deeming crowded neighborhoods, older properties, industrial activity, and what it called ‘the presence of inharmonious racial and nationality groups’ as anathema to secure investment, the FHA’s *Underwriting Manual*, a veritable bible among private lending institutions, directed housing loans to the suburban periphery and opened doors for the exodus of people and capital away from urban centers.”¹⁰¹ The ill-effects of redlining remained in El Paso neighborhoods into the 1970s.

El Paso’s East Side

The 1950s was also a period when both African Americans and Mexican Americans faced disadvantages in education, housing, employment, and many other areas. African American and Mexican children endured inadequate and inferior schools and facilities.¹⁰² What was typically called the East side was comprised of several smaller subdivisions: Payne’s Subdivision, Moeller’s Subdivision, Garden Subdivision and East El Paso Subdivision. The East side was bordered by the present-day streets of Cotton to the west, Montana Street to the north, Stevens Street to the east and the *Río Grande* or the U.S./Mexico Boundary line to the south (see Fig. 2.8).

Several racially-mixed neighborhoods with large percentages of Mexican Americans and African Americans, including Lincoln Park, were part of El Paso’s East Side. One of the families

---


who lived in El Paso’s East Side was the William “W. C.” Calhoun Parish family, who lived on Yandell Street. In her book, *Renegade for Peace and Justice*, Congresswoman Barbara Lee states Mr. Parish became the first African American letter carrier in El Paso in 1947. According to Alex Rosas, prior to the 1970s Alamogordo Street (present-day Yandell Street) located on the northern boundary of Concordia Cemetery in the Lincoln Park community was the color line: whites lived north of the street and African Americans and Mexican Americans lived south of it. In the map below, El Paso’s East side is denoted by the broken yellow line.

![Fig. 2.8. Detail of 1943 Benson Map of El Paso, Texas. Alamogordo Street is located on the northern edge of Concordia Cemetery labeled as “Cemetery” in the center of the map. In addition, El Paso’s East side is denoted by the broken yellow line. Graphic by the author.](image)

Other neighborhoods, such as “El Pujido,” rose in proximity to the Southern Pacific Train Roundhouse (formerly at the corner of Piedras and Missouri Streets). *El Pujido* (defined in Spanish as pushed in together) was a racially-mixed neighborhood which may have acquired its

---

104 Ibid.  
105 Interview with Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas, by the author in El Paso, Texas, on June 27, 2016.
name due to its proximity to the train roundhouse. *El Pujido* is located south of Texas Street on San Antonio Street, between Cotton Street and Lee Street, and sits on the edge of Segundo Barrio. Current maps show approximately 35 homes in *Barrio Pujido*. Nolan Richardson Jr., the noted basketball player and coach, was born in *Barrio Pujido* on Ladrillo (Brick) Street on December 27, 1941.

According to Historian Manuel B. Ramírez, the East El Paso barrio also contained significant amounts of Mexican residents. The small section, approximately one square mile, contained 15 percent of El Paso Mexicans. Another area known as Southwest El Paso, which was “bordered by Stevens on the east and the city limits on the west and Montana on the north and international boundary on the south, contained 10 percent of Mexicanos,” Ramírez stated.

In the 1940s, the Lincoln Park community was the eastern portion of El Paso’s East side. A sample of the 1940 U.S. Federal Census lists five African American males and one Mexican male who worked for the railroad in the community (see Fig. 2.9). Lee Moppins, 60, worked as a janitor in a department store and later worked for the railroad. He lived at 3204 Manzana Street. Brillo Smith, 54, worked as a head in-brakeman and lived at 308 Cebada; Robert Berry, 44, worked as a porter and lived at 3306 Manzana Street; James Frazier, 34, worked as a porter and lived at 3324 Manzana; Frank Woods, 50, worked as a boiler helper and lived at 3326 Manzana; Robert E. Lee, 46, worked as a porter and lived at 3330 Manzana; and Rafael Cruz, 34, was a boiler helper who lived at 3329 Durazno Street. Later, Manzana Street was removed for the creation of Interstate 10. In 1955, the 75-year-old Moppins, who was working for the Southern

---

107 Ibid.
Pacific Railroad, and Robert E. Lee served as El Paso Delegates for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters St. Louis Southwestern Zone Conference in Dallas, Texas.109

Fig. 2.9. Two unidentified Southern Pacific Railroad Sleeping Car Porters load food and beverages on a dining car in the 1940s. The El Paso Union Depot can be seen in the background. Photographer unknown. Photograph with permission of Roy Platner Collection.

Another African American family in the Lincoln Park neighborhood was the H. L. Scales Family. Mr. Scales was born in Hotel Dieu in 1947.110 H. L.’s father was from East Texas and his mother was from Little Rock, Arkansas. His father had come to El Paso as a worker for the Highway Department; he settled his family in the Lincoln Park community on Durazno Street, in a house that he inherited from his great aunts. In an interview, H. L. Scales’ sister, Mrs. Oralee Smith, stated her aunt’s husband was nicknamed “Country” Claybourne and he was from Louisiana.111 She said her stepfather was a “CC Boy” (a member of the Colored Cavalry) and a

110 Interview with H.L. Scales by the author, El Paso, Texas, September 27, 2016.
111 Interview with Mrs. Oralee Smith by the author, El Paso, Texas, October 1, 2016.
cook; he arrived in El Paso in 1931 or 1932. Mrs. Smith said she knew three Buffalo soldiers. One of them was Mr. Brown, who is buried at Ft. Bliss. Mrs. Smith’s brother, H. L. Scales, confirmed they used to know Buffalo Soldiers who lived in the Lincoln Park community. Because Fort Bliss was once located in Concordia, residents of Lincoln Park probably included military men from Buffalo soldiers and the Colored Calvary.

There were other black families in the neighborhood, such as the Jake and Annie M. Manigo Family. The Manigo’s home was located a few blocks from Lincoln School in the French Addition (where many African American families lived). The Manigo home was bought by the Highway Department on January 1, 1959, to create Interstate 10. Ms. Smith’s Uncle Mr. Harvey bought the adobe house at 4220 Durazno in 1917. She recounted: “In 1929, a lady moved from Arkansas to Vidol [Texas] and she told Mrs. Smith’s grandmother the prospects were wonderful for Blacks [in El Paso, Texas], and you could get a live-in job.” Mrs. Smith said Mr. Harvey was married to Mattie Harvey and Mr. Harvey’s sister-in-law, Mamie Stevens, lived with them. Mrs. Smith shared that her aunts were buried in Concordia Cemetery. Mrs. Smith said her parents did not live acrimoniously and at times she lived on Durazno Street and other times she lived on Eucalyptus Street. Her Aunt, Odessa Claiborne, lived on Eucalyptus Street, near Douglass Elementary.

112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., The Buffalo soldier Ms. Smith might have referred to might have been Donnie Wah Brown, who was born on April 8, 1908, and passed away June 1, 1995. He lived at 3203 Wyoming Street in the East El Paso Addition which was east of the Lincoln Park neighborhood. He was a Master Sargent and Private in the U.S. Army (discharged in 1953). He served in World War II and in Korea. He is buried at the Section O Site 1878 at the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery. Ms. Smith stated during her interview on October 1, 2016, that Mr. Brown, as she called him (not knowing his first name) is buried at the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery, and he is one of nine Buffalo soldiers, buried there.
114 Interview with H. L. Scales by the author, El Paso, Texas, September 27, 2016.
116 Interview with Oralee Smith by the author. Mrs. Smith stated a live-in job was one where an individual worked Monday through Friday at a residence and on weekends they went home and returned on Monday.
117 Interview with Oralee Smith by the author, El Paso, Texas, October 1, 2016.
118 Ibid.
Jim Crow and Urbanization

Sociologist David Montejano has argued that the segregation of Mexicans in Texas began to weaken in the 1940s due to urbanization and the rise of the Texas Mexican middle class: “Mexicans in the cities remained second-class citizens but whites were more cautious and respectful.” But these social changes were not sufficient to overturn race restrictions. It took four events to challenge the racial order: “(1) the emergency of World War II; (2) the mechanization of labor-intensive agriculture; (3) the growth of urban-based commercial interests; and (4) pressure from below and outside – the civil rights struggle of the 1960s.”

Nevertheless, according to Montejano, even before the war, in border cities like El Paso, Laredo, and Brownsville “ethnic relations were flexible and pragmatic” and “more a matter of class than of ‘race.’”

However, like other communities of color in the country and in Texas, most of the El Paso communities affected by the creation of Interstate 10 and other freeways were not represented in the decision-making. City politics in the years from 1954 to 1968 (the years Interstate 10 was built) was controlled by elites who did not represent El Paso’s Mexican American and African American citizenry. Further, since road building was linked to military efforts, few citizens fought against the building of the freeways. In spite of the devaluation of properties and the characterization of credit worthiness of African Americans and Mexican Americans during this period, community churches played important anchors in the lives of

---

120 Ibid., 31.
121 Ibid., 32.
residents. A common thread among the oral histories of residents who lived in the Lincoln Community was the important role of their neighborhood social groups in keeping their community bonded.

**The Lincoln Park Neighborhood Before the Freeways**

Mrs. Smith remembers there weren’t very many cars and the lions from Washington Park would scare her. Her parents explained the lions were in their cages and they could not come and get her. She said without much traffic, she could hear everything in the neighborhood. She attended Douglass Elementary and Bowie High School. She graduated from high school in 1956 and attended Brown’s business school, then got married. Her husband traveled throughout Europe while in the military service.

When asked about attending Bowie High School, Mrs. Smith said she and her friends organized a club called “The Charms.” The Charms (see Fig. 2.10) would walk to Bowie High School as a group through various neighborhoods so there would be less of a chance of being roughed up; in addition, they walked alongside the railroad tracks going to and coming from Bowie High School in Segundo Barrio. The group included Nolan Richardson, and his two sisters, Mrs. Smith, and her friend Dorothy who all attended Bowie High School. Her other friends attended Jefferson High School and El Paso Technical School.

---

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
Mrs. Smith said she was inspired by Richardson, who she described as “always very calm”; her experience walking back and forth to school was terrifying, but “Sam” as they called Richardson, would put their fears to rest. The Charms may have had reasons to band together for protection because neighborhoods during the 1950s were not safe for African American youth. In a January 3, 2005 article for *Newspaper Tree*, Attorney Ray E. Rojas described the Lincoln Park community as a rough and tumble neighborhood:

The *barrio* of Lincoln probably got its name from the nearby elementary school. Manzanilla, Durazo, and Rosa streets run east and west, Boone, Bowie, Roosevelt, Marr, Radford, and Ledo run north hitting Interstate 10 and south to the railroad tracks. To Lincoln’s south, Evergreen Cemetery gives a morbid wave from across the railroad tracks — tracks that at one time could easily be crossed to get to *La Roca* — but the tracks are now fenced off. The ghost of Victoriano ‘Viejo’ Huerta, *borracho de la de patas mas chuecas*, roams drunk at night and the Ramsey Steel Company sits as a stable fortress nearby. ‘I used to walk across Wyoming Street every day until they started building the interstate,’ says Teresa Orozco, a worker for Project Bravo. ‘Until one day, one of the workers told me I could not because I

---

126 Ibid.
was going to get hurt walking through the construction.’ Now the Lincoln Community Center, established in 1977, and a park, put up in 1980, sits in the middle of El Paso’s Spaghetti Bowl as the daily El Paso traffic travels by it.\textsuperscript{127}

Rojas captures some of the folklore associated with the Lincoln Park neighborhood. \textit{La Roca} (the Rock) is situated where the University Medical Center (formerly R. E. Thomason Hospital) now stands. Mrs. Smith said African Americans started moving out of the Lincoln Park area to Hacienda Heights in El Paso’s Eastside. She stated that at its height (from the 1940s to the 1950s), there were more than 25 African American families in the Lincoln Park area, yet African Americans also lived in \textit{Segundo Barrio} (El Paso’s Second Ward).

In an interview, David Prieto said in the 1950s there were five to six Black families in the Lincoln Park community. Prieto said, “What was amazing back then was that the kids, the Black kids around our age, most all of them spoke Spanish, just like us and they even spoke English with an accent, you know?\textsuperscript{128} He said they just saw them like regular Chicanos like themselves. Teresa Orozco, a long-time resident, said when her family moved into Lincoln Park in 1957, the neighborhood was “\textit{puro Negro},” meaning the people who lived in there were “pure Blacks” or predominantly Black.\textsuperscript{129} On September 20, 2013, Trish Long, the librarian at the \textit{El Paso Times} ran a photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson visiting a house on 3101 Gateway West (formerly 3101 Madera Street) during his 1964 visit to El Paso (see Fig. 2.11). The online posting stated:

Remember the 1960’s? Recognize the family shaking hands with President Lyndon B. Johnson in this photo? This was President Johnson’s Sep. 1964 visit to El Paso to meet with Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos to settle the Chamizal dispute. An article from the coverage says crowds lined the route and LBJ’s motorcade stopped so he could shake hands. This house was at 3101 Gateway West, the street was Madera street before I-10 was built. This is not the family that lived at that address.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{128} Interview with David Prieto by the author, May 14, 2015.
\textsuperscript{129} Interview with Teresa Orozco, by the author, September 24, 2016.
\textsuperscript{130} Trish Long, “Tales from the Morgue, El Paso History is Never Dead,” September 20, 2013 (accessed March 6 2017); available from \url{http://elpasotimes.typepad.com/morgue/2013/09/remember-september-25-1964.html}. 

94
As we can see in the photograph during President Johnson’s visit, the Lincoln Park community was a mixed area. Madera Street became Gateway West with the creation of Interstate 10. In 1954, Rebecca Sterling’s family moved to Lincoln Park to a house on the corner of Copia and Manzana (what is now Gateway West), when she was one-year-old. Sterling said the homes in her neighborhood all had porches like the homes on Yandell and Montana Streets. Across from Copia Street, there were two *presidios* (tenements). Sterling said her family had lived in Lincoln Park before the freeway. The Lincoln community was next to an *embarcadero*

---

131 Telephone interview with Rebecca Valdez Sterling, by the author, September 8, 2010.
(a stockyard), a cattle slaughterhouse, and a graveyard which used to be next to a dairy (see Fig. 2.12).\footnote{Stockyards in the Lincoln Park community included the Independent Union Stock Yards Company at 3802 Durazno St. (1936).}

The stockyard was the Independent Union Stock Yards Company, located at 3802 Durazno Street.\footnote{Hudspeth Directory Co. El Paso City Directory, 1921, El Paso, Texas (accessed March 4, 2018); available from \url{texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth285899/}. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, \url{texashistory.unt.edu}; crediting University of Texas at El Paso, 946.} Sterling said the area was racially mixed, “that there were a lot of Hispanics, a lot of African-Americans, some Puerto Ricans, and Germans.”\footnote{Ibid.}

When asked about how her family heard about the arrival of the freeway, Sterling said:

They contacted us (in 1958 or 1959) because they took our front yard. The city came and told us that the property belonged to the city and they took our front yard. The streets right now are Gateway East and Copia. That was my front yard. That

Fig. 2.12. Lincoln Park Community in 1953. Banes Aerial Photography. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation Photograph Archives. Illustration created by the author.
part itself was the front yard. Everyone on Gateway East, everybody, their yards got taken up. They were important properties. They had many front yards.\textsuperscript{135}

As Sterling recounts, the city of El Paso came and took their front yards to build Gateway East. It was not known whether families were compensated for the removal of their front yards.

In 1959, when Mateo Hinojosa Jr. returned from military service he said a Jewish lady named Ms. Gould came from the East Coast to help Lincoln Park residents organize politically to vote.\textsuperscript{136} Hinojosa said Lincoln School was formerly a voting precinct for the area which included the Loretto area joined with Lincoln Park residents. During that time, Hinojosa said, the Loretto area was walled-off from the rest of the neighborhoods (as a gated community). Hinojosa said his mother attended a school board meeting to complain about the food the children were being served at Lincoln School and she also questioned why the campus had not been painted.

Hinojosa said the next day district painters showed up to paint the school.\textsuperscript{137}

Hinojosa’s parents bought a new house north of Raynolds Street and north from Hawkins Dairy and the Lincoln Park ponding area. His parent’s house was on Ledo Road. He said they used to get flooded all the time because they had only one drain at the end of Durazno. “The drain was there for 50 years and whenever it rained, and it caused the flooding, and the water all came from the Loretto area, and the one drain could not take it all, so it will spill over and flood the neighborhood,” he said.\textsuperscript{138}

Mateo’s wife, Lydia Bueno Hinojosa lived in the Lincoln Park neighborhood from 1942 until 1964 when she married. She attended Kindergarten and First Grade at Lincoln School in the

\textsuperscript{135} Sterling Interview by the author, September 8, 2010. Yards were removed from the residents to build the gateways for Interstate 10. In building highways, states had a choice on building gateways. In Texas, highway builders created gateways (also called freeway access roads).
\textsuperscript{136} Interview with Lydia and Mateo Hinojosa, by the author, April 20, 2015.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
1940s. Her father was in the service during World War II, and when he returned, he found out she had been getting in trouble at Lincoln School. Lydia said her father did not like the school because he felt it was not educating the children. Lydia’s parents owned a store called Bueno’s Grocery at 4200 Whites Oaks (present-day Wyoming Street), and they decided they would send their daughters to Loretto Academy instead of having them attend Lincoln School.

Mr. Hinojosa remembered the cattle stockyards in the area as well as Montes Dairy, Lanes Dairy, and Hawkins Dairy.\(^{139}\) He said Bueno Grocery had a meat section, and Lydia’s father would extend credit to neighborhood patrons. He kept a ledger and most people would pay him on Fridays when they would get paid. Lydia said there were three stores in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, her parents’ store, Barrera’s Grocery across the street, and Abeytia’s Grocery Store located south of Hillside School. Rosa’s Store (Rosa’s Food Market), located at 4301 Rosa Avenue, is the only store which is still open in the neighborhood.

According to Mrs. Hinojosa, prominent families in the Lincoln Park community included “the Gutierrezes, Mr. Duran, Mr. Duron, Benavidez Family (a huge family lived next door to Concha—who was always making beans and tortillas for her large family), the Gementes, Eduardo ‘Lalo’ Rodríguez, City Inspector, Mauro Rosas (who was part of a family of musicians), Gerardo, Tom, Rosie, the Borregos, and a Mr. Ayala, who would train and board horses.”\(^{140}\) Lydia remembered Lincoln School had various grades, up to the eighth grade, with two classes for each grade. Children were severely punished for speaking Spanish. She remembered a child nicknamed “Blackie” who was caught defending her in the playground because she spoke Spanish. Lydia said someone told the principal and Blackie was dragged into

---

\(^{139}\) Ibid.

\(^{140}\) Ibid.
the office and beaten. Lydia said all her teachers at Lincoln School in the 1940s were Anglos.¹⁴¹

Every morning the children reported to their teachers to be examined for cleanliness and lice. If they were not clean, they would be taken to the bathroom and cleaned. Lydia said she remembers one boy in tenements nearby who used to bathe himself in a metal tub, in all kinds weather, even when it snowed, so he would not be cleaned in the bathroom. Lydia’s parents’ house was located on what is now Highway 54. Mateo felt the compensation for his parents’ property was fair, having been appraised at $38,000.¹⁴² According to Mateo, highway builders advised people not to move out of the house until they received the check for their homes from the state. If they settled with the state, in turn, they would “sell back” the house to residents for $200. Meaning that for an additional $200 paid by the former owners, owners could go into the former property and retrieve any fixtures that were not part of the house and take them for their next home.

Lydia said her parents were offered an appraisal in 1966 or 1967 and moved out in 1968.¹⁴³ The building of US 54 did not begin until everyone had moved out. Mateo said his neighbor, Mr. Rodríguez, fought the appraisal but received less money for his home. Mateo said his parents knew the freeway was coming because his father, who was a city building inspector, had seen a letter in his office at Bassett Tower about the acquisition of properties.¹⁴⁴ Mateo and Lydia did not recall any community meetings that residents and business owners were invited to attend. Concerning the community life of the neighborhood, Lydia was a member of Las

---

¹⁴¹ Ibid.
¹⁴² Ibid.
¹⁴³ Ibid.
¹⁴⁴ The El Paso Builders Association had offices in Bassett Towers. The Builders Association was created by George C. Hervey (brother of former El Paso city mayor Fred Hervey). George Hervey was the association’s first President. The Association also published a magazine. An inquiry by the author into the El Paso Builder’s Association’s archives produced no materials. Current officers are unaware of any materials or archives from the association’s early years.
Teresitas and at Easter, she was part of the Passion plays; she said the entire neighborhood would participate. Lydia stated El Calvario also provided housing for indigents or homeless individuals.  

Mateo’s sister, Martha Hinojosa Arriola, who now lives in North Corona (Norco), California, lived in Lincoln Park from 1950 to 1957. She remembers the streets in the community were not paved and flooding was a major problem. She and her sister attended Lincoln School from the second to the fifth grade. She remembers her second-grade teacher, named Mrs. Phelps. She also remembered that Ms. Lord and Mrs. Malandroff did not have good reputations (probably because they were strict). Martha was a finalist in the school’s Spelling Bee one year. She had many happy memories of her neighbors. She recalled the Lincoln Park neighborhood as a close-knit community and that there were five to six families who used to have get-togethers. She said the Jacquez family was active with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the Delgado family was one of the prominent families.

Other organizations that were active in the community were the Parent and Teachers Association (P.T.A.) and the Democratic Party. Martha also remembers a woman named Mrs. Ross who came to the Lincoln Park neighborhood to organize community members to vote. She said the community celebrated most festivals at Lincoln School. She learned to dance the Chapanecas, as well as the May Day Dance. The community also celebrated all the holidays. She said the State bought their home for the creation of Interstate 10 and that approximately 15 to 20 families had to move elsewhere.

Among the many students who attended Lincoln School and later became prominent persons in the community was former State Representative Mauro Rosas, a former pupil of

145 Interview with Lydia and Mateo Hinojosa, by the author, April 20, 2015.
146 Interview with Martha Hinojosa Arriola, by the author, June 11, 2015.
Grace Lord, who taught there for 31 years beginning in 1928, Rosas, the son of Justo and Julia Rosas, was born on December 5, 1925. During World War II, he served in the US Army Air Corps and later became an El Paso Attorney (see Fig. 2.13). He was one of seven children. His family lived in Lincoln Park. He attended Lincoln School in the 1930s and graduated from Bowie High School in 1943. He earned his undergraduate degree in the College of Mines (now the University of Texas at El Paso) and then he studied law at South Texas College of Law. He became licensed to practice law on August 27, 1953. His two other brothers, Mike and Tom Rosas, also became lawyers.

Fig. 2.13. Mauro Rosas (b. 1925) Rosas served as El Paso’s first Mexican American State Representative during the Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh Texas legislatures (1959-1962).

148 Mauro Rosas, cv, n.d. The courtesy of his nephews and brothers Alex and Roberto "Robi" Rosas.
149 Handbook of Texas Online, Zachary Foust and R. Matt Abigail, "Rosas, Mauro" (accessed March 10, 2018); available from http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/froef.
150 Interview with Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas, by the author in El Paso, Texas, on June 27, 2016.
Rosas’ military service included the U.S. Army, and he was part of the Army Air Corps as an Aerial Gunner. He was a Staff Sargent assigned to the 2126 AAF BB and was honorably discharged after completing 53 combat missions in Europe. He also served as a Ball-Turret gunner in a B-24 bomber and his decorations included two Air Medals and Four Battle Stars (Ribbon w/1 Silver Battle Star, Good Conduct Medal, Air Medal with 2 Bronze Clusters, and 1 Overseas Service Bar). He was active in the following organizations: the Segura McDonald Post 5615; the Catholic War Veterans of the United States; the El Paso Chamber of Commerce; LULAC Council #8; the El Paso Bar Association; the Mexican American Bar Association; and the State of Texas Bar Association.

Rosas was also the first Latino State Representative from El Paso, Texas to serve in Austin during the twentieth century in 1959 during the Fifty-Sixth and Fifty-Seven Sessions (1959-1963). As State Representative, he served on the National Legislative Leaders Conference and the Presidential Inauguration of John F. Kennedy. He was also chairman of the Free Conference Committee for the General Tax Bill; a Member of the General Revenue and Taxation Committee; a member of the Constitution Amendments Committee; and served on the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. Rosas was instrumental in creating important projects and events in El Paso. He was successful in signing the land grant to obtain land for the creation of the Sun Bowl, and along with others started the first Veteran’s Parade in El Paso; and he obtained another land grant to create Veteran’s Memorial Park in Northeast El Paso. He died September 10, 1993 and is buried at Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

---

Alex [b. 1938] and Robert “Robi” Rosas [b. 1943], Mauro’s brothers, attended Lincoln School in the 1950s. During their interview, Alex remembered that business owner Consuelo Forti’s mother was the cook at Lincoln School. Their father, Alejandro Rosas and his two brothers, who were born in 1920s, also attended Lincoln School. Mauro attended Lincoln School in the 1930s. Robert attended class at Lincoln School in the 1940s during the height of segregation. As an elected state representative, Rosas advocated for Latino city employees, firemen, bus drivers, and over time, his brothers stated, Mexican Americans were hired for those positions. Alex said his brother Mauro also supported Judge José Marquez when he graduated from law school. The Rosas brothers also said there was discrimination in technical positions such as telephone pole men. Robert said Ignacio “Nacho” Padilla, former El Paso city representative could not get hired as a pole man for the telephone company in El Paso, so he went to Los Angeles and was hired there. Upon his return, he became the first Mexican American pole man hired in El Paso. He later ran for office and was elected city representative.

Alex and Robert Rosas’s uncles (Mauro, Mike, and Tom Rosas) lived at their family’s homestead located at 4219 Wyoming (formerly White Oaks Street). Their grandparents lived next to Ramsey Steel, a long-time business in the Lincoln Park community. During their interview Alex and Robert recounted how they felt their family was bullied into selling their property to make way for Interstate 10. Regarding the State purchase of their property for the creation of Interstate 10, Robert said, “The thing about it when they were buying the houses, the state, they were giving them almost nothing, so when they came to my grandmother’s house which would be Mauro’s former home, she said, no, no, no, we’re not settling until we settle for

---

152 Interview with Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas.
153 Consuelo Forti, a noted business owner, and community leader owns Forti’s Mexican Elder Restaurant, a well-known restaurant located in South Central El Paso.
154 Interview with Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas.
this amount of money.” Roberto stated, “She was one of the few ones that got the actual value than what the state was offering at the time.” He said state agents were not bilingual and they offered owners prices below market values. “A man came in, and he was giving the owners below [market] value for their properties and since a lot of them did not understand English they were told to sign, or they put pressure on them, and they did not know they were selling their homes below market value,” Rosas said.

Another prominent Lincoln School student was Dr. Manuel D. Hornedo, who was born on June 11, 1903. He attended El Paso Junior College and Texas School of Mines and Metallurgy (now UT El Paso). Dr. Hornedo taught at the El Paso Technical Institute for two years before receiving his M.D. degree from the Medical Branch of the University of Texas. He later joined the United States Public Health Reserve and worked at the El Paso City-County Health Unit in 1933 as a Clinician. In 1952, he was appointed Health Officer for the City and County of El Paso and Director of the El Paso City-County Health Unit. Hornedo conducted research on the human thymus gland for more than 40 years in the determination of the etiology and had been a leader in the treatment of AIDS and other diseases of the immune system.

Martin Fierro, a noted saxophone player, and brother of Teresa Orozco, a resident of Lincoln Park was another significant figure who lived in the Lincoln Park community (see Fig. 2.14). Miriam Hospodar in her biography on Martin Fierro said he was known as The Meester:

A Native American of the Apache and Tarahumara tribes…born in Mexico on January 18, 1942, Fierro’s family moved to El Paso, Texas in 1952…he taught

155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
himself to play the saxophone so he could join the high school band…playing in a local club six-nights a week…backing up musicians such as Chuck Berry…in 1964 Fierro embraced jazz, performing in Mexico City with the Maxnava Jazz Four for audiences that included Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk…at the invitation of those musicians, he planned to move to New York City to continue a career in jazz…in 1968, destiny guided him to the San Francisco Bay Area where he continued to play both jazz and rock, mesmerizing live audiences and embarking on a recording career with a variety of bands and musicians.  

At his death, Fierro was considered one of the most versatile, accomplished and respected saxophone players in American rock history. He played with Mother Earth, Michael Bloomfield, Mark Naftalin, Tracy Nelson, James Cotton, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Shades of Joy, Merle Saunders, Steve Miller, Boz Scaggs, Queen Ida, the String Cheese Incident, Yonder Mountain String Band, Dark Star Orchestra and New Monsoon. He also formed a permanent musical alliance and friendship with Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead and played on several of their albums. Fierro died from cancer on March 13, 2008, in Marin County, Calif.  

160 Ibid.  
161 Ibid.
In a telephone interview, Los Angeles artist Pedro Martínez, whose family was originally from San Antonio, said he grew up in El Paso’s East Side around the jazz clubs with names like “Club Society” and “The Black and Ten” on Alameda Street before desegregation in the 1950s. When he was in the ninth grade, he said he quit high school to form a rock-and-roll band, but then he was drafted and served in Vietnam. He graduated from Jefferson High School between 1964 and 1965 and played with African American bands in 1976 or 1977. He remembered that there was a nightclub located at 5400 Alameda (present-day Food City Supermarket), next to a bowling alley that featured a performance venue called Rusty’s. Fats Domino and His “Goin’ Home” Orchestra played at Rusty’s Playhouse, formerly located at 3208

---

162 Telephone Interview with Pedro Martínez, by the author, July 3, 2017.
163 Ibid.
Alameda Street, on Saturday, October 22, 1955 (see Fig. 2.15).\textsuperscript{164} Tickets sold for $1.95 in advance and $2.40 at the door.\textsuperscript{165}

![fig215.png](image)

Fig. 2.15. Advertisement for Fats Domino & His "Goin’ Home" Orchestra at Rusty’s Playhouse, 3208 Alameda. \textit{El Paso Herald-Post}, Wednesday, October 19, 1955, 22.

Martínez said also knew Sonny Powell, who lived in south El Paso and Gerald Hunter who lived in \textit{Barrio Pujido}. Martínez said “there were not many old-timers who could remember the African American community in its heyday because their life expectancies were low.”\textsuperscript{166} He

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{164} Dance October 22, Fats Domino and His “Goin” Home Orchestra, \textit{El Paso Herald-Post}, October 19, 1955, 22, (accessed March 4, 2018); available in Newspaper Archive. Fats Domino played subsequent concerts at the El Paso County Coliseum. \\
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{166} Telephone Interview with Pedro Martínez, by the author, July 3, 2017. 
\end{flushleft}
said an African American Legion hall is still located on the corner of Palm and Myrtle Streets, which opened in 1945.  

Three Generations of Lincoln Park School Students

Several generations of the Prieto Family attended Lincoln School from the 1940s to 1970. Francisco Prieto attended Lincoln School from 1955 to 1962. He was born and raised in the community, and his home was two blocks from Lincoln School, at 4301 Stephenson and Roosevelt Streets. He said his grandmother bought the house in 1944 while her husband was in Italy during World War II. Prieto said his family tree goes back to 1775, with the immigration of his ancestors from Chihuahua. His great-grandfather was also named Francisco Prieto, and he was born in 1875 in Tucson, Arizona. Prieto's grandfather, as well as his aunts and uncles all attended Lincoln School. When asked about what levels of classes existed at Lincoln Park School, Prieto stated:

They went all the way from First to Sixth [Grades]. Later they added Seventh [Grade], because many people, they were going to Jefferson [High School] to intermediate and then they added another year. More or less around the same time the people that lived across the railroad tracks where the General Hospital is now at, called La Roca; they used to go to Burleson, but then the last year, everyone that was going to Burleson, they sent to Lincoln. There were 500 students there with 25 to 30 students per class. The classes were when you came in from the Southside; there were four of them, and there were First Grade, Second Grade, and they all went down the hall until you get to Fifth Grade. The other classes were upstairs. Sixth and Seventh [Grades] were upstairs. The janitor named Willie, and his family lived in the Cafétorium [that was] a combination cafeteria, and auditorium.

Concerning businesses in the neighborhood, Prieto remembered the grocery stores in the community included Lagunas Grocery, Fields Grocery, Rosa Food Market and Davies Market

167 Ibid.
168 Interview with Francisco Prieto, by the author, March 24, 2015, El Paso, Texas.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
(owned by Nacho González), as well as Lane’s Dairy, a Pepsi warehouse and a trucking company. He said the Peyton Company also ran a stockyard located a block away on the west side of Lincoln School (the Union Stockyards). The stockyards were close to the railroad tracks where they would unload the cattle and later take them to the slaughterhouse.

Prieto said his grandfather was paid $35,000 in 1970 for his house by the Texas Department of Transportation. Their house consisted of several lots. Prieto’s uncle, David Prieto, was born in 1953 and his family lived in the Lincoln Park neighborhood.171 His great grandfather was born in the early teens, and he lived at 3500 Rosa. His father was born in 1909, and he lived there with his grandfather who attended Lincoln School in the early teens. When his parents married in 1928, Val Verde Street was the end of the city limits. Prieto was born in 1953, and he was sixteen-years-old when his family had to move from the neighborhood. He remembers that with the arrival of the freeway, the community became isolated. He states:

The main thing I remember [about the community] was that it was isolated. We have cemeteries on each side of Lincoln. In the early 60s, they built a freeway, I-10, and it isolated Lincoln [Park]. I-10 was on one side and Evergreen Cemetery on the other side. And then to the west of it were warehouses. And then to the east of Lincoln, there were more warehouses. Before that, in the early teens, my grandfather lived west of the Lincoln School. The area between Lincoln School which is Martínez Street and Copia…the trains would bring livestock there. In the early teens, twenties, the area west of Lincoln School was a stockyard and later they built warehouses all over the place. So, [the] Lincoln [neighborhood] became isolated. The closest neighbor was, before the freeway, was [on] Manzana and Tularosa Streets, so those neighbors knew each other, but afterward, it was all by itself. To the south of Lincoln, the other neighborhood was La Roca (the Rock) -- that was it. The molino (the mill) was right across from Lincoln School, and it operated, when I was five, six or seven-years-old. A lot of people would take the corn to mill there. It was at the northeast corner, across the street from Lincoln [School].172

171 Interview with David Prieto by the author, May 14, 2015, El Paso, Texas.
172 Ibid.
Prieto said in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s people fueled their homes with petroleum. He attended Lincoln School in 1958 or 1959. His older brothers attended Lincoln School in the late 1940s, and the early 1950s (see Fig. 2.16). His father attended Lincoln School in the teens.

Fig. 2.16. Photographer unknown. The Prieto Family at Lincoln Park, Christmas, 1958. David is the youngest child on the left-hand side of his father, Francisco Prieto. His father attended Lincoln School up to the fifth grade. Photograph with permission of David Prieto.

According to David Prieto, Lincoln School had three sections of every grade level. First to seventh grade and from AB, A, B, C. “So, if you were in 3A, you were in the smart class; in 3B, you were in the medium; if you were in 3C, you knew you were with the not too bright group,” he said. Teachers sat you depending on your grades, with the smartest students in the
first row and so on and “every student knew it was a given.” Activities centered on celebrating Texas heroes. Truancy was limited among the students at Lincoln School, but Prieto said he was in and out of the office mostly for speaking Spanish and for being late to class. He said he and other children were often late because many of them went home for lunch.

Since many of the mothers did not work, at lunchtime all the Lincoln children would run home as far as four blocks away. “Many of us would be late, especially if our Moms had chile colorado con carne or chile relleños or they are still making tortillas and they are still nice and warm, and we would all have a warm tortilla with butter,” Prieto said. Punishment for being late to school were paddle swats in the office and he said many of the children were late “every single day.” Prieto states:

There were about six Black families there. It was the Whites, the Fields. The Fields who owned a little store and that is where everyone went to pay their poll tax. My dad made it a big deal that every year, he had to pay his poll tax. He was very proud of voting. He was a World War II Veteran, served in Europe, so he was very proud of being a veteran. Every year, come what time, he would always pay his poll tax. I would always go with him. To this day, I never fail to vote. My Dad used to pay to vote, you know. And we would go to the Fields store to pay.

Prieto said students at Lincoln School would also engage in antics much to the chagrin of their teachers. He said once one student brought fresh flowers to school. The teacher was pleased when a student brought her fresh flowers until she found out he took them from a recent funeral ceremony at the cemetery. David’s sister, Dalia Prieto-Rivero was born at home in 1957. She also lived at 4301 Stephenson, while Interstate 10 was built behind their home. Her parents were Francisco Prieto and Laurencia Holguin Prieto. She remembers her life in Lincoln Park fondly:

I have a lot of beautiful memories of the neighborhood. You could say that we had nothing, but we had everything. The neighborhood was tight-knit. Summertime was the best time ever because as soon as the sun went down, everyone came out to

173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Interview with Dalia Prieto-Rivero by the author, April 21, 2015.
play. There were no such things as games and stuff, toys. We played La *Quemada*, *Chinchilagua*, hide-and-go-seek, kick the can. Moreover, while we are doing this, all the ladies of the neighborhood, all the moms, would sit down in somebody’s front yard and just talk away, while the men would get together in somebody else’s house and they would drink beer or play the guitar, or they would tell jokes or whatever. It was wonderful, and the moment you heard your Dad whistle or yell your name, it was time to go in. It was wonderful; it was a beautiful time. We had no air conditioning. We would open our windows. It was very safe for us. Everyone knew us. It was very knit-tight, and when someone was in some crisis, whether it would be food or sickness, everybody pitched in.\(^{176}\)

Prieto-Rivero was referring to the years before the Interstate was built. She describes her neighborhood as a close-knit community. Communities in many of the neighborhoods before the arrival of the freeways had close relationships and kinships, and they supported each other in times of need. The creation of El Paso’s freeways disrupted the fabrics of these communities and divided their neighborhoods.

### A Chicago Family in the Lincoln Park Community

The Lincoln Park neighborhood was a vibrant community. Even young children remember it vividly. Mari Primero said her parents moved to El Paso from Chicago shortly after World War II.\(^{177}\) She was born in 1951 when her parents rented a house on Durazno Street. Her father fixed up the house for his family, but then the owner asked that it be returned to him once it was repaired. She remembers a flood damaged their rented home, and thereafter her family had to move to another house across from Lincoln School. In 1956, Mari’s father bought a new house in the Ranchland neighborhood and her family moved away, but she remembers her life in Lincoln fondly. Even though she was five-years-old, she said she had great memories of the community. She remembered the owner of Rosa Grocery named Nacho and his beautiful wife

\(^{176}\) Ibid.

\(^{177}\) Facebook e-mail chat with Mari Primero, former Lincoln Park resident, by the author, December 20, 2016.
named Loretta or Laura. There was an African-American woman named Miss Davis who also had a small store. She remembers her neighbors, the Perezes, the Cuetos (the husband was a mechanic), and a neighbor who worked for the water company. She remembers a woman named Señora Gamboa who was a good friend of her mother. Mari’s family lived across from Lincoln School, next to the store located at the corner owned by Juan Benavidez. The molino or corn mill was located at the corner of her block, in between apartments and they shared the backyard with chicken farmers and clothes lines. Her mother’s comadre (friend) lived in the big white house that still stands owned by Salvador and Mercedes Leal. She remembers the Leals who moved to California when Mr. Leal got a job for the railroad. Their son Salvador Jr. was a talented artist who graduated from Jefferson High School in 1968, but he was killed in Vietnam. Because his family moved to Barstow, California, he was not listed as a Texan. Mari’s parents and the Leals remained friends until the Leals both passed away in their 90’s.

Mari remembers the bazaars, weddings, baptisms and the priest at El Calvario where she was baptized and where she offered flowers to the church for the whole month of May. She remembers the trains, funerals, fights after school, the lions at Washington Park roaring at night and the hobos jumping the trains. On weekends, her family and their friends would all gather at Julio Cueto’s house. The men would fix their cars. The kids would play. She said the women chatted and cooked. They cooked mole, sopa, menudo, etc. Then the men would sit around and play their guitars, sing, and laugh. She remembered that her father had a friend named Hector, who did not live in the area but he, his wife and family would visit every weekend. He had only one arm, but according to Mari, he was an amazing mechanic.

---

178 A talented artist in high school who created the banners for the football team, Salvador Leal Jr. was drafted to Vietnam right after high school. He was killed by friendly fire.
Conclusion

The Lincoln Park community was an emerging neighborhood in the early-twentieth century in El Paso’s East side located at the end of the city limits. African Americans lived alongside Mexicans. Mexicans migrated north to El Paso and other areas after the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910. In El Paso various neighborhoods like El Pujido were created in proximity to the railroad station. Like Lincoln Park, El Pujido was an ethnically-mixed neighborhood, as was south El Paso.

The Great Depression in the 1930s created anti-Mexican sentiments and spurred a decline of home ownership and rental properties as thousands of Mexicans were deported or left on their own. Redlining was created by the federal government which stigmatized largely African American, as well as Mexican El Paso neighborhoods. Mexican students attended inferior schools in the period of Americanization. Yet even amid the Depression and the deportation of Mexicans, Lincoln Park residents who were intent on bettering their neighborhood built their community church El Calvario under the direction of Father Pacheco.

World War II ended the Depression. The Lincoln Park Neighborhood from the 1940s to the 1950s was an idyllic but also a conflicted community as detailed in oral histories with former residents. But this peaceful moment was short-lived as dramatic changes were about to unfold with the creation of El Paso’s freeways in the 1960s. In 1956, states were allocated funds by the federal government to purchase properties via the Federal-Aid Highway Act which sought to create a national Interstate System, as well as other freeways.179 Urban renewal and highway

---

construction were intertwined with the displacement of residents. Coupled with politics, insider knowledge and interests, housing, suburbanization, and the needs of school districts, the creation of highways across neighborhoods created a ripple effect which altered communities and created new ones. An example is the building of Interstate 10 through Sunset Heights which cut off the neighborhood from downtown El Paso.
This chapter discusses trans-border, national, state and local issues associated with highway building. It also profiles some of the key actors at federal, state and local levels who shaped El Paso’s urban space through the creation of its freeways. It also discusses the influence race and class played in the decision making of highway projects. The decision of where to locate Interstate 10 was an important element which is also explored in this chapter.

One important figure in the creation of Interstate 10 and subsequent roads was attorney Tom Diamond. Diamond created the city’s first right-of-way office, which initiated the process of acquiring land for the Texas Highway Department. Diamond later served as Chairman of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce’s Highway Council after the passage of the Highway Act was federally mandated in 1956. Another important individual was El Paso District Engineer Joe Battle, whose tenure at the Texas Highway Department from 1963 to 1991 coincided with the building of El Paso’s first freeways and its major roads.

Relatively few people in El Paso were represented in the decision-making regarding highway building. Politics and race played a large role in the building of El Paso’s freeways, just as they have in most road and highway building projects. State highway boards are positions appointed by the governor usually based on party affiliation. In Texas, as in other states, Highway Commission appointed members decide on key decisions related to state transportation issues.\(^1\) As an example, since its inception on June 4, 1917, there have been two Hispanics and

\(^1\) Since its inception on June 4, 1917, there have been two Hispanics and three women appointed to the Texas Highway Commission, compared to sixty Anglo men who have served. No African Americans have ever been appointed as members of the Commission. Ted Houghton Jr., has been the only El Pasoan appointed to the body. He served as a member of the Commission from December 15, 2003 to October 6, 2011 and as Chairman from October 7, 2011 to March 17, 2015. Texas Department of Transportation, “Former Commissions” (accessed March 2, 2018); available from https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/administration/commission/former.html.
three women appointed to the Texas Highway Commission, compared to sixty Anglo men. No African Americans and no Asian Americans have ever been appointed as members of the Commission. 2 Ted Houghton Jr., has been the only El Pasoan appointed to the body.

Two of El Paso’s freeways, Interstate 10 (built in 1967 and completed in 1968) and Interstate Highway 110 (built in 1971) were built with state and city funds in addition to federal funds. The North-South Freeway or Highway 54 (built in 1968), and the Chamizal Border Highway (built in 1972) were built with federal funds. Properties for the creation of Interstate 10 and Highway 110 were acquired via the Texas Highway Commission from 1964 to 1970. 3

Properties for Highway 54 were acquired by the federal government, and the Chamizal Freeway (Border Highway) was created as a condition of the Chamizal Settlement which was signed in 1963 (ratified in 1964). It is important to note that highway building in El Paso did not begin until after the Chamizal Dispute had been settled. Interstate 10 ran parallel to the Bankhead Freeway (Highway 80) which ran parallel to the railroad tracks, which ran parallel to the Río Grande.

**Trans-border Perspectives on Highway Building**

Highway building was also dependent on the rectification of the Río Grande, which according to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, was the boundary line between the two nation states. In El Paso, the boundary included an area known as the Chamizal:

---

2 Via an Open Records Request on the Internet on March 30, 2018 the question was asked as to how many present or former TxDOT Commissioners were of African American descent? The answer was zero. How many were of Jewish American descent? The agency stated this ethnic category was not maintained. How many were of Mexican American descent? The answer was three. How many were of Asian American descent? The answer was zero. How many were women? The answer was four. E-mail correspondence by the author, Tuesday, April 3, 2018, Nancy Shiring, Texas Department of Transportation, HRD BOM - Open Records Coordinator.

The most significant conflict arising from the 1848 treaty boundary involved an area of land known as el Chamizal, a 600-acre tract that eventually became part of downtown El Paso, Texas. *El Chamizal,* so named for the kind of bush that grew there, was located south of the Río Grande in 1848, but because of flooding and changes in the river’s course, the tract of land was located north of the river by 1910. After the riverbed changed, the city of El Paso, the state of Texas, and the U.S. government exercised political jurisdiction over this section of land, but they were consistently challenged by the Mexican government.4

The Río Grande had changed course several times over the years, in 1827, in 1852, and finally in 1880 when it created Cordova Island which was considered Mexican territory.5 The signing of the treaty in 1963, displaced residents all along the U.S./Mexico border, as parts of El Paso were returned to Mexico and other parts of Mexico were returned to the United States. The portion which was not returned to Mexico was turned into the Chamizal National Memorial and into Bowie High School. The Chamizal Settlement became the test case which then sanctioned the relocation of residents to other neighborhoods, like the Lower Valley and Northeast El Paso.

**National Perspectives on Highway Building**

Highway building in the United States and in Texas was an orchestrated series of decisions made by federal, state and local politicians, lobbying groups such as the American Association of State and Highway Officials (AASHO) and other interested parties, as well as chamber of commerce groups and business elites.6 In Texas, before 1917 the state did not have a transportation commission, and road building was left in the hands of state counties (and from

---

6 Both President Dwight D. Eisenhower, as well as Thomas Harris MacDonald, chief of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads in the mid-1920s, had been members of AASHO. In his 2013 book *Divided Highways, Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life,* Tom Lewis writes MacDonald was present at the group’s formation in 1914. Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).
1870 to 1890, of local municipalities).¹⁷ AASHO’s creation coincided with the development of the first Intercontinental highway in the United States, known as the Bankhead or Highway 80, which was constructed in 1916.

What cannot be overlooked in the creation of freeways and suburbs was the role of the automobile “which demanded hard-surfaced roads.”⁸ Urban historian Raymond A. Mohl states that a popular General Motors Futurama exhibit at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, according to Mark I. Foster, “stimulated public thinking in favor of massive urban freeway building.”⁹ The designer of the Futurama exhibit “also promoted the idea of a ‘national motorways system connecting all cities with populations of more than one hundred thousand.”¹⁰ President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Thomas MacDonald in 1938 and tasked him to create a report on the idea of creating “a system of east-west, north-south transcontinental highways.”¹¹ MacDonald produced his report, entitled Toll Roads and Free Roads, in 1939. Another report, entitled Interregional Highways, was created in 1944 by the National Interregional Highway Committee, again headed by Thomas MacDonald who was appointed by President Roosevelt. It promoted the idea that “dislocated urban residents…could move to the new suburbs and commute to city jobs on new high-speed expressways.”¹²

In September 1955, a year before the passage of the Highway Act, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, under Dwight D. Eisenhower’s administration, issued “General Location of National System of Interstate Highways Including all Additional Routes at

---


¹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 290. Mohl states Thomas H. MacDonald, a highway engineer from Iowa, headed the Bureau of Public Roads from its founding until 1953 and he was a relentlessly promoted his agency’s roadbuilding agenda.
Urban Areas Designated in September, 1955.” Known as the “Yellow Book,” it included three sentences of text and maps for 43 states and the District of Columbia where the Interstates would be built. The Yellow Book designated the future routes of highways. It was referred to as the “Yellow Book” because of the color of its cover.

The Highway Act (known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act) enacted in 1956 provided millions of dollars to states and cities to construct highways as part of the mandate to create an Interstate system over a short period of time. Mohl stated that the new interstate highways were “virtually completed over a fifteen-year period between the 1950s and early 1970s.” Mohl also contends that “postwar policy makers and highway builders used interstate construction to destroy low-income and especially black neighborhoods in an effort to reshape the racial landscapes of the U.S. city.” The same thing happened in El Paso, to predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods.

From the mid-1950s and early 1960s highway-building and subsequent suburbanization were also linked as issues of national security. In addition, scholars such as Kathleen A. Tobin

---

14 Lewis, Divided Highways, 120.
15 Adam Froehling, “Scans from the Yellow Book.” In Texas, the Yellow Book was limited to showing maps for Dallas, Ft. Worth, Houston and San Antonio. In subsequent years, other versions of the Yellow Book included El Paso, Texas (accessed 26 February 26, 2017), available from http://www.ajfroggie.com/roads/yellowbook/.
16 According to the Federal Highway Administration Highway History site, “The ‘Yellow Book,’ [was] the influential 1955 publication by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads that contains maps showing the general routing of urban Interstates... the formal title was General Location of National System of Interstate Highways Including All Additional Routes at Urban Areas Designated in September 1955 (accessed February 26, 2017); available from https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/links.cfm
17 Scott Campbell, Urban Planning 540, University of Michigan, “Planning History Timeline: A Selected Chronology of Events (with a focus on the U.S.), (accessed August 4, 2016); available from http://www-personal.umich.edu/%7Esdcamp/up540/timeline12.html#prog
have stated that Cold War historians saw “the link between suburbanization and atomic fears.”\textsuperscript{20} She also states, “Historians have given the Federal Highway Act significant credit for encouraging suburban development.”\textsuperscript{21} People sought to move away from downtown areas to distance themselves from the city center in case of an atomic attack. In Charles B. Quattlebaum’s view, writing about highways in 1944, the first American roads were military and the army was the principal instrumentality of road construction in early American history.\textsuperscript{22} According to Quattlebaum, “military roads were built on Native American trails, and later settlers created them during the conquest of the Northwest” in the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{23} “When the \textit{Bulletin of Atomic Scientists} argued for ‘defense through decentralization’ in 1951, it gained the support of the American Road Builders Association, and lobbyists worked to persuade Congress to pass the Interstate Highway Act in 1956,” Tobin wrote.\textsuperscript{24}

The Cold War therefore shaped discussion of the creation of freeways. Eric Avila, who has written on urban highway construction and racial communities, stated:

\begin{quote}
It is important to emphasize in the context of urban planning construction there were overlapping ideologies and overlapping forces that reinforced this kind of consensual idea that the highways must be built. It was not just the mass adoption of the automobile. It was not just the rise of the trucking industry. It was not just the imperative to boost the economic vitality of the downtown core against the thrust of suburbanization, during the 1950s. It was also the Cold War, and there was a very strong military imperative to build highways and to build them quickly because our cities are so concentrated, in the event of a nuclear attack, how are we going to evacuate our citizens from these densely, crowded, congested cities? Highways were seen as primary solution[s].\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Charles B. Quattlebaum, “Military Highways,” \textit{Military Affairs} 8 (Jan 1, 1944): 225 (accessed October 9, 2016); available from ProQuest, Periodicals Archive Online.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{24} Tobin., “The Reduction of Urban Vulnerability,” 25.
\textsuperscript{25} Eric Avila, Visiting Fellow. Presentation: “Betty, Barbara, Joan, and Jane: The Gendered Dimensions of Highway Construction in Postwar America,” University of Minnesota, Quadrant Lecture Series, funded by the Andrew W.
As Eric Avila points out the Cold War ushered in a need to protect the nation. Freeways became symbolic of infrastructure needed to mobilize the country. Few people would have taken issue with the reasons for building the interstate. The 1950s was also a period when both African Americans and Mexican Americans faced disadvantages in education, housing, employment, and many other areas. African American and Mexican children also endured inadequate and inferior schools and inferior facilities.26

Working hand in hand with city planning departments and state transportation agencies, federal agencies worked to clear the land to build highways. Because highway building was linked to issues of national security in the Cold War Era, transportation maps in the mid-1960s were presented as Defense and Highway Maps at public hearings.27 From October 30 to November 10, 1961, El Paso hosted a two-week National Security Seminar planned and programmed by the Armed Forces Industrial College and sponsored jointly by the Chamber of Commerce and Texas Western College.28 According to Chairman Carl W. Connors, general manager of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company (El Paso), “The objective of the seminar is to bring about a better understanding of the many interrelated problems and interests of the civilian and military populations and to point up the inseparable nature of the civilian-military coalition in the National Defense and security effort.”29 The seminar was

27 Texas Highway Commission Public Hearing on Regional Development, El Paso, Texas, December 1, 1966, Exhibit Number 7.00, 1 of 1, 16. Highways were crucial for moving military equipment in the 1900s, but the surfaces could not handle the loads and roads deteriorated.
29 Ibid.
attended by over 1,500 people and was held at Magoffin Auditorium at the Texas Western College (now the University of Texas at El Paso).^{30}

Nationally, citizens who were impacted by decisions to build highways through their neighborhoods did not have a vote in their creation. Multicultural communities affected by the destruction of their neighborhoods were not part of the decision-making in the creation of highways. A 2002 publication stated:

Highway builders were clearly conscious of the social consequences of interstate route location. It was quite obvious that neighborhoods and communities would be destroyed, and people uprooted, but this was thought to be an acceptable cost of creating new transportation routes, facilitating economic development of the cities, and converting inner-city land to acceptable or more productive uses. Highway builders and downtown redevelopers had a common interest in eliminating low-income housing and, as one redeveloper put it in 1959, freeing blighted areas ‘for higher and better uses.’^{31}

Highway building resulted in the displacement of minorities along highway routes throughout the United States and was big business. Using blighted areas for higher and better uses included the creation of suburbs and business corridors and not for the greater good but for the higher dollar. A January 12, 1965, memorandum for President Lyndon B. Johnson on the revised estimate cost of the Interstate Highway System stated the following:

Attached is a copy of the report being sent to Congress today by the Commerce Department estimating the cost of completing the Interstate Highway System. The report required it be transmitted to Congress within ten days after January 2. The report is used to determine each State’s proportionate share of the cost of the Interstate System and the amount of grants each state receives. The report shows a $5.8 billion increase in the total cost of the System over the 1961 estimate. The Federal share of this increase is $5.0 billion. The revised total cost is $46.8 billion, and the Federal share is $42.0 billion, compared to the $37.0 billion estimated in 1961.^{32}

---

^{31} Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing and the Freeway Revolt,” 3.
Each year highway building was not completed, the price increased dramatically. In a four-year period, the cost rose from $37.0 billion to $46.8 billion, a 26% increase. States were required to pay a share of the cost, usually on a 50/50 basis. Businesses which benefitted by road building in El Paso were contractors, suppliers, and businessmen such as the Road Hands Inc., an El Paso group associated with the highway industry in 1964.\(^{33}\)

**State Issues on Highway Building**

It was evident that state agencies did not have the resources to easily respond to the Federal Highway Act of 1956. The President of the American Association of State Highway Officials William A. Bugge, in a speech given before the Mississippi Valley Conference of State Highway Departments in Chicago, Illinois, on March 8, 1957, stated there was an urgency for state highway departments to restructure themselves to rise to the occasion like they had never done before.\(^{34}\) Bugge stated:

> Today the State Highway Departments are on the spot. They have been asked to deliver a real package of goods. And they have been asked to deliver it on time and in good shape. If the package is late or if it isn’t in the shape it should be, the State Highway Departments have failed to carry out their assignments and they will have lost their effectiveness in the role they properly should play in carrying out an integrated, long-range highway program. We can’t send out a boy to do a man’s job. And this is a real man’s job the Federal Government and the States have set out on.\(^{35}\)

According to Bugge, two items for highway building were in short supply -- skilled engineers and state money. However, Bugge’s statement was indicative of the bravado of the period, and the optimism that the country would pull on its bootstraps to get the job done.


\(^{35}\) Ibid.
The Texas Highway Commission moved into high gear with funding for the acquisition of land from private citizens and businesses (called right-of-way) being of paramount importance. On June 20, 1956, D. C. Greer, the State Highway Engineer for the Texas Highway Commission, sent a letter to Division Heads, District Engineers and Engineer Managers on the creation of the right-of-way office to build the Interstate Highway System via Minute Order No. 40217. In his message, he announced the creation of the right-of-way division, as well as the selection of the division chair, and he outlined the primary functions of the department. The State Highway Commission engaged in purchasing property to build the Interstate and by June 15, 1958, 2,049 parcels had been purchased for the Interstate System at the cost of $11,747,314. By 1958, there were four hundred and fifty full-time employees in the right-of-way acquisition section. Historically, Austin, Texas has always had more employees than any other Texas Highway Department District Office. One of the other issues at the state level was the proposed locations of Interstate 10 through each city.

Local Issues and Historical Agents on Highway Building

Four years earlier, on February 5, 1954 a letter written by Hosmer W. Hill to D. C. Greer, the State Highway Engineer of the Texas Highway Department, addressed the issue of where the


38 The Austin office had their in-house magazine called Highway. Issues of Highway contained employee news and articles, baby photographs, promotions, retirements, and deaths.
freeway should be built through El Paso. Hill was opposed to the highway being built on the Bankhead Freeway or Route 80, which ran along Alameda Street. In his letter, he stated:

As a private citizen, and a tax payer in El Paso County, I wish to lodge my voice against the idea of using the present hi-way [sic] 80 for a freeway into El Paso, regardless of what action has been taken by our Chamber of Commerce, or County Officials. It is a major defeat of a fine beautiful freeway entering El Paso along the so called sandhills [sic], overlooking El Paso Valley. Many El Pasoans will be disappointed in this decision and I am sure many will register it in the next election.\[39\]

Hill was referring to the sand hills area (see Fig. 3.1) which were a remnant of the continental shift or the Rio Grande Rift created after oceanic activity millions of years ago.\[40\]

---

**Fig. 3.1.** Photograph of Lower Valley farmland, 1953 by Banes Aerial Photography. Hosmer W. Hill referred to the sand hills (upper left-hand side) as the area he recommended where the Interstate-10 be built. The sand hills are actually part of the Continental shift which occurred to oceanic activity. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation.


Hill considered the Bankhead Freeway as twenty-five years behind the times. In his letter, he also stated he owned land along the sand hills route, but that that was not the reason he was writing his letter. He felt business owners along Highway 80 had long profited from Highway 80 while others who did not own property there had not complained. To him, the route along the sand hills made more sense because “the population is moving out of the valley towards the hills, and hi-way [sic] 80 as it stands now would serve as a relief for the valley traffic, while the freeway in the sand hills would serve for through traffic.”

Evidently, the route of the proposed location was a hot button in 1954. A small note was attached to Hill’s letter to Engineer Greer emphasizing his position:

Dear Engineer: I don’t want to enter this into a public argument. They would accuse me of trying to benefit by this relocation because I own land up there. Actually, El Paso needs this new route. This just leaves our hi-way [sic] a mess and it’s just a shame, for El Paso as I see it. The valley route is too crowded already, and the freeway in [the] sandhills [sic] is exactly where it belongs. Hope you will reconsider it. – H.

Hill so believed in the state running Interstate 10 through the sand hills that when the time came, he donated (exchanged according to the deed) his property for the endeavor, therefore enticing highway builders to align the highway on his land. On June 14, 1957, Hill and his wife Anna G. Hill exchanged their land in the sand hills with the El Paso County for $1 so the Texas Highway Department could build Interstate 10 through it.

Hill was born in 1892 and coincidentally, he and his wife lived at 3123 Durazno Street (between San Marcial and Estrella Streets), a few blocks west from Lincoln School. He died February 24, 1971.

---

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
Hill’s donation of this land could have been construed as a gesture of goodwill, but it might also have been a means to force the hand of the Highway Department to run I-10 through the sand hills and transfer the wealth which had developed along Highway 80 to the new area. Before I-10 was built, Highway 80 was the home to many of El Paso’s most prominent families, estate homes, businesses and hotels which profited from the route. Changing the location of the freeway would drastically shift the city’s wealth, as well as spur the creation of new subdivisions and business corridors.

**Tom Diamond, Texas Highway Department Right-of-Way Engineer**

The late Tom Diamond, who received a degree in civil engineering from Stanford in 1956 and a law degree from Baylor University in 1957, arrived in El Paso in late 1958 to open the city’s first right-of-way bureau to acquire private property for the construction of Interstate 10.45 When asked about the procedure to acquire properties, Diamond stated the following:

> The individuals were approached once the engineering departments gave us the plats and legal descriptions that we needed. When you approach somebody about acquiring their land for a public purpose, you need to be prepared. You do not do anything after you contact them. You need to do it before you contact them, so, the first thing we had to have was the legal description of the plat, and we had to have a policy. One of the significant things about that plan was that in those days, we had a firm ruling at a state level that you did not negotiate the purchase price. You did not go in and offer them $10,000 one day and then agree to $12,000 the next. It was a once-in-a-lifetime offer. We went in there and based on the value, oh, that is another important thing; you had to have an appraisal. You had to have engineering data, and you had to have appraisals.46

---

45 Interview with Attorney Tom Diamond in his residence by the author, August 5, 2016. Diamond stated Bill Reiger was a right-of-way purchasing agent for Interstate 10 in 1958. Formerly from Austin, Texas, Reiger relocated to El Paso to join the right-of-way office. Efforts to interview Mr. Reiger, the last surviving right-of-way agent for the construction of Interstate 10, were futile.

46 Ibid.
Diamond stated that less than 10 percent of the acquisitions were eminent domain.\textsuperscript{47} Diamond remembered the opening of the freeway when city officials held a formal ceremony on Interstate 10 on December 1968. He said everyone was parked on I-10, and when he cut the ribbon, he took the microphone and yelled: “Gentlemen, that concludes our program, start your engines!” [Laughs]\textsuperscript{48} He said they all looked at him then went and started their engines and the freeway was officially opened.\textsuperscript{49}

![Image](image.jpg)

\textbf{Fig. 3.2.} Banes Aerial photograph of the Lincoln Park community in 1953. Banes Aerial Photography. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation Photographic Archives.

\textbf{Jonathan Ray Cunningham, El Paso Director of Planning, 1958-1978}

Jonathan Ray Cunningham was another important figure in the creation of El Paso’s freeways. Joan Cunningham-Estrada said her late father’s parents were from Indiana.\textsuperscript{50} His

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. \textsuperscript{48} Ibid. \textsuperscript{49} Ibid. \textsuperscript{50} Interview with Joan Cunningham-Estrada by the author, El Paso, Texas, March 20, 2018.}
grandfather had been a professor at New Mexico State University. His mother had moved to the Southwest to recover from tuberculosis. Cunningham grew up in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Cunningham-Estrada said that her father earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from New Mexico State University and a Master of Arts degree also in political science from the University of New Mexico then took courses at UCLA until he was drafted for World War II. She said he served in World War II as a historical officer and wrote the history of the Trans-Pacific Air Command. After World War II he attended classes at the University of Chicago. He taught at Wittman College in Washington State for several years and eventually became a city planner in the surrounding communities of Walla Walla, later becoming a city planner in Spokane, Washington. In Spokane, he was recruited by El Paso Mayor Raymond Telles to come to El Paso and work as a city planner. The Cunninghams moved to El Paso in 1958 “when it was a little town.” During her interview, Cunningham-Estrada described her father as a progressive person:

He had a big background in Political Science. He had studied with all the great thinkers at the University of Chicago and he was always forward thinking. He loved cities. He learned maps. He attended all the meetings. He paid for himself to go visit planning sites in Finland. He went to East Berlin, West Berlin. Back then city planners were not paid very much so he made great sacrifices to do these things. He had a diverse mind and he was a Renaissance man and a thinker at heart.

Cunningham was a learned person at a time of great change in El Paso. He served as Director of Planning for the City of El Paso, Texas from 1958 to 1978, a period which included the decade of highway building from 1960 to 1970.

51 Ibid.  
52 Ibid.  
53 Ibid.  
54 Ibid.  
55 Biography from a finding guide to the Jonathan R. Cunningham Papers, MS 287, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.
He was also involved in the historic Chamizal Settlement which would have been a challenge for any city planner because it included working with two nations, two presidents and over the years, with a plethora of mayors, politicians, communities and special interests. Cunningham was also a diplomat, having survived the administration of nine El Paso mayors and varied personalities which made up the El Paso Chamber of Commerce Highway Council, as well as numerous politicians who were often larger than life.

On November 3, 1977, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Cunningham were invited by First Lady Rosalynn Carter to attend a ceremony at the Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso, Texas at 3 p.m. to thank individuals who had worked to create the memorial. Mrs. Cunningham made notes of the occasion by writing:

Mrs. Carter spoke. We had special seats. There was a proper tea and servants—silver and linens. She wore a beautiful Vera Maxwell suit, and I my Eva Picone. She spoke well and acclaimed J.R.C. and others. J.R.C. [Jonathan Ray Cunningham] was able to negotiate and obtain the Chamizal National City Park through J.C.’s efforts and his friendship with Charles Luce, Secretary of the Interior. Frank Smith, 1st Superintendent of [the] Chamizal Park gives J.R.C. full credit [Mr. Luce was Under-Secretary of the Interior under Stewart Udall].

---

56 The Jonathan R. Cunningham Papers, MS 287, at the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department is limited to 50 inches or 10 small boxes and does not reflect the twenty-year career of a planner during the height of freeway building in El Paso, Texas. Another larger collection, The El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, also at the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department does include about 100 boxes of materials, but the collection has many elements, as well as duplicated and items such as deeds, contracts, are not included. Former Director of El Paso City Planning, Nester Valencia in a private conversation stated the City of El Paso maintains a city archive with thousands of boxes in East El Paso which are not open to the public, except under Freedom of Information (FOIA) request. There is no public finding aid for this collection.

57 Cunningham arrived in El Paso after serving as Director of Planning for Spokane County in Washington from 1952-1956. He studied Public Administration and Planning at the University of Chicago. As a professional planner, he was committed to contributing to the profession and often wrote articles about planning that he presented at planning conferences.

58 The White House, Chamizal Memorial Grounds, “Invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Jon Cunningham, El Paso, Texas, October 29, 1977.”

59 Ibid.
The meeting was also attended by Carmen Lopez-Portillo, wife of Mexican President José López Portillo, who along with President Lyndon B. Johnson had settled and signed the Chamizal Settlement in 1963. Other dignitaries in attendance included U.S. Representative Richard White, California Governor Jerry Brown, New Mexico Governor Jerry Apodaca, Alderman Dan Ponder and his wife, Executive Assistant Jim Kirby, County Judge Udell Moore and former County Judge Travis Johnson. Before proceeding to the Bridge of the Americas, thousands of spectators waited along the bridge and on the Mexican side, as the two first ladies passed by Zavala School, which had been spared by the creation of Highway 110. At Zavala School, “several hundred school children filled the playground to cheer and wave.”

Both first ladies met in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez to “commemorate the signing of the Chamizal Treaty and the 10th anniversary of the park.” Cunningham-Estrada stated her late father encouraged the federal government to create a national park to commemorate the community, but his job wasn’t all pleasurable. When asked how her father dealt with the multiple interests in city planning, Cunningham-Estrada said:

He had to be very adaptable. He learned how to work with power without being offensive, but I remember him coming home and being so tired from the Planning Commission meetings and sometimes being so frustrated from having to work with the special interests. He was an idealist at heart. He was also a very practical man. He had to play the party game and go step-by-step. You had to learn the party-line and not buck the system too much, but you still had to have great integrity and lead and that is what he always did. He was a very honorable man.

Cunningham had a bird’s eye view of city planning and the politics of highway building. In 1969, he hired Nestor Valencia as a Planning Technician. Over the course of his tenure as

---

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Interview with Joan Cunningham Estrada by the author.
Director of City Planning, Cunningham groomed Valencia to succeed him after his retirement in 1978. Valencia followed Cunningham as Director of Planning, Research, and Development in 1979 until his retirement in 1991. But by 1979, all of El Paso’s early freeways had been built.

Cunningham played a significant role in the creation of El Paso’s freeways, but as a trained planner, he had to work within certain limits, knowing the city’s plans would disrupt people’s lives and the fabric of entire communities. Urban historian David Díaz has argued that “planning [has] assumed a structural role by ignoring the gross deterioration of the urban condition of minority communities.” Yet in many ways, Cunningham’s hands were tied as a public employee; he could not counter El Paso’s business elites, politicians and policy makers. As Cunningham-Estrada stated in her interview, her father had to learn to adapt and had to learn “how to work with power” without disagreeing with his superiors and other special interests. Yet, the relocation of citizens in urban or road project were constant issues from 1960 to 1970, in El Paso and throughout the country.

**District Engineer Joe M. Battle, Builder of El Paso’s First Highways**

On September 1, 1962, Joseph M. Battle, a graduate of The University of Texas with 24 years of experience, was transferred to El Paso. Battle had been in El Paso before. Journalist María Cortés in an *El Paso Times* article reported “Battle served 45 years in various jobs with the state highway department…and began working in El Paso as a member of a surveying crew

---

67 Díaz. *Barrio Urbanism*, 5. Díaz states that in 1965, the first major book on a Latina/o urbanism was Patricia Cayo-Sexton’s *Spanish Harlem* and it “was an early model of how planning addressed Latinas/os and spatial relations.” Yet after its publication, he states, “the planning literature focused almost exclusively on Afro-Americans, and this minority group served as the explanatory model for all minority urbanism.”
68 Interview with Joan Cunningham Estrada by the author.
in 1937 while a student at the University of Texas at Austin.”

Battle constructed Houston’s expressway system. He joined the El Paso District Office as Assistant Director succeeding E. W. Mars upon his retirement as District Engineer for West Texas. Battle was not happy with his promotion since he felt he was leaving his home in Houston. He began his position on September 1, 1963, eight months after the U.S. government settled the Chamizal Dispute on January 14, 1963. He inherited the challenging task of facilitating the creation of El Paso’s early highways, the creation of farm-to-market roads, working with state and federal government agencies to build ports of entry after the Chamizal Settlement, and building Trans-mountain Road initiated by Judge Woodrow “Woody” Bean. Many of these projects were built in 15 years, as mandated by Congress.

*Manuel F. Aguilera, The Spaghetti Bowl and Highway 54*

The late Manuel F. Aguilera, who rose to Deputy Director at the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), was born five blocks from the Lincoln Park community in his grandmother’s house at 77 Boone Street at a time when it was common to be born at home with the assistance of midwives. Aguilera was a *Fronterizo* (a border person), born in Mexico, but raised in both countries who later became an engineer and helped build El Paso’s freeways. His father was from Guadalupe, México, across from Fabens, Texas. His mother was from El Paso. Raised in Guadalupe until he was six-years-old, Aguilera then came to live with his

---


70 *Highway*, Published by and for Austin Employees of the Texas Highway Department, Vol. 17, No. 9, (September 1963), 3. Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Photography Archives, Austin, TX.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Interview with Manuel F. Aguilera by the author.
grandmother, so he could attend school in El Paso. On weekends his parents would pick him up, and they would return to Guadalupe. He attended Burleson School which later became Jefferson High School. After Burleson closed he attended Zavala School in the Latta’s Woodlawn Addition, a neighborhood south of the Lincoln Park community, which eventually became Highway 110.74

In 1964 Aguilera graduated from Texas Western College with a degree in engineering. After graduation, he was drafted to Vietnam. He stated: “I was very fortunate because I already had my degree and went to Ft. Poke, Louisiana for basic training and was the only one in my company who didn’t go to Vietnam.”75 He was sent to Arkansas to work in engineering. After two years in the military, he was offered a job in Seattle with Boeing. In Seattle, he said they were building the first 747s, but after being there for a week and not seeing the sun, he decided to return to El Paso for a position at White Sands Missile Range. Two months before he was to begin his new position at White Sands, he went to visit one of his professors at Texas Western College who told him the Highway Department was hiring engineers.

Aguilera said that by 1967 the design for Interstate 10 had been drawn up. His engineering professor called the El Paso Office of the Highway Department, then located on Clark Street (currently the building for the Parks Services) and scheduled an interview for his protégé. The next day, Aguilera interviewed and was hired. He said the pay at the Highway Department was $20 less than the position at White Sands, but he did not mind it because he would not have to drive there. Aguilera began working on the design of Highway 54 from

75 Ibid.
Interstate 10 to Pershing Street. According to Aguilera, the creation of Highway 54 included different sets of engineers working with issues of flood control and terrain issues. Aguilera said Lincoln Center became the field office for all the engineers in the construction of Interstate 10, the Highway Interchange and the North-South Freeway (US 54).\textsuperscript{76} He stated, “One of our inspectors, I remember going into the restroom at Lincoln Center, it was a grade school and all they had were toilets for little kids…and here is this guy 6’ 4” or 6’ 3” sitting on a toilet with his legs up here (pointing to his shoulders).”\textsuperscript{77} Aguilera said the right-of-way costs were the jurisdiction of the city or the county. The property underneath became a park after the construction of I-10.

When Aguilera began his position with the Highway Department, he said there were many Mexican-American engineers who were mostly graduates of Texas Western (present-day UTEP), but that all the managers were white. Even though he was an engineer, Aguilera said he faced discrimination. He said, “Back in the 1960s, you had to be two times better than the Anglo guy to move up.”\textsuperscript{78} Aguilera’s first position was in the design department when the interchange was already in the final design stage. He said the design portion for the four-level interchange was so massive it was developed both in El Paso and in Austin, as well as farmed out to engineering companies in San Antonio and Houston.

A 1967 black-and-white photograph shows Aguilera with fellow engineers in front of a maquette of the interchange (locally known as the Spaghetti Bowl) along with a foot-high stack of blue-lines plans for its construction (see Fig. 3.3). He said when the project was awarded it

\textsuperscript{76} Aguilera verified Lincoln School had been a field office for the Highway Department to build I-10.
\textsuperscript{77} Interview with Manuel F. Aguilera.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
had an estimated cost of $19 million dollars and the job came in at $17 million – the highest price for a highway project at the time.⁷⁹

Fig. 3.3. Photographer unknown. Texas Highway District 29 (El Paso) Office, 1969 standing in front of maquette of “Four-Level Highway Interchange” (termed the Spaghetti Bowl). Aguilera is standing in the front wearing a dark turtleneck shirt. Photograph Courtesy of the late Manuel F. Aguilera.

Aguilera said he worked in the design department of the El Paso office of the Texas Highway Department for eight years where he was tasked to create the North-South Freeway. The Department maintained a close working relationship with the city of El Paso because they had to purchase the property, clear it, then the engineers would design and build the freeways. For the construction of Highway 54, the city bought entire city blocks of houses from I-10 to Pershing Street. The Highway Department had a staff of workers who worked with the city to acquire properties.

⁷⁹ Ibid.
According to Aguilera, one engineer was directed to design the section of US 54 from Pershing to Van Buren, Aguilera developed the part from Van Buren to Fred Wilson, someone else designed the section from Fred Wilson to Hondo Pass, and another from Hondo Pass onward; all teams worked on building the freeway at the same time. He said they developed US 54 with flood control all the way to the Texas-New Mexico line and worked with Fort Bliss because the highway was adjacent to their property and they had to move some of their flood control dams and rebuild some of them like Pershing Dam. He said the project required considerable coordination.

Aguilera remembered that in 1968 or 1969 he test-drove a Jaguar he had bought downtown at 100-miles-an-hour on Interstate 10, but then the freeway ended at Copia Street. Aguilera said the last section of I-10 to be built went past the University of Texas at El Paso going North. He designed the section of I-10 from Mesa to Sunland Park to Executive Center Boulevard and later worked on the design of the Chamizal Freeway (today called the Border Highway). He also designed the pump stations for pumping the water from Cordova Island into the Rio Grande. Aguilera said the design took drainage and terrain into consideration, including the city’s responsibilities to maintain the flood control dams. He said Battle made the decision to construct the highways out of reinforced concrete because of its long life. He said reinforced concrete was costly then, but over the decades, it has maintained its effectiveness.

Aguilera said one day Battle requested a meeting with him and asked him if he wanted to work as a traffic engineer. Aguilera told him he did not know much about traffic engineering,

---

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid. On December 2018, the El Paso portion of Interstate 10 will be 50-years-old.
82 Ibid.
so Battle sent him to Northwestern University for three months to learn it. From then on, he
worked as a traffic engineer, then a Deputy Assistant Director in the 1990s. When the Texas
Department of Transportation Laredo District Engineer position opened, he said he thought
about applying, but because his children were in college, he declined it. Aguilera became one of
the first Hispanic engineers to break through the ceiling and become the first Mexican American
Assistant District Deputy Director under Battle. He and other Mexican American engineers
opened the door for the next generation of transportation engineers. When he retired in 2003,
Aguilera received recognition for his work in building El Paso’s roads. The County of El Paso
named a highway in his honor. Aguilera Highway runs from Tornillo to the new Port of Entry to
Interstate 10.

Twelve years later, in 2015, former County Judge Veronica Escobar sought to change the
name of Aguilera Highway to “something more international.” On May 11, 2015, Aguilera and
more than 20 members of his family attended the El Paso Commissioner’s Court to request the
that the court deny the name change. They also collected more than 1,000 signatures and
obtained letters of support from political officials in Guadalupe, Mexico. Jenny Robinson, one
of Aguilera’s supporters, a retired teacher and friend, stated in the public hearing:

The Spanish meaning of the last name, Aguilera, is not just the name of the family, it also means a family of eagles. She stated that the name Aguilera on [the] highway would not only honor the Aguilera family but also represent “the family of eagles

---

83 A traffic engineer makes sure that there is traffic flow, that signs are set up during construction, to keep commuters informed and that people get to where they want to go. Interview with Manuel F. Aguilera.
that don’t know their boundaries, they fly back and forth; they are stong, and there is an eagle in the Mexican flag and there is an eagle in the American culture.  

Judge Escobar and Commissioners then experienced a change of heart and renamed the road “Aguilera International Highway.” Aguilera said he felt the freeway name change would have led people to question his integrity and it was the reason his family fought it. Aguilera passed away on October 24, 2017.

**Representation During Highway Building**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, when right-of-way proceedings began for the creation of Interstate 10, communities to be impacted were not represented politically in the decision-making. There was no representation of Lincoln Park residents or those from other neighborhoods that were impacted by highway building. City political positions in the years from 1954 to 1972 were mainly held in the hands of a few elites who did not represent the growing majority of El Paso’s Mexican-American citizenry, least of all the African American community in the Lincoln Park community.

During freeway planning in the 1950s the Lincoln Park neighborhood, like other areas in El Paso, experienced the brunt of highways going through them, but the affected communities lacked formal advocates to voice their opposition to highway construction. Further, since road building was linked to military efforts, few citizens fought it. As reiterated throughout this research, no one (except the politicians and business elites) had a voice in El Paso.

---


87 Ibid., Florés, “County to Rename the Manuel F. Aguilera to Aguilera International Highway.”

A bond election to pay for land acquisition for the first stretch of Interstate 10 was planned for Spring 1955. The news article mentioned that there was already city and state agreement on the freeway route between Campbell and Piedras Streets and that the freeway would be placed along the northern side of the Southern Pacific rail yards.

A 1955 article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* titled “El Paso Promised Fund for Freeway,” stated that in a meeting in Austin on September 20, 1955, the Texas Highway Commission informed El Paso officials it was willing to provide between $50 to $100 million for highway and road building. Initially there was not much agreement about where to build Interstate 10 through El Paso, but by the time the El Paso delegation attended the September meeting, officials had come together and agreed on two plans. Highway Commission Chairman E. H. Thorton Jr. was satisfied that the El Paso delegation had come to an agreement. He stated at the meeting:

> It is commendable that you are together in El Paso on the type of expressway the City should have. For a while you were scattered like a bunch of quail on your views. It now appears possible for prompt approval of plans, and early work on the freeway.

Thorton’s statement was indicative of the infighting that had occurred concerning the freeway route through El Paso. In spite of the enormity of building the freeway, citizens who had the resources or who were able to fight against the project by challenging the appraisals of their properties, did so; yet many citizens along the highway route felt that were not getting fair appraisals for their properties.

---

90 Ibid.
In 1956, property owners in El Paso County, both in the Upper and Lower Valley, asked the state for $250 an acre but were denied, thus they faced condemnation of their properties. The four owners were offered between $15 and $20 an acre for their land by the Commissioners Court on behalf of the State Highway Department on December 11, 1956. The Court offered $4405.89 for 147.059 acres in the Lower Valley to Eleanor Eubank Coldwell Shapleigh and Katherine Coldwell Sutter; and $2315.94 for 145.396 acres to R. C. Sparks, Richard E. Sparks, Peyton Sparks and Nellie Sparks Warren at $15 an acre, but they rejected it. The County Court at Law No. 1 then filed condemnation suits against Sparks and Coldwell. The Herald-Post reported that the hearing was set for Sparks for 10 a.m. January 11th and for Coldwell at 10 a.m., January 16th.

El Paso Chamber of Commerce elites had no qualms about acquiring land through residential sections, but they were deeply divided on how the freeway would pass through downtown. Issues included the fear of blight if the freeway was built overhead and probable changes to property values, as well as who would determine the compensation of properties acquired. Concerns about the just compensation were substantiated by a 1957 Associated Press article in the El Paso Herald-Post which stated the highway officials seemed to be under-appreciating potential business properties located next to the freeway. Pete Peterman, an appraiser, questioned amounts for commercial potential of land along the highway. He argued that land which could be used for businesses had a higher appraisal value than residential land because the highway department was basing the value of land on farming and ranching.

---

94 Ibid.
95 $8 Million Road Work Due in ’57, State Highway Engineer Plans Big Construction,” El Paso Herald-Post, Tuesday, December 18, 1956, A1.
96 Ibid.
97 “On Highway Land Costs: Appraiser Asks State to Figure Full Value,” In Our Southwest Section, El Paso Herald-Post, Wednesday, December 25, 1957, 12.
property. In one example, highway appraisers valued business “property at $9,946.24 and the court-appointed appraiser’s figure totaled $99,995.76, for a difference of $90,009.52.” Clearly, property owners who could afford legal representation to challenge right-of-way appraisers fared significantly better than property owners with no legal assistance, but it was certainly not always the case.

The El Paso Highway Council

The 1955 delegation of El Paso Chamber Members and officials lead by El Paso Mayor Tom Rogers presented Austin officials with two route plans for the proposed El Paso freeway. A Herald-Post article reported Mayor Rogers would not expect citizens to vote on a bond project for phase one of the freeway until the state informed citizens how much the total project would cost. The state would pay ninety-percent of the cost to build the freeway and ten percent would be paid by the citizens via a bond vote.

In 1955, the Bassett Estate owned the major portion of the sand hills freeway section right-of-way from Hawkins to the Ft. Bliss spur line. City Planning Director Lowdon Wingo said there would be little difficulty in acquiring this section of land for the freeway. The article stated, “a two-mile route through this land [the Airport land] was being studied by the Civil Aeronautics Administration in Washington, D.C.,” and the approval for the acquisition of the land was eminent. The article also detailed that El Paso County had already acquired right-of-

---

98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
way for “the three miles of the sand hills route beyond airport land to the Ysleta cutoff road.”

The Ysleta cutoff was where present-day Zaragosa Road is located today (Hosmer and Anna Hill’s land).

Officials sought community input, although as evidenced by news articles, in a somewhat limited way. As a requirement of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, a public hearing was held on three links of the proposed $50 million Interstate Highway across El Paso County on Thursday, June 27, 1957 at the County Courthouse. A June 22, 1957 article in the El Paso Herald-Post, stated the meeting would be recorded and transcribed for use by officials.

In 1961, the Highway Council (or the El Paso Chamber of Commerce Highway Coordinating Committee), which was comprised of business elites and El Paso Chamber members, tasked themselves with deciding on the highway routes in El Paso. An April 17, 1961 issue of El Paso Today listed original members of the Highway Coordinating Committee as businessmen James E. Rogers, Joseph Irvin, and Edward Hines. The Highway Council did not include city staff members like Jonathan Cunningham, the director of planning. The El Paso Chamber of Commerce’s Highway Council was comprised of local elites, like similar groups in other parts of the country, who saw themselves as doers of the greater good, but who also had business interests. According to Mohl:

State highway engineers and consultants, usually working with local civic elites, determined the interstate routes into the central cities. The routes they chose were consistent with perceptions and policies of the past. Highway builders had traditionally made clearing out housing blight at the center of the cities one of their goals. By the mid-1950s, after a decade and a half of the large Black migration into

---

104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
urban centers, most of the inner-city areas targeted by the highway planners’ maps were predominantly African American.¹⁰⁹

In El Paso, up to 1977 city issues were controlled by a centralized form of government and not city representatives as in the present day, so decisions to build highways and where to place them were largely in the hands of city elites and city boosters who controlled city council and were members of the Chamber of Commerce Highway Council. As late as 1980, historian Oscar Martínez conducted a study which found few Mexican-Americans in city council or among business elites or who had been directors of the Sun Carnival Parade in El Paso.¹¹⁰ Attorney Tom Diamond concurred with Martínez’s research and stated that when he arrived in El Paso in 1958 Anglos dominated the political arena.¹¹¹

Since rental and private properties in the Chamizal were substantially lower than in other parts of the city, individuals who were relocated either moved to low cost housing subdivisions or housing projects in East El Paso and the Lower Valley or to neighborhoods like the Devil’s Triangle in Northeast El Paso. In other words, relocation was based on what citizens could afford and on how much they received for their properties which generally was not substantial because they had been redlined or had depreciated over time.

Charting the Path for Interstate 10

¹¹¹ Interview with Retired Attorney Tom Diamond by the author, August 5, 2016.
In 1957, real estate brokers involved in the creation of Interstate 10 stated, “while the submerged route might cost State and Federal governments more for right-of-way [costs] it would decrease construction costs.”\(^{112}\) There were varying ideas of building Interstate 10 through El Paso. On one hand, business owners thought that submerging the interstate through downtown El Paso would prevent blighting of adjoining properties. Yet, in the Lincoln Park area, the decision to place freeway pillars through the community depreciated property values. Two years earlier, downtown businessmen had proposed creating a downtown bypass road to veer away from downtown similar to other Texas towns.\(^{113}\)

Costs were also determining factors in highway construction. The Lower Valley portion of Interstate 10 consisting of a 12.2-mile section from the El Paso junction and Hudspeth County lines to Fabens was budgeted at $16.5 million.\(^{114}\) Another 17-mile section from Fabens to the Ysleta cutoff through the sand hills was to be built by 1958, according to E. W. Mars, the State Highway Engineer.\(^{115}\) The Texas Highway Commission visited El Paso for two days on May 5 and 6, 1958 to review plans for the freeway location. On May 6, they announced the freeway route. An article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* also offered insight on some of the politics behind the decision and Texas Highway Commission’s visit to El Paso.\(^{116}\) The last event the Highway Commission held was a cocktail party and dinner at the International Club given by road and other contractors where the press was barred.\(^{117}\) The article also mentioned that Texas Highway Commission Chairman Marshall Formby would organize another public hearing in September to

\(^{112}\) “On Highway Land Costs: Appraiser Asks State to Figure Full Value,” 12.
\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{117}\) Ibid.
see if there was any opposition to the highway route which was stated as “near Wyoming street on the north side of the present business district.”

The 1925 Kessler Plan provided the foundation for city planning. It envisioned growth patterns and foresaw the need to create thoroughfares. Based on the recommendations of the Kessler Plan, the route for Interstate 10, known as the Thorofare [sp] Plan was approved by Mayor Raymond L. Telles Jr., and the El Paso City Council on March 31, 1960. The report Operations 1960, The Plan for El Paso, City Plan Commission, 2 stated, “The plan evolved from earlier studies and was updated before adoption.”

The Kessler Plan stated the following:

In looking towards the future, the 1925 Plan predicts the City will be densely built up in the future to the Baptist Sanatorium (Logan Heights Cantonment) and eastward to the Fort Bliss Spur (Robert E. Lee Road). West of the mountains usable territory in Kern Place and Piedmont will be well occupied and there will be settlement all along Mesa Road to Country Club. Down the Valley, suburban residences will extend in solid lines along all roads as far as Ysleta. In the city, the business district will have expanded northward, and eastward and new trading centers will have sprung up. Manufacturing will be important, and factories and warehouses will occupy much of the territory between the railroads and the river. Such a city will need more and wider thoroughfares leading into the business center, and more trolleys. The blocking of important crossings by railroads will not be tolerable. There will be great public buildings and there will be parks and parkways. With such a prospect to plan for the future [sic] is efficient and economical, for otherwise much that is done will be inadequate and inappropriate.

118 Ibid.
119 “The 1925 City Plan, A Review of the George Kessler Plan for El Paso,” Plan Report 62-I, Department of Planning City of El Paso, 1962. What is commonly known as "the Kessler Plan" was the 1925 City Plan created by the City Plan Commission, the City Plan Engineer, Walter E. Stockwell and George E. Kessler, City Planner and Landscape Architect. It included seventeen maps in a 69-page document. It was a document which envisioned the growth of the city to include local residences, business districts, trading centers, manufacturers, factories, warehouses, thoroughfares, public buildings, parks, parkways, and trolleys. City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso, Box #5, Folder #1A.
120 Operations 1960, The Plan for El Paso, City Plan Commission, 2. The State Highway Department and the City Traffic Engineering Department made a complete metropolitan area traffic survey. The Thorofare (sp) Plan evolved from the El Paso Highway Coordinating Committee, and officially recognized by the State Highway Department as the basis for estimating and scheduling the state's construction program. The plan map was available to the public widely-distributed. Jonathan R. Cunningham Papers, MS 287, Box 1, No Folder, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
In 1962, the City Planning Department had updated the Kessler plan and created proposed highway routes throughout the city (See Fig. 3.4). A January 8, 1962, article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* signaled the arrival of Interstate 10 with the buying of land in El Paso’s East side. The same article featured a photograph which outlined the path the freeway would take from Virginia Street to Hawkins Street and through the French and Lincoln Park communities.

![Fig. 3.4](image-url)

Fig. 3.4. The Major Thorofare Plan (1962) used the 1925 Kessler Plan as a base map. It placed secondary arterials (in red) and major arterials (highways) (in blue) throughout the city. MS 204 El Paso Planning Department, Collection, Box #59, Folder 32, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso, 51. Courtesy of C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.

When asked why Interstate 10 took the path it took, Manuel Aguilera, former Highway District Engineer stated the decision was probably made in Austin because Interstate 10 was initially planned to be placed directly on top of US 80 (The Bankhead Freeway). US 80 ceased to exist once the last section of Interstate 10 had been completed.
The Costs of Building El Paso’s Highways

In his oral history interview, Diamond stated the I-10 route was dependent on the cost of the acquisition of the land. He said a Texas Highway Surveyor said, “the location of the freeway had been determined by the North line of the Ysleta and the Socorro grants.”

According to Diamond, the I-10 site selection was based on the land grant boundary lines in effect at the time. I-10 changed the east-west subdivision of the French and Lincoln Park communities into north and south halves with the “boundary” being I-10.

Additionally, the Chamizal Settlement was a turning point and major driving force in the redevelopment of Lincoln through road transportation projects. Specifically, the treaty mandated the building of the Chamizal Highway (later renamed the Border highway) and the Port of Entry (POE) Cordova Bridge aka the “Free Bridge.” The site selection of the Port of Entry aligned to the north with Highway 54 and as a logical result it was connected to I-10 via I-110 and Highway 54 which later became the North/South freeway. The result was a division of the French and Lincoln Park communities into four quadrants.

---

122 Interview with Attorney Tom Diamond in his residence by the author, August 5, 2016.
123 Ibid.
Another reason I-10 might have been built through the Lincoln Park community was because the Charles Bassett Center was built in front of the freeway path which came from east El Paso at a diagonal, in the same direction as the train tracks. As a result of the creation of Bassett Center in 1961, the freeway had no choice but to veer left and then dip south through the French and Lincoln Park communities (see highway curve in upper right-hand corner (See Fig. 3.5)).

---

124 Homer Hoyt Associates, Washington, D.C., “Market Survey of Charles Bassett Center, Intersection of Highway 62 and East-West Freeway, El Paso, Texas, March 1956. City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso, Box 48, Folder 1. An article in the March 1, 1966, issue of El Paso Today, 6, stated the shopping center named was for pioneer El Pasoan
Interstate 10 was completed in December 1968 in a period of two years, according to Joe Battle, District 24 Engineer.\textsuperscript{125} Aguilera said in comparison to Interstate 10, the North-South Freeway (or US 54) he designed in 1967 was planned with a higher capacity than present-day Interstate 10 and since its creation, the freeway has peaked regarding capacity and thus gridlock is a constant issue.\textsuperscript{126} Decades later, in 2011, the lack of capacity planning for Interstate 10 led to the I-10 Connect Project which would again threaten the demolition of Lincoln Center.

Displacement of people in El Paso mirrored other parts of the country along highway routes like the decision to construct Interstate 10 on Claiborne Avenue through the Treme in New Orleans.\textsuperscript{127} According to Environmental Sociologist Beverly Wright:

\begin{quote}
Unlike the hoopla that surrounded proposals for the construction of the Riverfront/Vieux Carré Freeway, no public hearings were held to inform the black community of the Claiborne Avenue section of I-10. Moreover, blacks in the city did not protest its construction when they were finally informed. This fact may puzzle some who are unaware of the conditions of black life or the degree of disenfranchisement of blacks in the South during the 1950s. However, these were not the times of black protest. In fact, the attitude of most blacks towards the construction of the I-10 was that its construction was imminent. As one resident of the Treme so aptly put it, “you can’t fight things like that.”\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

In the 1950s, in New Orleans, the feeling to fight against the creation of freeways and to take on state agencies and the local politicians supporting them might also have been insurmountable for average residents, like they had been in El Paso. Later, groups such as the NAACP Legal

\begin{flushright}
Charles N. Bassett who was president, and later chairman of the board of State National Bank and was a former President of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{126} Interview with Manuel Aguilera by the author. In 1967, the North-South Freeway was designed at a higher level of design compared to Interstate 10. Capacity is measured by taking the population of today and then via a computational program it can be expanded it years into the future with variables to arrive at future use. Highway projects are always designed 20 years into the future. In the case of Interstate 10, Aguilera said he recommended the use of more lanes after Zaragosa Road but according to the city stated that there capacity even though he stated the city seemed to be growing towards the area.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 134-135.
\end{flushright}
Defense and Educational Fund made it conceivable to take on equitable regulatory enforcement in the form of civil rights violations.\textsuperscript{129} Moreover, decisions regarding the creation of El Paso’s highways occurred in the 1950s-60s, before the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. The National Historic Preservation Act was created in 1966, but there is no evidence of citizens or groups using the Preservation Act to prevent highway building in El Paso, Texas.

Like in other communities, highway building in conjunction with city planning and the creation of school districts, was used as a social tool to force demographic shifts and cast downtown districts into a free fall. With the creation of highways, it was no longer a requirement to travel downtown for banking and shopping needs.\textsuperscript{130} El Paso’s population in 1960 numbered at 276,687 and 69.3 percent or 163,971 of the city’s population lived in Central El Paso.\textsuperscript{131} By 1970, due to highway building and the Chamizal International Settlement, only 44.7 percent of El Paso’s population or 143,964 were living in Central El Paso, resulting in a loss of 20,007 people or close to 25 percent of the population. Citizens moved to Northeast El Paso, Northwest El Paso, Southeast El Paso and Ysleta.\textsuperscript{132}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{130} Bassett Center opened in 1961. A market survey conducted in March 1956 by Homer Hoyt Associates from Washington, D.C. stated, "the strategic position of the Bassett site is due to its location between two branches of the Y where El Paso is growing most rapidly." The center's location was an important up and coming area. Homer Hoyt Associates, "Market Survey of Charles Bassett Center, Intersection of Highway 62 and East-West Freeway, El Paso, Texas," March 1956, Washington, D.C., MS 204 El Paso Planning Department, Collection, Box #48, Folder 1, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
\textsuperscript{131} “El Paso Population Analysis and Projection, Chapter 1, The Extraterritorial Jurisdiction of the City of El Paso,” Department of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, February 1972, El Paso, Texas, page 27, The City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 25, Folder 19, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, highway building resulted from a series of legislative and political events. There were various governmental and special interests and issues at play, at national, state, and local levels. The Highway Act of 1956 became the conduit to build the nation’s freeways. Highway building also coincided with suburbanization after the Cold War. City planning departments worked hand in hand with state and federal agencies as highway building became a mandate. Citizens by and large did not have a voice in deciding where freeways would be built, although when possible, they challenged the appraisals of their properties. A constant narrative in this research is citizens impacted by El Paso’s freeways were not represented in decisions on where to place them.

Some of the state issues regarding highway building were the lack of infrastructure and staffing, as well as where to build the freeways. Local issues also dealt with proposed routes of highways but also with appraisals, as well as funding, and questions of who would finance these projects. As this research demonstrates, politicians, elites, and boosters worked hand in hand with federal, state, and local governments to decide the routes the freeways would take and working with insider information they created opportunities for themselves, their relatives or associates—in other words, it wasn’t highway building for the greater good, but highway building for the greater buck. The next chapter demonstrates how certain individuals would profit greatly by those decisions and by what we now call “insider information.” It will also discuss suburbanization related to highway building, as well as federal urban renewal efforts via the federally-mandated Workable Program and how LBJ’s War on Poverty created local programs such as Project BRAVO.
 CHAPTER 4: DEMOLITION, DISPLACEMENT, AND SUBURBANIZATION, 1954-1975

This chapter examines issues associated with the creation of El Paso’s freeways such as slum clearance, housing and urban renewal. It also details trans-border urban issues created as a result of the Chamizal Settlement, in addition to the creation of the ProNaF (Programa Nacional Fronterizo) which was Mexico’s effort to capitalize on El Paso’s highway building. This chapter also documents how the creation of Interstate 10 divided the city in half and changed property values in its path. Federal laws such as the Federal Housing Act of 1937 which provided funds to solve blight via urban renewal are discussed. The amendment to the Urban Act via the Housing Act of 1954 also sought to rehabilitate existing structures, curb the demolition of structures, and solve issues of blight. In 1964, the War on Poverty created opportunities to remedy housing issues with programs such as the Workable Program which was a stop-gap effort to assist homeowners displaced by the signing of the Chamizal Settlement.

At the local level, El Paso Chamber of Commerce leaders questioned whether a federal department of urban affairs would provide any support for local municipalities as President Lyndon B. Johnson sought to address the country’s slums in June 1967 with the creation of “The Committee to Rebuild America’s Slums,” which later became known as the Model Cities Program. Johnson followed with the creation of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. The 1960s also coincided with the Civil Rights movement. Urban historian David R. Díaz states “the Civil Rights movement made two significant social demands: political and civil rights and economic empowerment.”1 Part of economic power was the right to affordable housing.

El Paso benefitted by the creation of organizations involved in Johnson’s War on Poverty. Programs such as the Workable Program created through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965 are explored in this chapter. Under the Workable Program local grass-roots groups like MACHOS and Project BRAVO were born. The quest for affordable housing resulted in the demolition of hundreds of housing units in the Chamizal community which were deemed as blighted. This chapter shows that the settlement of the Chamizal in 1963 spurred wide-spread relocation of residents many of whom did not receive comparable funds for their homes since they were defined as blighted and inferior.

The encroachment of highway structures in the community at the expense of historic buildings such as El Calvario Catholic Church is also discussed, as is the community’s response to the demolition of their church. This chapter also details the numbers of homes removed due to highway building in Central El Paso, and the creation of the city’s early freeways, along with the psychological effects of displacement due to highway building. It concludes with community experiences which displaced residents used as a means to cope with the destruction of their barrio.

According to Historians Mark H. Rose and Raymond Mohl, suburbanization occurred as a result of the mass production of automobiles, and suburban sprawl. Economics also played a large factor in the growth of suburbs. Rose and Mohl write:

Manufacturers and big retailers had already begun to decentralize their operations in the postwar years. Slower sales and rising costs pushed department stores and corporations out of city, while the growing base of suburban consumers and workers provided a magnetic attraction. The aging central cities suffered from decentralization and population loss, while the brand-new suburbs benefitted from both trends.

---

2 Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, Interstate, Highway Politics and Policy Since 1939 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 95.
3 Ibid.
Most of the builders of El Paso’s freeways were white men. Historically, there have been very few Hispanics and fewer women associated with highway building in general, in Texas and in El Paso. This is not surprising, considering the racism of the period. The fact that by the 1960s, El Paso was an older city whose character had been defined by Chicana/o urbanism since its inception was entirely swept aside. Urban historian David R. Díaz states:

The two oldest forms of settlement in North America are pueblos of first nations and, subsequently, the formation of colonias. The evolution of cities in the Southwest is directly linked to Chicana/o urbanism from its earliest histories. In the twentieth century, barrios assumed a structural role in the production and reproduction of cities, in terms of both spatial and labor relations. With a few notable exceptions, in particular El Paso and San Antonio, these enclaves were numerically overwhelmed by Euro-American in-migration into the Southwest. But despite this, they have maintained an essential role in the evolution of the city.4

El Paso and San Antonio might not have been overwhelmed as Díaz points out, but a Director of Planning of Mexican descent would not be hired in the city until 1979.

Population Growth, Housing and Suburbanization

El Paso County’s loss of acreage and simultaneous rapid population increase had a profound impact on housing. The following summary characterizes the extent of the change:

In 1873, when the City of El Paso was incorporated, the County of El Paso had about 3,700 inhabitants and an area of almost 9,500 square miles. Half a century later, in 1920, the population had increased to 101,877, although the County had lost nearly seven-eighths of its area. The formation of new counties left El Paso with only 1,054 square miles. In the next thirty years, the County's population nearly doubled, and the 1950 census reported 194,968 people in El Paso County. An increase of 62% during the next 10-year period brought the 1960 total to 314,070 people. In 1873, one out of every 200 Texans inhabitants lived in El Paso County. In 1910, one in 70 Texans resided in this County, and by 1960, this proportion had increased to one out of every 30 state inhabitants.5

---

As the numbers show, El Paso grew exponentially in the later part of the twentieth century, which created new opportunities and dilemmas. Escalating needs for housing and infrastructure in the growing metropolitan center supported the case to build freeways.

The Chamizal Settlement and the building of Interstate 10, Highway 110, US 54 and the Border Highway, were all significant factors in the creation of El Paso’s suburbs. During his first term, from 1951-1955, Mayor Fred Hervey, a proponent of slum clearance, gave the city of El Paso carte blanche to condemn private properties and begin reshaping the city in preparation for highway building and real estate development. An article in the May 12, 1954 issue of the *El Paso Times* by Peter Schrag detailed citizen discussions of the new city charter that granted new powers to the city. The charter included a section on urban development, or “urban renewal,” which gave eminent domain authority to the city. According to Schrag, the charter provided “the power to condemn private property which is substandard or blighted and resell it to another private owner who indicates that he will use the land or property in such a way as to conform with improvements outlined by the City and Chapter 2 of the city charter allowed the city to accept State and Federal aid in slum clearance and development work.”

The Kessler Plan had envisioned the creation of thoroughfares in El Paso as early as 1925. However, because properties in the Lincoln Park community had been reclassified as early as 1936, homes there were valued at significantly lower prices than homes a few blocks away to the north. Was it social engineering or just the opportunity to make millions? It wasn’t illegal, but was it ethical for Hervey’s older brother George Crossett Hervey (b. 1906) to have used his brother’s insider information to capitalize on the opportunity to build dense low-cost housing in

---

7 Ibid.
what had been desert and sand hills in the mid-1950s? Or was it strictly business? Hervey’s brother created Hervey Construction, as well as the Hervey Real Estate Company. Given Mayor Hervey’s insider understanding of highway plans, he knew there would be a need for inexpensive tract homes. His brother’s real estate company, Hervey Construction, positioned itself to build subdivisions west of Bassett Center in the new East El Paso. These subdivisions included Ranchland Hills, Del Norte, Hacienda Heights, Cedar Grove and others.\(^8\)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the creation of Interstate 10 established a class line across the city (not unlike the cliché notion of neighborhoods distinguished by which side of railroad tracks they occupy). The class-based economic line meant homes built east of Hawkins Boulevard and south of I-10 were relatively inexpensive compared to those built north of Interstate 10. I-10 made it possible to appraise homes and businesses located north of the Interstate at a higher value than homes located to the freeway’s south. Homes south of the freeway sold for under $10,000 while homes north of I-10 sold for over $10,000. In 1955, citizens complained to authorities that realtors engaged in bullying tactics to purchase homes in the proposed path of Interstate 10. Two real estate agents were charged with using “pressure tactics” by two property owners who were told “unless they sold their properties at the prices quoted by the agents, the city would institute condemnation proceedings and move bulldozers in and tear their homes down and clear the lots for the freeway right-of-way.” Two property owners, Mr. and Mrs. Cesario Rodríguez of 5806 Florida Avenue refused to sell their lot, which included two residences, for the asking price of $3,391.20. Even in 1955, $3,391.20 for two

\(^{8}\) Hervey Construction build hundreds of low-priced homes between Hawkins to the west, North Loop to the south, Lee Trevino to the east and Interstate 10 to the North as well as in East and Northeast El Paso. George C. Hervey was one of the founders of the El Paso Builder’s Association. An October 6, 1967 article in the El Paso Herald-Post stated Hervey had been active in homebuilding and land development in East and Northeast El Paso and had built more than 2,500 homes during his career as an El Paso builder, “Meet Parade of Homes Builders,” El Paso Herald-Post, Friday, October 6, 1967, Section D, 3.
properties was a significantly low valuation. In contrast, two other citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Rafael Medina received $7,385.75 for their one lot which had two homes built on it. There was no indication why property values differed in the same block during this period.⁹

The Federal Housing Act of 1937 triggered the initiation of slum clearances in Southwestern cities like Tucson.¹⁰ According to Sarah F. Liebschutz, three laws helped to address problems in American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹ The first was the National Housing Act of 1949, which “was established for widespread and continuing national support for housing and community development activities.”¹² According to Liebschutz, subsequently, the Housing Act of 1954 “modified the emphasis on urban renewal by encouraging rehabilitation rather than demolition of existing structures, and stipulating participation of neighborhood residents in the planning process.”¹³ Plans to build highways had been formulated as early as the 1930s, but, according to Mohl, “were not fully implemented until the late 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁴

In his book Divided Highways, Tom Lewis stated: “For nearly eight years the Eisenhower administration had stalled urban renewal, killed low-rent public housing, and neglected public transportation.”¹⁵ The creation of freeways also contributed to the decentralization of cities as people moved away from densely populated areas. The concept of urban renewal, and how cities participated in programs to act as proponents of it, was closely tied to housing issues. It resulted

---

⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Otero, 97.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁵ Lewis. Divided Highways, 152.
in a chain of legislation, including the Fair Housing Act in 1949, the Interstate Highway Act in 1956, and others focused on slum clearance, like the Urban Act of 1949 and the War on Poverty in 1964. An article in the May 12, 1954 issue of the *El Paso Times* detailed a city plan to condemn private property deemed substandard or blighted.\(^\text{16}\) The condemnation of private properties by the city coincidentally occurred at the same time as the 1954 amendment to the Housing Act of 1949.\(^\text{17}\)

The Fair Housing Act declared every American deserved a “decent home and a suitable environment.”\(^\text{18}\) Robert E. Land and Rebecca R. Sohmer, writing about the legacy of the 1949 Housing Act stated that Congress attempted to achieve this goal with various programs: “Title I financed slum clearance; Title II increased authorization for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage insurance; Title III committed the federal government to building 810,000 new public housing units; and Title V allowed the Farmers Home Administration to grant mortgages to encourage the purchase or repair of rural single-family homes.”\(^\text{19}\) These forces created a unique opportunity for cities to make slum clearance and highway development possible.

The Highway Act of 1956 provided millions of dollars to states and cities to construct highways as part of the mandate for an Interstate system. Urban renewal and slum busting acted as willing partners to create freeways. A 1956 map of El Paso shows the Lincoln Park community situated at the edge of the city limits. Not all homes were connected to the city’s sewer lines, which meant that parts of it could be defined as slums, rendering property values considerably lower than those north of Bassett Center. Mateo Hinojosa’s parent’s home on Ledo


\(^{17}\) The Housing Act of 1949, 42 U.S.C. 1941 (as amended).


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 291.
Street is an example of a home that was declared to be in a slum or blighted area. His house, along with all the houses on his street, were purchased at under-market prices to construct Interstate 10.\textsuperscript{20}

**Urban Renewal and Blight in El Paso**

In his book, *American Urban History, An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries*, Alexander B. Callow, Jr. quotes sociologist Herbert J. Gans as stating “urban renewal, even armed with federal funds and the power of eminent domain, failed on many fronts.”\textsuperscript{21} Urban renewal in the United States emerged in numerous forms and laws. In El Paso, urban renewal generated both blight and poverty. Actions taken by the Federal Housing Administration in the 1930s, and resulting later with the Fair Housing Act of 1937, the Housing Act of 1949, and eventually the Housing Act of 1954 were contributing factors. In all of these programs, the goal was to “revive decaying central business districts and industrial areas, preserve open space, decongest freeways, and combat air and water pollution.”\textsuperscript{22}

A publication printed in November 1957, titled *Urban Renewal for Texas*, described urban renewal as:

A name given to a broad range of activities in the field of urban conservation and rehabilitation for which federal loans and grants are being made available to the local community. The program is designed to remove the causes of blight as well as to eliminate blight itself. It provides a framework within which all elements, including federal, state and local government, private enterprise, professional and civic groups, and individual citizens can join in a coordinated effort to combat

\textsuperscript{20} Interview with Mateo Hinojosa, El Paso, Texas by the author, April 20, 2015.
urban blight and obsolescence—in short, a program to ‘help cities help themselves.’

Claims of blight by city officials assumed that there was a shared working definition of blight, whereby local governments, through their redevelopment departments, could conduct studies to identify it; cities, partnered with their respective states and the federal government, could engage in blight removal; and blighted communities, armed in their urban renewal efforts with federal legislation, could combat, reduce, deter and eliminate blight. Citing a need for blight removal did not, on its own, automatically satisfy requirements necessary to exercise eminent domain. Politicians often took it upon themselves to designate minority neighborhoods as slums, and subsequently engage in their eradication.

The definition of blight imposed on minority communities is problematic. In his discussion on how Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved cities for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and who should control those funds, Díaz states:

Once the power of minority neighborhoods was effectively diluted, the next major issue was to examine the seemingly simple definition of the term “blight.” HUD required that cities identify blighted neighborhoods eligible for CDBG applications, while only vaguely defining the term. The term blight and the concept of what constitutes a blighted community is not a challenging intellectual exercise. HUD was determined to address the terminal deterioration of barrios and minority neighborhoods that demanded substantial reinvestment, both from the state and private sections. It established threshold criteria to ensure that only neighborhoods that were actually blighted qualified for federally funding projects. Fundamentally, this strategy implied the need to identify resources in minority neighborhoods that exhibited signs of severe deterioration and decline.

According to Díaz, HUD required that cities identify blighted neighborhoods eligible for CDBG applications, yet “blight” was a vague term. Further, the definition of blight was subjective and

according to Díaz, was “one of the most reprehensible episodes in the history of the planning profession.”

According to historian Jon C. Teaford, “Congress launched the federal urban redevelopment program in Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, and during the next two decades, planners, mayors, journalists and the public dreamed of grand schemes to revitalize the nation’s cities.” Teaford’s opinion was that urban renewal met with limited success in the United States. He stated that with the Housing Act of 1954, “Congress required communities receiving urban renewal funds to prepare a comprehensive development plan.” The guidelines were based on a program called the “Workable Program.”

Even though Eisenhower dragged his feet on certain matters, in September 1953 he appointed the Advisory Committee on Government Housing Policies and Programs to address urban issues. In his book, Urban Renewal for Texas, Schembeck stated, “This committee was composed of representatives of major businesses, financial, and civic interests of the country.” In a matter of a few months, the committee produced a 377-page document titled “Report on The President’s Advisory Community on Government Housing Policies and Programs, Washington, D.C. 1953.” According to Schembeck, “... the analysis and recommendations contained in the report formed the basis for the 1954 amendments to the Housing Act of 1940.” In 1956, highway builders were given 15 years, or until 1972, to create an Interstate freeway system, or,

---

25 Ibid., 175.
27 Ibid., 445.
28 Ibid.
29 Schembeck, Urban Renewal for Texas, 6.
30 Ibid.
by Congressional Mandate, they would lose the funds to build it. Later, housing programs such as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed housing to homeowners and renters displaced by freeway construction.

Judson F. Williams, President of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, in his presidential message to members titled “Urban Affairs Are Local Affairs,” questioned the creation of the Department of Urban Affairs and Housing. He felt that the department, in company with H.R. 8429, “would create a Department of Government which could become the most powerful Cabinet post, and the most expensive.” Williams, who seemed indifferent about bettering people’s lives via governmental efforts, did not see the need for a Cabinet-level spokesman for public subsidy programs. He saw the creation of these programs as removing power and authority from cities, counties, and states to govern matters that he saw as local responsibilities. When he became Mayor of El Paso in 1962, he exhibited the same indifference to working on low-income housing issues in the city.

In November 1964, the Texas Highway Commission approved the largest work program in the history of the department. In an unprecedented action, the work program enabled the Texas Highway Department to purchase 3,033 miles of land to build the Interstate Highway System, and to cover construction costs for an additional 1,306 miles. As of September 1963,

---


33 Ibid.


35 Ibid.
the State of Texas was allotted 3,031.8 miles of highways, with California following behind receiving 2,176.5 miles.\(^{36}\)

In the midst of widespread relocation of citizens by road construction and the lack of homes for individuals with low to moderate income levels, a need arose to build affordable housing. The spike in homebuilding did not occur by itself; it required federal legislation to push it forward. On June 2, 1967, Lyndon B. Johnson announced his intention to create a committee called “The Committee to Rebuild America’s Slums.”\(^{37}\) He drew together a group of distinguished industrialists, bankers, labor leaders, and specialists in urban affairs, and asked them “to examine every possible means of establishing the institutions to encourage the development of a large-scale, efficient rehabilitation industry.”\(^{38}\) The overall goal of the committee was “to develop a blueprint for the future of the American City,” thereby fulfilling what would become the Model Cities Program, which was created a year after the Committee was formed.\(^{39}\)

Johnson stated that the committee had a significant influence on the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, and that it had identified the need for greater flexibility in the housing market by providing federal subsidies (tax credit funding) for low to moderate income housing.\(^{40}\) The 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act guaranteed financing for private entrepreneurs to plan and develop new communities. The committee also recommended making participation in federal programs more attractive to private companies and proposed the creation of the


\(^{37}\) “The White House, Statement by the President of the Formation of a Committee to Rebuild America’s Slums,” Office of the White House Press Secretary, June 2, 1967, Executive, LBJ Presidential Library and Archives, FG 647, Folder: Committee to Rebuild America’s Slums (11/22/63 – 12/31/67), [1 of 3].

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
National Housing Partnership to involve private-sector companies in building housing for the poor.

In the 1960s, with the efforts towards decentralization of city centers, land speculation was driven by special interests more than community needs and neighborhoods were often caught in the middle:

At the intersection of these private and public anxieties, urban development policies took a decisive turn. Slums were to be cleared not for better housing, but for a more abstract faith in local economic development and growth. Targeted areas were identified less by demonstrable need than by the willingness of private interests to invest in redevelopment. Redevelopment, in turn, rested on an increasingly elastic definition of “blight” that put the health of the CBD (Central Business Districts) at the top of the urban agenda.41

Historically blight has been a moving target, defined differently by municipalities, CBDs, and politicians. Property values were quite different from those in neighborhoods and commercial areas located north of Bassett Center in 1961. The “Historical Overview of Housing in El Paso,” in the El Paso City Plan Commission 46th Annual Report, stated homebuilding in El Paso grew exponentially after 1970:

Between 1967 and 1970, the total number of subdivision plats processed by the City Planning Department ranged between 44 and 53. Even more revealing, in 1967, the total number of sites represented on prepared plats was 1,707; by 1969, the number of locations had reached 2,081, and by 1971, the number stood at 4,954.42

As the summary reveals, from 1967 to 1970 new additions were created by the city to house the shift of population from Central El Paso, but home building in Lincoln Park in 1970 remained relatively static. Tobin has stated, “Though suburbanization in the United States during the 1950s is a well-known story, scholars still consider postwar prosperity and underlying desire on the part

of the American people to move further away from the problems of the inner city as its primary causes.”

The thesis in her article states decentralization was due more to fear of the atomic bomb and being attacked by foreign powers, and the perception that moving into suburban areas reduced “urban vulnerability.” Decentralization of cities shifted populations from downtown areas to city outskirts and suburbs. *The Historical Overview of Housing* issued by the Department of Planning Research and Development stated, “The most striking evident trend during the period 1940-1950 was the movement towards single-family, detailed dwelling units and away from multi-unit structures.” In the *1950 Housing and Population* study, data from “persons of Spanish surname” was collected for the first time in the U.S. Census.

Before the relocation of residents due to highway building there was already a shortage of housing in El Paso. The *1950 Housing and Population* data for the El Paso Standard Statistical Metropolitan Area (SMSA) in El Paso County shows 45.9% of the population had Spanish surnames, but they occupied only 37.5% of the dwelling units. About 45.1% of total residents were homeowners, but only 29.4% of those with Spanish surnames owned their homes, and 36.5% of those with Spanish surnames lived in dilapidated housing compared to 18.4% of the total population.

In its 1964 publication, “The Chamizal International Border Improvement Project,” the City of El Paso’s Planning Department estimated that, in addition to the loss of commercial and government structures, El Paso would lose 513 single-family dwelling units, 650 tenement apartment units, and 90 additional shelter units. In short, it estimated that the Chamizal

---

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 7.
47 Ibid., 8.
Settlement with Mexico would result in a loss of 1,253 dwelling units occupied by 1,155 families. The reality proved close to that estimate: between 1963 and 1966, 741 tenement units were demolished in fulfillment of the Settlement, and 355 owner-occupied single-family dwellings in Cordova Island were purchased by the International Boundary and Water Commission to transfer to Mexico.48 (See Fig. 4.1).

The Workable Program

Working with grass-roots organizations, the federal government created the Workable Program in response to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965, which “called for the maximum feasible support of the poor.”49 Under the program, communities were required to participate in urban renewal efforts. In El Paso, grass roots groups like the MACHOS and Project BRAVO participated. The 1962 program guide for the “Workable Program for Community Improvement” covered the following: 1) Codes and Ordinances; 2) Administration Organization; 3) Comprehensive Community Plan; 4) Financing; 5) Neighborhood Analysis; 6) Housing for Displaced Families, and 7) Citizen Participation.50 A goal of the program was to foster community participation and lay the groundwork for neighborhood support of efforts to combat blight.51 The Alameda Policy Advisory Committee of Project BRAVO collected data and developed program plans which it presented to the El Paso City Planning Department in its application for a Community Renewal Program.52 Project BRAVO and other organizations, such

48 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 3.
52 Project Bravo, CAP-81, (Alameda Policy Advisory Committee, 1965), MS 2014, Box 52, Folder #14, 13. The City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 25, Folder 19, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
as the Mexican American Committee on Honor Opportunity (MACHOS), also assisted the Planning Department in identifying “blight” in their communities.\textsuperscript{53}

The Workable Program was geared to assisting displaced families. The creators of Project BRAVO present a counter-narrative to the boosterism of the period countering the rhetoric of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce and other groups which promoted mass demolition of homes deemed as “blighted.”

In 1964, the program provided approved right-of-way funds as part of a city-sponsored bonds issuance; and an Urban Beautification Program of half a million dollars a year to counter urban decay in declining and low-income areas.\textsuperscript{54} Another objective of the Workable Program which resulted from the signing of the Chamizal Settlement was border improvement:

The Chamizal Treaty saw the elimination…of 730 housing units deemed substandard, including slum tenements. Of the 149 non-residential land uses involved, 16 were for public and quasi-public uses. The removal of slaughter pens, feedlots, and a rendering plant adjacent to high-density residential areas also occurred. Relocation and reparation of these units were the responsibility of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) under the terms of the Chamizal Convention. This Act, and subsequent legislation, however, also made possible significant renewal measures, most of them the product of local planning and promotion.\textsuperscript{55}


\segmentedcitations
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Schembeck. \textit{Urban Renewal for Texas}, 39.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 34.
Island (from Paisano to Alameda, and from Piedras to the North-South Freeway, comprising 153 acres) was classified in the 1960 census as about 52% blighted.”57

In contrast to Mayor Hervey’s first administration, a 1975 Community Development Program, financed from the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, outlined, in his second administration, the need for funding to keep Lincoln Park, and Lincoln Center, from becoming slums or blighted areas.58 The actions that were assigned maximum feasible priority for the prevention of slums and blight and for improvement of the environment in the proposed first-year budget among the three-year programs seeking community development block grants for 1975, 1976, and 1977 included renovation funding for the Lincoln School:

Old Lincoln School Bldg. and Area – Renovation, Recreational, and Beautification. (Abandoned school building surrounding property acquired from Texas Highway Dept.) – to be renovated for a neighborhood/community center and open space developed for Recreation and Beautification. [Located in Lincoln Park south of Interstate 10-North/South Freeway interchange].59

Lincoln School was renovated to create a cultural fine arts center, and the open space that had once been residential space around the school became Lincoln Park.

LBJ’s War on Poverty and Project BRAVO

The creation of Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, in August 1964, provided job training for the poor and marginalized. That was the same year that the Chamizal Settlement was

58 City of El Paso Community Development Program, 1975, (Department of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, Texas, March 1975), n.p. First Year funding was $100,000, Second Year $150,000 and Third Year $50,000. The City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 24, Folder 5, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
59 Ibid., n.p.
ratified, causing community members to ask themselves how they could help poor citizens. In El Paso, a community action organization, The El Paso Community in Action Program, Project BRAVO, was created under provisions of the Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and it became a beneficiary of Johnson’s War on Poverty. The organization sought to respond to economic conditions faced by Mexican-Americans in El Paso in the 1960s. In September of 1964, Salvador “Sal” Ramírez, Associate Director of the Boy’s Club of El Paso, met with social workers to discuss the War on Poverty, or “The Poverty Bill,” as it was termed. Ramírez was familiar with many members of El Paso’s Jewish Community, who were also members of various agencies concerned about poverty in El Paso. The individuals who came together in 1964 did so because they sensed an urgent need for action in the wake of the reorganization of the U.S. - Mexico border following the Chamizal Settlement.

A document in a spiral bound binder, in a box labeled “Upward Bound & Project Bravo,” belonging to Dr. Ralph Segalman (perhaps his personal copy as the cover bears his signature), recounted the story of the creation of Project Bravo. At the time, Segalman was a doctoral social research candidate at the New York University Center for Human Relations and Community Studies, engaged in field research with the Jewish Community Council and Center of El Paso. Project BRAVO was not the subject of his dissertation. Several individuals associated with the creation of Project BRAVO were members of El Paso’s Jewish community,

---

60 Articles of Incorporation of El Paso Community Action Program Project BRAVO, approved April 14, 1965, Article Four, page 1. Upward Bound and Project BRAVO, Dr. Ralph Segalman. BRAVO was an acronym for Building Resources and Vocational Opportunities. MS 001, Box 1, Unprocessed Collection, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
61 Ibid., 3.
62 Ralph Segalman, “An Application for Funds Under Public Law 88-452 The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Project Bravo (Building Resources and Vocational Opportunities) Community Action Program, El Paso County, El Paso, Texas, March 1965, 6. MS 001, Box 1 of 1, No Folder, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 6.
and they loaned Segalman to Project BRAVO on a part-time basis. The spiral bound document offers a richly detailed account of the counter-story of the Chamizal Settlement, and the need for an organization like Project BRAVO. Unlike other reports from the City’s Planning Department, it does not wallow in the boosterism of the period. The need to have the Chamizal dispute settled is revealed to be the reason for creating the Community In Action Program, to address pressing needs for employment, education, neighborhood development, and health. Those needs, which resulted in the creation of Project BRAVO, are reflected in his report:

> El Paso is confronted by serious, complex, and terrible problems created by its rapid growth and by its large and expanding slum areas and poverty-stricken populations. Twenty-five percent of the city’s population lives in slum areas, and this is aggravated by the fact that over 11 percent of El Paso families earn less than $2,000 annually. The 1960 census shows 3,023 families with less than an income of $1,000, 4,859 families with an income of less than $1,999, and 15,358 families with less than $3,000.

Segalman’s report further states “The transfer to Mexico of the Chamizal, which was largely a slum and industrial area, and the relocation of its residents to housing they can afford are bound to create a chain of social strains spreading throughout the city.”

Here for the first time, a group of informed citizens presents a counter-narrative concerning relocations. Jewish leaders and members of El Paso’s social agencies reasoned that the people relocated from the Chamizal would likely face financial hardships which could affect the entire city:

> El Paso and Juárez are in the process of “adjusting” the border between the United States and Mexico, and this process will continue during the next few years. For the most part, it means that a significant portion of the affected areas in El Paso will be bought up by the United States, the tenants will be provided with moving expense, and the area will be cleared and turned over to Mexico for public parks, etc. purposes. In a sense, this is slum clearance, but the pressure for rental units at the same level of rentals will be such that the very areas suffering from social

---

65 Ibid., 18-28.
66 Ibid., 18.
67 Ibid.
morbidity will be added to in considerable numbers, and with results which can only make the situation graver in the very areas where Project BRAVO will be operating. Thus, slums will have the greater usage, and if the situation goes beyond control, rents may rise, and services become even more limited. This could have a profound effect on health, social, and related conditions.\textsuperscript{68}

This analysis was in direct disagreement with the rhetoric of International Water and Boundary Rights Commissioner Joel Friedkin, who, along with city planners and the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, claimed that the changes mandated by the Chamizal Treaty were needed to bolster the economy. In contrast, those associated with Project BRAVO did not see the Chamizal Treaty as a win-win for the entire community and were joined in their objections by other socially-conscious organizations. The Texas Employment Agency, the Sociology Department of Texas Western College, the El Paso Boy's Club, the El Paso Chapter of the Texas Social Welfare Association, the General Practice of Medicine, Catholic Counseling Services, the Catholic Youth Organization, the Mathematics Department of Texas Western College, along with several independent citizens all allied with Project BRAVO in expressing their concerns. Members of the Jewish Community Council and Goodwill Industries became staff members of Project BRAVO.\textsuperscript{69} Project BRAVO had a long-lasting, positive impact on El Paso, and paved the way for later community programs and action groups in the South Central and the Lincoln Park communities, such as the “Weed and Seed Program” that was created in the 1970s to curb gang activity in the area.

\begin{flushleft}
\textbf{Creating a Green Space: Lincoln Park}
\end{flushleft}

Under Mayor Pro-Tem Ruben Shaeffer, the City of El Paso requested from the State the use of the Right of Way beneath Interstate 10 overpass structures for the creation of Lincoln Park

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 11.
on August 8, 1973. Subject lands included “... a total of 23 acres of land, more or less, out of and part of the right-of-way of the Interstate 10 and 110 interchange in El Paso County, Texas; said total acreage consisting of three (3) parts of areas of land herein designated as Areas 1, 2, and 3.” City Planner Nestor Valencia, drew up plans for the park (see Fig. 4.1).

Starting in 1974, Lincoln School was considered for use by El Paso Community College. In a May 1975 letter to Jonathan R. Cunningham, Director of Planning and Research for the City of El Paso, Assistant District Attorney Bruce Yetter stated:

The City has the right to use the old Lincoln School and adjacent twenty-three acres for any approved public purpose. The Texas Highway Department and the Federal Highway Administration have already approved this proposed renovation of the old Lincoln School. Also, HUD has approved this project and allowed the expenditure of funds under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Title I.  

Fig. 4.1. Lincoln Park, 4001 Durazno Street, El Paso, Texas. Photograph by the author.

70 “Multiple Use Right of Way Agreement,” “Right-of-Way for the Multiple Land Use Park in the IH-10 and IH-110 Interchange,” (The State of Texas, County of El Paso, August 8, 1974), 1. In an email message from Alan Shubert, City Engineer to Deborah G. Hamlyn, Quality of Life Director, City of El Paso, Subject: 4001, in a three-ring binder titled “Lincoln Center,” prepared by the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee. Shubert states that they city sent a letter to the State requesting the use of State-owned right-of-way beneath Interstate 110 structures for a public purpose. The general purpose was to create Lincoln Park.

71 Ibid.

72 Correspondence from Bruce Yetter, Assistant City Attorney, Legal Department, the City of El Paso to Jonathan R. Cunningham, Director of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, Re: Lincoln School Renovation Project, May 14, 1975.
In an e-mail titled “4001 Durazno Timeline” to El Paso Quality of Life Director Deborah G. Hamlyn, El Paso City Engineer Alan Shubert stated, “(On) August 8, 1974, the city passed a resolution authorizing the Mayor to sign the Multiple Use Right-of-Way Agreement with the State of Texas authorizing the city to use State-owned right of way beneath Interstate Highway 110 structures for public purposes.” Funds from the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1974 were used to upgrade the Lincoln School and reopen it as a cultural arts center.

A year later, the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created. The El Paso MPO was created on June 23, 1975 at an El Paso City Council meeting under Mayor Don Henderson with the appointment of Mrs. Judy Price to the position. According to the Texas Department of Transportation, “a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a local decision-making body that is responsible for overseeing the metropolitan transportation planning process.” MPOs are required for urban areas with a population of more than 50,000 people.

In September 1975, a resolution was signed, authorizing the Mayor to sign a Non-Alienation Agreement with the Economic Development Administration for remodeling the Lincoln School building and turning it into a recreation center. The building was remodeled in 1976 with $100,000 of Community Development (CDBG) Funds. The center would house...
offices for divisions of the Parks Department (later renamed Park and Recreation Department or PARD) and would provide spaces for cultural events for the Parks Department.\textsuperscript{78}

Remodeling Lincoln School was part of Mayor Fred Hervey’s 1975 Community Development Program funded by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.\textsuperscript{79} Mayor Hervey convened over 70 city-wide meetings with El Pasoans to decide on projects for the Program. Over 4,000 citizens attended and identified funding priorities in their neighborhoods.

The September 1975 agreement made it possible for the city to retain the title to the Lincoln School, and have a leasehold interest for the useful life of project facilities which was determined to be 40 years. The agreement included waivers of, and modifications and alterations to, restrictions and limitations, which required prior written consent from the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development in accordance with the Title 13, Code of Federal Regulations. The contract expired in 2015 and the center was returned to the Texas Department of Transportation that year.

\textbf{The Spaghetti Bowl and the Demolition of El Calvario Catholic Church}

In Chapter 3 the discussion of building the Spaghetti Bowl and US 54 are linked to Manuel F. Aguilera’s career and profession; here, they are linked to the destruction of the space and structures in the Lincoln Park community, and they acted as the beginning of the end for many homeowners in Central El Paso. The Lincoln Park community acted as ground zero where all four of El Paso’s highways would meet in the city’s center. El Paso’s highways (those built

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Community Development Program 1975, prepared and designed by the staff of the Department of Planning and Research of the Public Information Requirement of the Community Development Act. Printed by the El Paso City Printing Department, (Department of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, Texas, March 1975), 4.
between 1960 and 1970) converged at an interchange known as “the I-10, U.S. 54 Interchange” which was deemed a state-of-the-art structure when it built in 1970, and which became known locally as “the Spaghetti Bowl.” The “ultra-modern, four-level interchange was built between December 1968 and April 1969 for $17,000,000.”

At the time of its construction, the I-10, U.S. 54 Interchange was the largest highway interchange project ever undertaken by the state of Texas, and the most complicated to build. The design consisted of 858 pages of blue prints. Lyle D. Scarbrough, a supervising design engineer for District 24, stated, “The last sheet should have been specifications for a cart to carry them around.” Material needs to build the structure required 48,000 cubic yards of excavation, 62,000 cubic yards of concrete, 12,450,000 pounds of reinforcing steel, 6,400,000 pounds of structural steel, and more than 22 miles of pre-stressed concrete beams. As a physical structure, the Spaghetti Bowl represented a technological marvel, and signaled other developments in highway building to come.

The push for urban renewal was not the only factor influencing the creation of Interstate 10 and the Spaghetti Bowl. Highway building made it possible to connect with the proposed Bridge of the Americas (BOTA), which was part of the Chamizal Settlement with Mexico. According to Mexican urbanists Marisol Rodríguez and Hector Rivero, the Mexican government initiated the National Border Program - ProNaF (Programa Nacional Fronterizo) - hoping to align itself with the urban changes taking place on the U.S. side of the border in the 1960s. The ProNaF (Programa Nacional Fronterizo) which was “a regional and urban planning initiative to face an economic openness in the southern and northern border cities which aimed to detonate an

---

81 Ibid., 8.
82 Ibid., 9.
integrated development model.” In addition, the ProNaF project answered the call for an “urban border proposal” for the land which was returned to Mexico via the Chamizal Settlement. Not wanting to just build highways, developers of the ProNaF worked with the Technical Council of Regional Planning, and proposed building a superblock of urban cells with freeway access on the Chamizal property (a very different approach to freeway building than that adopted in the United States). The project was an effort to modernize the city of Ciudad Juárez. Wider streets, designed to attract American tourists and make them feel like they were in the United States, were incorporated into the proposal.

During this period Mexico sought to create linkages to U.S. cities all along the border for trade purposes, as well as for tourism and industrialization. The ProNaF was used as a test model for a commission on border urban development known as the “Mixed Committee on Border Urban Development” (Comisión Mixta de Desarrollo Urbano Fronterizo) which via Regulatory Plans (Planes Reguladores) created master “urban development plans for several cities in the northern Mexican border including Ensenada, Tijuana, Nogales, Mexicali, Piedras Negras, Matamoros and Ciudad Juárez. These Regulatory Plans laid the foundation for the modern maquiladora industry. Maquiladoras began operating in Mexican border cities in 1965.

---

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 199.
88 Ibid., 204.
89 Ibid., 198.
90 Ibid.
In 1968, while Mexico was creating a utopia for American shoppers and preparing itself for a future of trade with the United States, Interstate 10 and Highway 110 were rising around *El Calvario* Catholic Church and Lincoln School. The footprint of *El Calvario*, a stone church built in 1933, located at the corner of Durazno and Martínez Streets (see Fig. 4.3), was needed to make way for a freeway column to support a section of Highway 54 leading to the Bridge of the Americas (BOTA) Port of Entry. In 1970 *El Calvario*, the pride of the Lincoln community, was demolished.

![Fig. 4.2. Photographer unknown. Demolition of El Calvario Catholic Church in 1970. Courtesy of El Paso Times.](image)

Trish Long, Librarian at the *El Paso Times* republished the following story:

February 21, 1970, “The North and South freeway and its gleaming steel and concrete overpasses and underpasses will grace our fair city sometime in the near future, but the former site at 4000 Durazno street will always bring tears to many old timers who built the church with their hands,” states Mrs. Anna Manley of 4110 Leeds street, former member of El Calvario Church. It was founded by Rev.
Francisco Pacheco in 1933 after he had just arrived from Spain. Money for the building was raised through donations, bazaars, enchilada dinners, theatrical shows and magic shows. It was built by hand by congregation members. The last service was held in October. “What some of the old timers ask, is, why did their church have to be torn down? During the depression [sic] when neighborhood men went every morning to look for work and couldn’t find any, they would return to the church and pull themselves up on ropes to the top of the rock walls and with their pastor, put in their day’s free labor for the House of God. In their hearts, El Calvario Church will always be a beautiful shrine of love, faith and hard work,” Mrs. Manley said.  

A reader following the thread, Nicolas Palacios, posted the following:

Trish: Thanks for posting this picture and brief history of the "El Calvario Catholic Church." Our whole family (Palacios) were members of this church. My father, Ricardo Palacios, was active in the church and helped Father Pacheco. Several of my sisters were married in this church. Prior to it being torn down, I still remember Father Pacheco going around the neighborhood asking for signatures to save the church structure from being demolished. I attended CCD here and also [sic] attended Lincoln Elementary School which was located just across the street…

At the church service on that fateful day, Father Pacheco began the mass in a solemn and emotional state and declared it was going to be the last mass to be held, and that the state needed the church and it would be torn down. Witnesses state Father Pacheco’s voice broke and his eyes welled up with tears. Parishioner and Lincoln Park resident Teresa Orozco was in attendance when Father Pacheco made his announcement. She said he began giving the church saints and objects away to parishioners at the mass. She recalled many parishioners crying during the service. The choir sang, the last mass was held in Latin. Before the church was torn down, the altar was moved to Guardian Angel Church at 3021 Frutas, and church statues were given to devoted families. The life-sized Catholic crucifix with the tableau was moved to Guardian Angel Church at 3021 Frutas Street, where it currently resides. The tragedy regarding the demolition of

---

93 Ibid., posted by: Nicolas Palacios, August 25, 2011 at 01:12 PM.
*El Calvario* church was the National Historic Preservation Act (a federal law) was in place as of 1966; but in 1970 when the church was demolished Lincoln Park residents were never notified.¹⁴

Lincoln School itself was also closed in 1969, and the city of El Paso sold the school to the Texas Department of Transportation for $20,000. East of the Lincoln Park community, suburbs and shopping malls were being built as early as 1961 (Bassett Center was built in 1961) while the roads were being cleared for the creation of Interstate 10.¹⁵ During this period, Montana Street was also widened. Stephenson Street was removed in 1973, when the City of El Paso requested access to the space beneath I-10 to develop open space for public use, and Lincoln Park was created. The Highway Department purchased properties via eminent domain for the construction of the ramps and lanes connecting Highway 54 with the Bridge of the Americas, as well as to Interstate 10.

The city of El Paso was granted access to the state-owned right-of-way beneath the I-10 overpass structures for public use. Battle, in a letter to Mayor Paul Hervey, stated: “This office has examined the agreement between the City of El Paso and the State of Texas concerning the multiple use of land in the IH-10 and U.S. 54 Interchange and has determined it is possible to obtain approval of the City’s request for the El Paso Community College to use the old Lincoln

---

¹⁴ The National Historic Preservation Act, which is a federal law, mandates that “for projects using federal funds, licenses, or permits, project planners must consult with potentially interested parties, including the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to: (1) identify historic properties potentially affected by an undertaking; and (2) and avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on historic properties.” It is not known whether such a study was conducted on El Calvario Church prior to it being torn down in 1970. Texas Capital Fund Workshop, Introduction to Section 106 Review, Section 106 Overview: the Regulations, (accessed April 26, 2018); available from http://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Texas%20Capital%20FundTexasHistoricalCommissionTraining2016.pdf

¹⁵ A black and white aerial photograph dated 1961 shows the construction of Bassett Center as early as 1961 while the roads of being cleared for the creation of Interstate 10.
School building, provided an agreement executed between the City of El Paso and the El Paso Community College is acceptable to the State and Federal Highway Administration.”

In 1974, even though El Calvario Church was closed, residents continued having church services in the park under the canopy of the freeway overpasses (see Fig. 4.3). Orozco said former El Paso County Commissioner Orlando Fonseca helped open Lincoln Cultural Center, so the residents could hold services at Lincoln Park after the church was demolished.

Fig. 4.3. Photograph by Teresa Orozco. Church services being celebrated where El Calvario Catholic Church once stood, underneath freeway pillars, 1970. Photograph with permission of Teresa Orozco.

96 Correspondence from Joe M. Battle, Texas Highway Department, District Engineer, to the Honorable Fred Hervey, Mayor, City of El Paso, Subject: Multiple Land Use Agreement in IH-10 and U.S. 54 Interchange, September 10, 1974.
97 Interview with Teresa Orozco by the author, September 24, 2016.
Purchasing Property for El Paso’s Highways

In addition to Interstate 10, other freeways around the Lincoln Park community further re-shaped its space. In 1969, EPISD sold Lincoln School and its adjoining 23 acres to the Texas Highway Commission, for use as a field office for overseeing the construction of Interstate 10, Gateway East and West and the Spaghetti Bowl, and as a staging location for construction and maintenance equipment and personnel. In December of 1968, Battle, the District 24 Engineer, said Interstate 10 was mandated to be completed within a period of two years.

Property to build I-10 was acquired by the County of El Paso as early as 1954, two years before the passage of the Highway Act. The purchasing of properties for highways continued in the state for some time. In January of 1964, the Texas Highway Commission voted on the acquisition of parcels for the construction of Interstate 10. Between January 29, 1964, and August 31, 1967, the Commission purchased 43 parcels to build Interstate 10. Between August 31, 1967, and January 1970, the Commission purchased an additional 38 parcels to build Highway 110, and on January 29, 1970, it purchased two parcels to build Loop 375. Parcels for the creation of U.S. 54, the North-South Freeway, and parcels to build the Border Freeway were purchased by the federal government. The creation of the Chamizal Freeway was coordinated by the Texas Highway Department of the U.S. Department of Transportation project.

---

98 E-mail message from Alan Shubert, City Engineer to Deborah G. Hamlyn, Qualify of Life Director, City of El Paso, Subject: 4001 Durazno Lincoln Center Summary, August 2, 2011.
Table 4.1. State Highway Department property purchases between 1950 and 1970 by subdivision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Properties Purchased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascarate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassett Addition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaumont</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood Heights</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chula Vista</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordova Gardens</td>
<td>2102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dichiara</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Bennett Survey 12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Dennett Survey 11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East El Paso</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Valle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Heights</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Addition</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Hill</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandview Addition</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA Chadwick Sur 253</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Barker Survey 10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latta’s Woodlawn</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Park</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan Heights</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magoffin</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesa Heights</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Place</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morehead Block 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morningside Heights</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundy Heights</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Fort Bliss</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orndorff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paynes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivera</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Elizario Grant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satterthwaite</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See Instrument</td>
<td>22103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyline Hills</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socorro Grant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise Acres 1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise Acres 3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Heights</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

102 This number does not include the 50 properties in the Rio Linda Subdivision which were returned to Mexico as a result of the Chamizal Settlement.

103 Twenty-two property purchases have the designation of See Instrument.
An analysis of deed records from the El Paso County Records identifies the purchase of properties by the State Highway Department between 1950 and 1970 by subdivision: As the above chart illustrates, highway building affected numerous subdivisions, but most significantly the Beaumont Addition (82 properties purchased); the Campbell Addition (48 properties purchased); the French Addition (111 properties purchased); the Government Hill Addition (185 properties purchased); Latta’s Woodlawn (with 52 properties purchased); and Logan Heights (with 51 properties purchased). In contrast only 23 properties were purchased in Lincoln Park. Brentwood Heights had 43 properties purchased; and Dichiara had 40 properties purchased. The other subdivisions on the list lost less than 40 properties each. A total of 1,078 properties were purchased.

On the average, families in the Lincoln Park neighborhood were paid from $4,000 to $6,000 for their homes. Prices were decided by the lot size or number of lots residents owned, and not by the physical characteristics of homes on the lots. Where families relocated depended on how much money they received for their homes. Many families moved into communities where they could purchase homes for the amounts they were paid. Many families moved into homes built by Hervey Construction -- later the Hervey Real Estate Company -- which had converted the land south of the sand hills into the new East side neighborhoods, where the future Interstate 10 would be routed.
Building US 54 (the North-South Freeway, the Patriot Freeway)

Interstate 10’s six-lane highway and Gateway East were constructed in 1968, just feet away from Lincoln School, but in 1965 the building was already threatened by the creation of US 54.\textsuperscript{104} The 1965 article in the \textit{El Paso Herald Post} stated, “City Planning Director Jon Cunningham today said there was no chance of avoiding the school when the North-South Freeway is constructed.”\textsuperscript{105} The news article, printed four years before the school was closed, reported that the building would be in the path of the proposed Freeway Interchange, but, for an unknown reason, Lincoln School was not torn down.

US 54 began at Lincoln Park and extended north to end at the Texas-New Mexico border. The city of El Paso paid fifty percent of the right-of-way costs -- $7.5 million -- to purchase properties for the North-South Freeway, with the federal government paying the other 50 percent, totaling $15 million for the right-of-way purchases alone.\textsuperscript{106} The $7.5 million of the cost of land purchases was raised via a bond election for $8 million on October 3, 1964; and the state’s construction cost for the freeway was $25 million.\textsuperscript{107} Joe M. Battle, District Engineer, in a letter to D. C. Greer, State Highway Engineer, projected preliminary planning and location studies would take one year, and conveyed that the city of El Paso would assume right-of-way costs on a 50-50 basis.\textsuperscript{108}

A September 7, 1964 article in the \textit{El Paso Herald-Post} stated that US 54 would connect to Interstate 10 from the north, make all parts of the city accessible, and help relieve congestion

\textsuperscript{104} “Lincoln School Must Be Moved for Highway,” \textit{El Paso Herald-Post}, Saturday, July 17, 1965, A1, Col. 6, A-2, Col. 8.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} “Highway Committee, Aids Multi-Million Dollar Program, April 1967, 1.


\textsuperscript{108} Letter from Joe M. Battle, District Engineer to D.C. Greer, State Highway Engineer, Austin, Texas, October 15, 1964, Box 2002/101-65, Folder: El Paso County, Re: Highway matters, in the El Paso area, October 29, 1964, 10-29-64, Texas State Archives, Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Building Library, Capitol Complex, Austin, Texas.
on the major roadways.\textsuperscript{109} The two cemeteries, Concordia and Evergreen, would be spared, as the freeways traversed them diagonally from North to South.\textsuperscript{110} In the early 1960s, former journalist Olga Camacho’s family lived on Frankfort Street in Central El Paso, a block away from the proposed route of the US 54.\textsuperscript{111} When she was seven-years-old, Olga recounted playing on the mounds of dirt which remained after the houses with addresses between 4130 and 4300 blocks were demolished to make way for the first section of the highway.

The late Manuel F. Aguilera said Highway 54 was created in parts, with the first section extending from White Oaks Street (now Interstate 10) to Pershing Drive.\textsuperscript{112} Homes in the first section of Highway US 54 were purchased in the mid-1960s, but the highway was not built until 1968, upsetting the former residents who had to move years in advance because of the proposed construction. Cynthia and Federico Villalba’s family lived on the 4200 block of Memphis Street from 1962 to 1966. Their home, which was located four streets south of Pershing Street, was acquired by the city in 1966.\textsuperscript{113} In her oral history interview, Cynthia stated:

The deed shows that they purchased the house in ’66. I think they started making, building that [US 54] in like ’68 or sixty... Did they finish up that portion like around ’69? However, I do remember my Dad complaining about that and saying (sic) “I do not know why they made us move so far in advance,” and “it is taking them forever.” I think that area—and I am not sure, I do not even know, but I would say that area probably is one of the first sections of I-54 that was built. Probably—that is what I think.\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Conversation with Olga Camacho by the author, May 25, 2016.
\textsuperscript{112} Interview with Manuel Aguilera by the author, El Paso, Texas, September 18, 2015.
\textsuperscript{113} Interview with Federico Villalba & Sister, Cynthia Villalba by the author, June 29, 2016.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
The Chamizal Settlement and Building Its Freeway (The Border Highway)

On February 29, 1968, F. C. Turner, Director of Public Roads for the U.S. Department of Transportation sent a letter to J. C. Dingwall, State Highway Engineer for the Texas Highway Department, notifying him that he could proceed with building the Chamizal Border Highway. The letter authorized a budget of $3 million dollars to build the freeway.

The Chamizal Settlement and the Chamizal Memorial Freeway factor into examination of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood because they were barometers of what was to come in the creation of Interstate 10 and the North-South Freeway. The area of the Chamizal itself was what Jeffrey M. Schulze described as “contested boundaries between colonial domains” (referred to in this study as a third space) in his 2012 article, “The Chamizal Blues: El Paso, The Wayward River, and the Peoples in Between.” Schulze states that, due to the unpredictably changing nature of the river, “the Chamizal attracted thousands of residents who often quickly recognized and capitalized upon the tract’s uncertain status.” As of the mid-1960s 3,750 residents lived there.

The displacement of Chamizal residents became synonymous with Chávez Ravine in its magnitude of relocation. To build the Chamizal Freeway, the State of Texas took properties from two blocks West of Santa Fe Street to Zaragosa Road. It was a significant event in El

---

116 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 310.
120 Correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Patino by the Texas Highway Department, District 24, 212 Clark Dr., P.O. Box 10278, El Paso, Texas, 79994, regarding the creation of the Chamizal Border Freeway, November 13, 1970. El Paso County, Control 2552-4, CBH L375 (2), Parcel 148. Michael Patino Family Papers.
Paso/Ciudad Juárez history, as the history of the displacement of its residents is also relatively unknown.\textsuperscript{121} It is also interesting to note that former Mayor Fred Hervey (1951-1955) was chairman and arbitrator for the Chamizal Planning Commission. He would later be re-elected Mayor of El Paso for a second term, from 1973-1975.

El Pasoan Michael Patino’s parents, who were renters in the Chamizal neighborhood, received a series of letters from District Engineer Joe M. Battle of the Texas Highway Department, District 24 about the acquisition of their property. A letter from Battle dated October 21, 1970, stated:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Patino, The Texas Highway Department, acting for the State of Texas, is in the process of acquiring right of way for the Chamizal Border Highway. Since you are renting property within the proposed right of way, we would like to explain just what is going to happen and the effect this will have upon you. First, the property you are renting must be appraised to determine the value. The State must then negotiate with your landlord and buy the property. After the property has been purchased, you will be given a reasonable time to relocate. Since the state owns the property, the time required for you to relocate will be rent free provided the State also acquires the building; however, you will have to pay your utilities. The time for you to start looking for a place to move is when you are notified that the State owns the property. The Highway Department has a Relocation Advisor available to assist you in relocating. Please be assured you will be given sufficient time to relocate after the state has purchased the property. Thank you for your cooperation and if you have any questions, please feel free to call upon us.\textsuperscript{122}

The Highway Commission hired relocation officers to assist citizens whose residences were being acquired. The Patino family purchased a home, with a VA Loan, for $8,839.01 in Northeast El Paso. Forty-six years later, Michael Patino found himself defending the Union

\textsuperscript{121} Master of Arts student Alana Hinojosa from the University of California at Los Angeles Department of Chicana/o Studies, has begun researching the lives of Chamizal families. She presented a paper titled "Dis(re)membered Histories of the Chamizal Relocation Project," as part of Panel Three: “Displacement and Surveillance,” at the 2018 UTEP Borderlands History Conference, on Saturday, February 03, 2018.

\textsuperscript{122} Correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Patino by the Texas Highway Department, District 24, 212 Clark Dr., P.O. Box 10278, El Paso, Texas, 79994, regarding the creation of the Chamizal Border Freeway, October 21, 1970. El Paso County, Control 2554-4, CBH L375 (2), Parcel 147. Michael Patino Family Papers.
Plaza neighborhood, when homes there fell within the Union Plaza Master Plan on Leon Street, across the street from the proposed $180 million arena.\textsuperscript{123}

The purchase of properties and the relocation of people were tests for the massive forced relocation of residents in later years to build Highway 110, the North-South Freeway and the link to the BOTA. While the totality of the Chamizal Settlement is beyond the scope of this study, it is important in the context of the building of the Chamizal Freeway, which also displaced citizens and changed their lives. In Tom Diamond’s description of right-of-way property acquisition practices, there were no negotiations; individuals had to accept what they were offered and were required to move.\textsuperscript{124} Relocation of Chamizal residents resulted from two events, one the return and exchange of lands -- Cordova Island returned to Mexico and the swap of the Rio Linda neighborhood -- and the other, the creation of the Chamizal Memorial Freeway, which later became known as the Border Highway. Due to its proximity to the U.S./Mexico border, the Chamizal Highway was a federal project managed by the International Water and Boundary Rights Commission (see Fig. 4.4). The Chamizal Highway took properties from the Campbell Addition south of Segundo Barrio (Second Ward).

The Chamizal was a conglomeration of neighborhoods and subdivisions which included Cordova Island (see Fig. 4-4). City planning documents state that a sizeable number of homes

\textsuperscript{123} The fight to save Duranguito/the Union Plaza neighborhood saw the combined efforts of the Paso del Sur, the Chicano History Project, community activists, university historians, citizens, students and El Paso County Historical Commission members to encourage the El Paso City Council consider an alternate site. After an intense effort from the community, the El Paso City Council voted 4 to 2 to seek alternate sites for the arena. As part of the effort, I published a Guest column in the \textit{El Paso Times} on Sunday, December 10, 2016 suggesting the El Paso Civic Center as an alternative site, as well as a Change.org petition that over 200 signed that went directly to city council members, as well as created two Facebook groups, the “Save the Union Plaza Neighborhood” and “Amigos de Duranguito/Friends of Union Plaza Neighborhood” Pages. At its peak, the “Save the Union Plaza Neighborhood” group had 3,451 members where members had to post under their account names. Paso del Sur also created a community page had which at its peak had 3,847 “Likes” and posting was administered by the group. In February 2018 David Dorado Romo began writing a manuscript on the history of the neighborhood for publication.

\textsuperscript{124} Interview with Tom Diamond by the author, August 5, 2016.
lacked utilities, had outhouses, and required sewer systems. Scholar Maria Trillo, in her
ethnography of the Chamizal community, writes a very different description of the Chamizal:

El Chamizal contained four principal components with it: two communities, an
industrial/warehouse area, a large cotton field with the remains of a once-thriving
cotton gin named the El Paso Milling Company, and a radio station (KSET) in the
middle of those cotton fields. One of the communities was Río Linda, and the other
was known as Los Jardines (Los Bosques) de Córdoba/Cordoba Gardens or Los
Diablos (The Devils). The industrial area had several warehouses and industries,
including the Peyton (Meat) Packing Company, Three-V Cola, and a bleach
factory. Additionally, private-cotton fields owned by non-Chamizal residents and
by Texas College of the Mines (now the University of Texas at El Paso). Next to
Peyton Packing Co. were cattle corrals. Furthermore, the corrals, the river, and a
‘western/cowboy’ movie set provided a backdrop for Hollywood on occasion.
Córdova Island, also known by its original name, La Isla de Córdova, had a US
International Bridge and Immigration/Customs housing linking Mexico and the US
and was part of the Chamizal dispute.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Maria Eugenia Trillo, “The Code-switching Patterns of Río Linda Community of El Chamizal in El Paso, Texas:
An Emic Perspective of Syntactic Constraints,” (PhD diss., The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 2002), 13.
Trillo’s neighborhood of *Río Linda* was considered a middle-class enclave (homes had utilities and a sewer system) by *Segundo Barrio* residents (see Fig. 4.5). It consisted of single-family brick structures. As part of the Chamizal Settlement, the *Río Linda* neighborhood
transferred to Mexico in the context of the land swap. Because Mexico's sewer system was incompatible with the Río Linda houses, the fifty homes transferred were demolished.

William E. Wood Jr., a former government appraiser during the Chamizal settlement, said the Chamizal was a large area and not just a neighborhood. Residents were offered their property values based on what their homes were worth. Wood stated:

Most of these homes were humble. They were modest houses. They were not cardboard shacks. They were well-built [and] probably cost new around $5,000 [or] $6,000 new after World War II. They were little houses in the 900 [and] 800 square

---

126 Interview with William E. Wood Jr. by Michelle L. Gomilla, 1994, "Interview no. 846," Institute for Oral History, the University of Texas at El Paso, 13.
foot range, most of them. Some of them would be around 1,200 to 1,500 square feet. Those were the bigger ones. The houses were immaculate [and] well kept. Pride of ownership was extremely evident. These people had very humble jobs in El Paso.127

In his interview for the Chamizal Oral History Project, Wood, who was one of two appraisers during the relocation of residents, stated: “moving expenses for the relocation of people was paid by the government.”128 In 1967, the Texas Highway Commission approved the Chamizal Highway as part of the November 8, 1966 part of the Chamizal Treaty.129 The 12.5 miles of the Chamizal freeway starts two blocks west of Santa Fe Street, passes through the Chamizal area and ends at the Zaragosa Bridge. Congress authorized $8 million in federal funds to pay for it.130 The amount increased to $15 million in 1967.131

The El Paso Chamber of Commerce Magazine reported, “With assistance from the Chamber’s Government Relations Committee, headed by Chairman Mart Pederson, we have helped make a reality out of the Chamizal Memorial Freeway, approved by a joint Texas Highway Department of U.S. Department of Transportation project.”132 Pederson meant the Chamizal Memorial Freeway was a joint project of the Texas Highway Department and the U.S. Department of Transportation. When asked how many automobiles would use the Chamizal Memorial Freeway, Highway Committee Member Diamond stated: “The U.S.-Mexico boundary from downtown El Paso to the Zaragosa port of entry will provide a vital El Paso link estimated by the State Highway Department to carry over 40,000 vehicles a day.”133

127 Ibid., 14.
128 Interview with William E. Wood Jr., 25. The Chamizal area was a collection of separate barrios.
130 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
As stated throughout the narrative during this period, not everyone was open to relocation, as an article in March 1966 issue of *El Paso Today* reported:

The U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission has released a Chamizal Project Progress Report concerning the convention for settlement of the Problem of the Chamizal. Land Acquisition: A total of 636 properties were acquired. Most of the properties to date are residential. Purchase contracts signed amount to $6,180,000. There are 99 of the 110 claims filed by residents for special compensation, amounting to $54,864. They have been referred to the Department of Justice 24 cases for price determination. The program contemplates essential completion of the land acquisition by or soon after July 1966. Relocation of the United States Public Facilities and Private Improvements: The Convention provides for the acquisition and orderly evacuation of occupants of the lands to pass to Mexico before the new boundary becomes effective. There will be required relocation of public facilities including ports of entry, the Franklin Canal, railroads, and bridges. Plans for the location of each of these facilities are scheduled for completion by June 1, 1966.134

In just four years, the Chamizal Dispute went from it being an opportunity to a problem, according to the rhetoric in the El Paso Chamber of Commerce’s publication *El Paso Today*.135

In an August 1, 1962, issue, an article titled “El Pasoans Support Chamizal Settlement Plan” was featured.136 The rhetoric in the article favored the plan, while, according to historian Leon Metz, dozens of letters against the settlement were sent to the editors of both the *El Paso Times* and the *El Paso Herald-Post*. Both newspapers countered by publishing editorials in favor of the agreement.137

Amid the boosterism which surrounded the proposed settlement of the Chamizal, one person who was pivotal to opening the community dialogue against the project was Elvira “Vila”

Lacarra, profiled in a 2006 short film by Arturo and Valerie Enriquez, from Vantage Point Studios in El Paso, Texas. In the video, Vila, who later became the founder of the Chamizal Civic Association, speaks of reading about the Chamizal issue in the newspaper and then going to the Paso Del Norte Hotel to speak with Mexican Ambassador Thomas C. Mann during his visit to El Paso. In the video, Vila states that she waited hours to see Mann, until someone came out and told her it would not be possible for Mann to meet with her. She then called the El Paso Herald-Post, and Marshall Hail arrived at the hotel to interview her.

When Hail arrived, Mann came out of his meeting and apologized to Lacarra, and told her: “I apologize, but your Mayor had told me that everyone was 100% for the Treaty.” Hail reported that Ambassador Mann “assured the ‘little people’ of south El Paso he would get their views of a proposed Chamizal Zone settlement before their property is transferred to Mexico.” On Monday, April 13, 1963, U.S. Representative Ed Foreman of Odessa met with nearly 800 Chamizal residents and business owners at Sacred Heart Church and took questions about the issue.

Federal and state departments lacked bilingual relocation agents, which necessitated other methods to educate Spanish-speakers about the concept of Right-of-Way. A 15-page Spanish booklet titled “La Compra Del Derecho De Vía” (the purchase of right-of-way) was printed by the El Paso City Planning Department in conjunction with the Texas Highway Department (see Fig. 4.6).

---

138 “Vila,” (Arturo and Valerie Enriquez, Vantage Point Visual Studios, 1109 Arizona, El Paso, Texas 79902, vpoint@ix.netcom.com, Copyright 2006).
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
143 “La Compra Del Derecho De Vía,” Departamento de Carreteras de Texas (sp), Impreso por el Departamento de Planificacion de la Ciudad de El Paso en Cooperacion con El Departamento de Carreteras de Texas (sp), n.d. The
In the introductory comments, the booklet stated that the purpose of the publication was to answer questions regarding the state’s right-of-way practices. The booklet detailed that negotiations for the purchase of properties for right-of-way were handled directly by the State Highway Department, which was responsible for the acquisition of properties. Since freeways were new to Spanish speakers, the Highway Department expounded such concepts as: “The engineers design and place the freeway with you in mind, to give you service and security and to reduce the price of operating your vehicle.”

To encourage the relocation of residents, the government paid closing costs for the purchase of relocation homes for Chamizal residents.

The last page of the booklet explained the process of eminent domain (Proceso de “Dominio Eminente”) for individuals who refused to sell to the state. Historian David Dorado Romo has stated that the ratio of people relocated in the Chamizal Dispute was six Mexican Americans to one Anglo resident.

\[\text{City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 6, Folder #20, “La Compra Del Derecho (Right-of-Way) de Via.” C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 5.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 13.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 19.}\]

\[\text{Personal conversation with Historian David D. Romo, July 15, 2016, El Paso, Texas.}\]
Resistance to Relocation and Psychological Effects of Highway Building and Displacement

Little has been written about the financial, social and emotional impact of minority communities forced to relocate – and the displacement of families, the loss of schools, family grocery stores, renters, etc. Less has been written about the loss of entire neighborhoods. Nothing has been written about the potential intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions which
might have evolved from the pool of real talents and skills in densely populated barrios forced to disperse in the name of highway building and urban renewal. Forced relocation scattered people and fragmented their kinships and connections as neighbors. Relocated individuals often became depressed and isolated and suffered psychological hardships. University of Texas at El Paso Sociologist Elwyn R. Stoddard’s “The Role of Social Factors in the Successful Adjustment of Mexican American Families to Forced Housing Relocation: A Final Report of the Chamizal Relocation Research Project, El Paso, Texas,” and the City of El Paso Planning Department’s “Relocation Practices in El Paso,” are two important studies of El Paso relocation practices and their psychological effects.  

The Stoddard study includes materials collected over a five-year period, starting in 1964, from a study group of “1,155 families relocated, [and] a sample of 40 homeowners and 40 renters” who were selected and personally interviewed by him. The other study, conducted by the City of El Paso Planning Department, reports that, “The Texas Highway Department became the first El Paso governmental agency in recent years to displace scores of residents with the acquisition of properties for the Right-of-Way of Interstate 10.” The removal of people from their homes via eminent domain for the creation of Interstate 10 began in 1957, a year after the signing of the Highway Act. The perception has been that citizens did not resist relocation,

---


149 Ibid., iv.


151 Ibid.
even if they felt their properties were purchased for less than they were worth, but this is incorrect. People did resist, but the laws were against them. Those who could afford it hired legal representation. Others organized and hired representation as groups. Right-of-way was not a new concept. Right-of-way and eminent domain for the relocation of residents in El Paso had occurred since the 1880s. But it was an activity which had not been heard by the generations which experienced it in the 1960s with the creation of El Paso’s freeways.

Individuals like El Paso Mayor Judson Williams and city planners like Jonathan Cunningham saw relocation efforts as needed tools for the social engineering of the city, and often reported in local publications that it was a smooth and efficient endeavor, when in reality it was a very messy ordeal. An article titled “Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities,” documents efforts to counter highway building and describes the nature of bottom-up freeway revolts. Disagreements over property compensation did occur in El Paso, on an individual basis, and some cases went so far as to be brought before the Justice Department.

William E. Wood Jr., a former government real estate appraiser during the Chamizal settlement, in his interview for the Chamizal Oral History Project, recounted a story of a woman who said she was not going to give her house up. He recounts that she told Robin Washington,

---

154 An article titled “Chamizal Project Construction Near,” in El Paso Today Vol. 18, No. 3, (March 1966): 8, reported: The U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission has released a Chamizal Project Progress Report concerning the convention for settlement of the Problem of the Chamizal. Land Acquisition: A total of 626 properties were acquired or 755 of the total number of available units. Most of the properties acquired to date are residential. Purchase contracts signed amount to $6,180,000. Approved were 99 of the 110 claims filed by residents for special compensation, amounting to $54,864. They were referred to the Justice Department 27 cases for price determination. The program contemplates essential completion of the land acquisition by or soon after July 1966.
155 Interview with William E. Wood Jr., by Michelle L. Gomilla, Interview No. 846, Institute for Oral History, the University of Texas at El Paso, 17.
another appraiser, that “she was not going to give her house to those goddam Mexicans in Mexico that they could go to hell and that she was keeping her house and if need be, she would ‘get her guns out and fight.’”  

As a February 23, 1965 article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* pointed out, “This is the final price and if you do not sign you have 60 days from this day on and at the end of such time the amount offered to you will be deposited at a local bank and your property will be torn down whether you move or not.” Regardless, Lydia Hinojosa on June 1, 2015, recounted that her father did not feel he had been justly compensated for his family’s business, but had had no choice but to sell or face the business he had spent a lifetime building being condemned.

Highway building also dramatically changed the landscape and people’s psychological sense of place. El Paso, as a small and sleepy place, experienced the beginnings of an urban transformation that continues to this day. One person lamented the change to the city in a column “Ask Mrs. Carroll,” in the *El Paso Herald-Post*, where she stated, “Dear Ann Carroll, I hate to see all these highways and freeways destroy the last vestige of sweet little sleepy El Paso.” Later in her letter, she writes: “I can remember when Lincoln Park School was in the ‘wilderness’ and driving in the Lower Valley summer afternoons was a restful and cool respite with the smell of alfalfa blowing across your face and out past Ysleta to Socorro you could smell mesquite fires burning and see farms clear to the river.”

A book on a family’s dispossession due to urban renewal states:

I don’t know if it was Dr. Claytor’s charm or his insouciance that helped pull the piece together for me. He was not seeking my pity. In fact, he strove to maintain
his dignity while telling the story of his losses. But the pain was such that he couldn’t quite keep it out of his voice. It was the breaking edge of his grief that linked it to the sound of pain that I have so often heard, a sound that was obvious in some of the voices, and just beneath the cheerfulness in others. There was a remarkable emptiness in that pain. In that searing moment, I realized the loss that he was describing was, in a crucial way, the collective loss. It was the loss of a massive web of connections—a way of being—that had been destroyed by urban renewal; it was as if thousands of people, who seemed to be with me in sunlight, were at some deeper level of their being wandering lost in a dense fog, unable to find one another for the rest of their lives. It was a chorus of voices that rose in my head, with the cry, “We have lost one another.”

Like the individuals in *Root Shock*, coming from insular and close-knit communities, students like David Prieto, whose family moved to the Ranchland area, where he attended Bel Air High School, were put into a multi-racial student environment in a time of turmoil. Prieto experienced racial strife and conflict and the student walkouts of the 1970s. Other displaced people suffered myriad losses, personal, physical, psychological and economic ones.

**Lincoln Park School’s 75th Year Alumni Reunion**

On June 7, 1987, the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department at the Lincoln Arts and Cultural Center held a Lincoln Park School Reunion at 4001 Durazno Street, and created a 1912-1987 Memory Book. It was the ten-year anniversary of the Lincoln Arts and Cultural Center and the 75th-Year Reunion of Old Lincoln School. June 7, 1987 was also proclaimed Lincoln Arts Cultural Center and Old Lincoln School Day. The celebration featured a Grand Parade from 12 to 1 p.m., featuring Miss El Paso Jaime Archer, the three reigning Miss Lincoln

---


Centers, the Lincoln Neighborhood Association and much more. Grand Marshalls of the parade included the two oldest former students of the Old Lincoln Park School, Luz Mendez, and Jazmine Ornedo. Entertainment included performances by Magician Bob King; Rosa Guerrero’s International Folklorico; Singer Becky Romero; the Lincoln Center Dance Revue; Celebrity Impersonator Cynthia Caro; and Mariachi Colima.

Photographs of 32 alumni members were featured in the memory book, along with numerous historical photographs and images of the day’s celebration. An article by Ray Sanchez on Trinidad “Trini” Guillon, former star pitcher, who, along with Ruben Porras, took the Bowie Bears to win the State Baseball Championship in 1949, was featured on page 12. Even the school’s song, “Old Lincoln Park School” was reprinted:

Lincoln Park is here to sing a song that isn’t long  
Just to let you know we’re very strong  
For our Lincoln Park  
Our Teachers and Pupils are Gay  
And we often hear them say  
(Chorus)  
Lincoln Park is here to sing a song that isn’t long  
Just to let you know we’re very strong  
For our Lincoln Park  
All together let us shout for blue and red  
There’s no doubt to be faithful of these colors  
For our Lincoln Park  
Lincoln Park is here to sing a song that isn’t long  
Just to let you know we’re very strong  
For our Lincoln Park

165 Ibid., 7.  
167 Ibid., 12.
Once again from the very top start over!\textsuperscript{168}

Local Leaders in the Community

Lincoln resident Teresa Orozco also remembered the late Richard Telles, a member of the El Paso Independent School District Board, who helped open Lincoln School to residents, so they could have neighborhood community meetings and other special events.\textsuperscript{169} Telles’ family was active politically, and the Telles machine orchestrated the election of his brother Raymond L. Telles for El Paso County Clerk in 1948, as well as for Mayor of El Paso in 1957. Telles was also part of the Viva Kennedy Clubs in El Paso when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson visited El Paso to campaign in 1960.\textsuperscript{170}

Although the number of Chicanos grew in El Paso from 1970 to 1980, few Mexican-Americans held positions of power where they could influence local politics or the highway building that took place from 1960 to 1970. The article “The Chicanos of El Paso,” states a study conducted by Paul Sweeney and Carey Gelernter in December 1968, in the \textit{El Paso Times} “found that not a single Mexican American made the top twenty-five economic “elites” that ran the city.”\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. According to an interview of Richard Telles 6/22/1996, by José Angel Gutiérrez in Tejano Voices. According to the web site “Tejano Voices,” “Telles was born in 1922, and was raised in El Paso and served as El Paso City Clerk, Democratic Party Precinct Chairman, President of the American National Insurance Council, and El Paso County Commissioner. He was a member of the Masons, the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and helped to form Viva Kennedy Clubs in El Paso.” At the time of his death in 2003, Richard Telles was president of the El Paso Independent School District board of trustees, the first Mexican-American in the role in the last century, 2011, The University of Texas at Arlington, UT Arlington Library P.O. Box 19497 Arlington, TX 76019, (accessed December 16, 2016); available from \url{http://library.uta.edu/tejanovoices/interview.php?cmasno=034}.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{171} Oscar J. Martínez, "The Chicanos of El Paso," \textit{Southwestern Studies}, Monograph Number 59, 1980, Texas Western Press, the University of Texas at El Paso, 11. The series of articles published in the \textit{El Paso Times} on December 1968 found similar absences of Mexican Americans, as lawyers, as Presidents and committee members of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, the Sun Carnival Parade and as homeowners in affluent neighborhoods. The City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 23, Folder 11. C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.
Politically, the mid-to-late 1970s and 1980s was also a period that produced organizations for the Chicano/a community. *La Campaña Pro la Preservation del Barrio*, a grass-roots organization, was created by *Segundo Barrio* housing activist Carmen Felix, and others in the 1970s. *La Campaña* focused on housing issues in *Segundo Barrio*. Former Lincoln Park resident Francisco Prieto remembers an Anglo labor activist visiting the Lincoln community to teach them about their rights.\textsuperscript{172} In the early 1980s, a coordinating body known as *El Concilio de El Paso*, composed of over 20 Mexican-American organizations, was also formed to advocate for Chicano rights. In Central El Paso in the 1980s another social service organization known as Trinity Coalition, created by Patricia Roybal-Sutton, advocated on behalf of Chicanos in El Paso. Trinity Coalition was active in the Lincoln Park community, as were other labor justice organizations.

**Conclusion**

The construction of El Paso’s freeways and the city’s rapid growth constituted a form of social engineering and created an economic tsunami for El Pasoans. It reinforced class lines and valuated and devaluated properties, including properties which had been in families for generations. Among Mexican American residents, there was little understanding of highway building and concepts of right-of-way. In comparison, elites and those who could afford them, armed themselves with lawyers.

In 1965, for unknown reasons, the Lincoln Park School was spared from demolition.\textsuperscript{173} However, 40 years later there would be a widespread public outcry against a renewed threat of

\textsuperscript{172} Interview with Francisco Prieto by the author, El Paso, Texas, 24 March 2015.
demolition of Lincoln Center, and indirectly against highway building in El Paso. In conclusion, even though the settlement and afterward the relocation of citizens was a violent event, the narrative of the period shows that the settling of the Chamizal dispute was crucial before the building of subsequent highways such as Interstate 10, Highway 54, Highway 110 and the Chamizal Freeway could commence. If the Chamizal boundary dispute had not been settled, it would have posed an impediment to highway building because of the unsettled status of the international boundary line and of the affected neighborhoods.

According to Chihuahuita resident Freddy Morales, a protest occurred against highway building in 1978 as depicted in a mural by Chihuahuita residents titled "Untitled" or "A Tribute to Joe Battle" or "Lágrimas" on the 200 block of Montestruc, formerly Seventh Avenue. The mural was painted in 1978 by Fred Morales and Mara (full name unknown) and other Chihuahuita residents. It addressed the possibility of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) running a freeway through the neighborhood, which it later did. The mural was sponsored by Proyecto Bello, Beautification Project under Project Bravo Southside. Ivette Enríquez, “¡El Barrio Unido Jamás Será Vencido!:” Neighborhood Grassroots Activism and Community Preservation in El Paso, Texas,” (PhD diss., The University of Houston, 2016), 252-253. Morales stated the mural was a tribute to then Texas Highway Department (El Paso Director) Joe Battle for not extending Loop 375 through Chihuahuita, after a two-year battle. Yet in 2018, TxDOT built highway infrastructure over the community.
CHAPTER 5: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: LINCOLN PARK
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This chapter examines the David and Goliath paradigm of how a grass-roots organization
with the support of the community rose to meet the challenge against incredible odds. It also
argues that Lincoln Center and the Lincoln Park community, which was the site of the third Fort
Bliss, was long overlooked as a historical site. Reasons for overlooking the historic importance
of the community are that long-time residents moved away or passed away; that politicians
sympathetic to residents passed away and could not advocate for residents; as well as the idea
that historic preservation in Latina/o communities is a more recent development. The Lincoln
Park Conservation Committee learned that the old Lincoln Park School building was to be
demolished in 2011. In 2014, a series of events galvanized the Committee, the community and
local politicians. From then on, Lincoln Center was seriously taken into consideration as a
cultural heritage site that needed to be reopened but the process has since stalled.

This story validates Edward Said’s theory that, in the words of global studies scholar
Fazal Rizvo, “the role of the intellectual [is] to ‘speak truth to power’.”¹ It narrates the process of
how a Lowrider car club became a neighborhood association and later a preservation
organization that advocates for the community and the space known as Lincoln Park in South
Central El Paso. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first relates developments that led
to the closure of Lincoln Center and the formation of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee,
an organization that advocated for the reclamation of communal space and organized community

¹ Fazal Rizvi, “Speaking Truth to Power: Edward Said and the work of the intellectual,” in Jerome Satterthwaite,
Michael Watts and Heather Piper, eds., Talking Truth, Confronting Power (Trent: Trentham Books Limited, 2008,
113-126).
actions and events; the second tracks specific actions the LPCC took to engage with the community and prevent Lincoln Center from being demolished.

**Closure of Lincoln Center and Evolution of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee**

The turn of the century saw the decline of population in the Lincoln Park community. A major flood in 2006 was blamed for the closure of Lincoln Center. The Lincoln Park Conservation Committee emerged, took ownership of the open space adjacent to Lincoln Center, beautified the park, and ultimately converted it into El Paso’s Chicano Park. In an interesting turn of events, LPCC began organizing events at Lincoln Park, which had long thrived as a community gathering place following its creation, but by 2006 had almost been forgotten.

LPCC members found a model to refer to, in considering potential uses for the space, when Hector Gonzales, his brother David Gonzales, and their family visited Chicano Park in San Diego in 2008.\(^2\) When they returned to El Paso, the Gonzales brothers sought to emulate what they had seen in San Diego’s Chicano Park, which led to the establishment of Lincoln Park Day. The event grew in size every year, and LPCC members became motivated to research the rich history of the community that had been lost due to highway construction and neglect by the city. Each year, bits and pieces of Lincoln Park’s history were rediscovered, until its importance could no longer be disregarded by the city and state officials, and the community’s quest to reopen the center could no longer be ignored. This dissertation is intended, in part, to contribute to giving a face to the community’s unknown history.

From 2005 to 2007, the Latin Pride Car Club organized an event called “Arte en El Parque,” modeled after the City of El Paso’s “Art in the Park,” but with a Chicano twist. In 2008,

---

\(^2\) Interview with Hector Gonzales and Gabriel Gaytán by the author, August 13, 2016.
the event became the Annual Lincoln Park Day, modeled after similar events held at Chicano Park in San Diego. A year earlier, in 2004, Hector Gonzales, firefighter and president of the Latin Pride Car Club, had e-mailed the City of El Paso about re-opening Lincoln Center. His e-mail went unanswered.3 In August of 2006, torrential rainfall resulted in flooding in El Paso and the Lower Valley. Central El Paso suffered the worst of it. According to El Paso City Manager Joyce Wilson, Lincoln Center was “severely impacted by water damage.”4 Following the 2006 floods, the city shut the center down with plans to reopen it. González’s fire unit had been called to assist Saipan-Ledo residents evacuate their homes during the floods.5 Lincoln Center was used as a rescue station for flood evacuees from the Saipan-Ledo neighborhood, where 56 homes were destroyed. A reoccurring theme in this dissertation is the marginalization of households in lower economic areas by land clearance for road building or natural disasters such as flooding. A 2009 article discusses the flooding of the Saipan neighborhood, which was caused by a breach of a Fort Bliss detention pond:

The Saipan neighborhood was located in central El Paso. In August 2006, a detention pond maintained by the US Army at Fort Bliss overflowed, inundating nearly 60 neighborhood homes. In October 2006, while residents were investing in repairs, the city was “determining options for hazard mitigation through an engineered drainage solution” (City of El Paso, 2007b). Technical problems in the buying out process arose due to the unique characteristics of Saipan, which included small homes and very low average property values (2007 US$58,000). Comparable properties elsewhere in the city were valued at 2007 US$85,000 on average. While media reports and politicians branded the relocation program a success (Johnson, 2007), the 20 buyout offers accepted by residents as of March 2007 totaled $1,043,243 – an average of $52,000 per home. Even if the city had bridged differences in property exchange values, households would still have experienced a loss of neighborhood use values.6

3 Ibid.
5 Gonzales and Gaytán Interview, August 13, 2016.
It is important to note that the damage to homes resulting from the breach of the pond did not affect Lincoln Center. Lincoln Center itself did not get flooded as city officials claimed, but in fact, as related above, was used as an evacuation center. In October 2006, citing mold issues caused by flooding, city officials closed the center. There were mold issues, but they had been caused not by flooding but by the city’s negligence and installation of improper air conditioning units. Thereafter, the city conducted an inspection of the building, ostensibly to determine whether it could feasibly be reopened or should be demolished. In reality, LPCC members felt the inspection was intended to justify the building’s demolition.

“The Microbial Investigation on Lincoln Center,” was conducted by Sun City Analytical Inc. on October 16, 2006. Based on their report, the City’s Environmental Services determined that the center should be closed temporarily, for the mold to be cleaned out and structural deficiencies repaired. The city expressed plans to reopen Lincoln Center in November 2006, but it never did.

The Microbial Investigation report, upon close examination, reveals the main reason for water intrusion into the Lincoln Center to be not flooding but “window caulking that was missing or damaged, roof and parapet wall damage, and/or exterior plaster cracks.” The inspection report states that the main cause of “moisture in the building (was) the evaporation cooling system” which was “building excessive moisture in the air plumes due to missing or

---

7 Correspondence from John Garza, City of El Paso Environmental Services to Louis Aloysius, “Microbial Investigation at Lincoln Center,” October 16, 2006.
8 “Microbial Investigation, Lincoln Center, 4001 Durazno, El Paso, Texas,” prepared for the City of El Paso, Attn: Mr. John Garza, 7969 San Paolo, El Paso, Texas, 79907 (Sun City Analytical Inc., Environmental Services, 1409 Montana, El Paso, Texas, 79902, October 16, 2006), 5.

inoperative exhaust systems.” The evaporation coolers were only two years old. The report stated that they should not have been used in a building exposed to high volumes of soot and tire dust from the freeway. The report stated that no mold was found in the ducts, but that soot and rust were found on the evaporation cooler. The report recommended that refrigerator coolers should have been used instead. Testimonies by residents who experienced the floods first-hand concurred with the Microbial Investigation report that there had not been damage to the carpet in the building, and flooding had not reached Lincoln Center. The majority of the mold growth was found on ceiling tiles. The report did not recommend demolishing the building.

According to City Manager Joyce Wilson and the Microbial Investigation report, the closure of the building was ordered by Dr. Jorge Magaña, Director of the City-County Health District, “who requested the closure of the Center and that all personnel vacate the building due to (1) that asbestos... with positive aspects of mold were present in the building; (2) that the investigation revealed air contamination with mold permeating throughout the entire building; and (3) that Center staff members had reported respiratory ailments due to contaminants.” The building has remained closed since 2006.

In 2008, brothers Hector and David González and artist Gabriel Gaytán created the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee to advocate for the needs of Lincoln Park. Attorney Ray Eli Rojas submitted several Freedom of Information Requests (FOIAs) to the city. The documents he obtained confirmed the city’s intent to tear down the center. The documents revealed that city officials had been planning the demolition since 2007 and had not notified

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 6.
12 Ibid.
residents of their intentions. An e-mail dated January 2, 2008, from City Manager Wilson to Deborah Hamlyn and Nanette L. Smejkal is illuminating:

Wayne [Thorton] made some comments about Lincoln Center and the flooding/relocation, etc. I thought we were in consensus that we would not be reopening this facility for any purpose going forward – particularly since we bought most of the residential properties nearby plus the costs of fixing the building, plus the Y building purchase. Make sure we are speaking with one voice and that he understands that his operation is not planned to go back there, Thx.

Wayne Thorton, who had long managed the City’s Youth Recreation Program, had inadvertently made comments to local newspapers about his office returning to Lincoln Center. Wilson, who had closed the center in 2006 for no other likely reason than wanting to save money for the city, was vehemently opposed to the idea. In her e-mail message concerning Thorton’s comments, Wilson stated: “Nanette: Please find out why this happened? THIS FACILITY SHOULD BE CLOSED—PERIOD. We all agreed on that, months ago, thanks.”

Wilson might have wanted to close the center to divert funds elsewhere, but the reason she gave, that Lincoln Center was flooded during “Storm 2006,” had been disproven two years earlier by Sun City Analytical inspection. As Collins and other authors quoted in this dissertation illustrate, it is easier to marginalize communities that have no input in decision making processes and are vulnerable to socio-environmental changes. While deliberations regarding whether or not to demolish the Lincoln Center progressed inside city hall, the LPCC painted murals on the

---

14 “Comments about Lincoln Center,” in e-mail correspondence from Joyce A. Wilson, City Manager to Nanette L. Smejkal, Director of El Paso Parks and Recreation, January 02, 2008.
15 E-correspondence regarding Lincoln Ctr. via Freedom of Information Request FOIA.pdf, 1.
16 E-correspondence re Lincoln Ctr. via Freedom of Information Request FOIA.pdf, 1.
17 Ibid.
pillars at Lincoln Park, and continued holding annual Lincoln Park Day celebrations. These actions amounted to the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee claiming the park and Lincoln Center as a place of Chicano/a culture, in spite of the building being closed and inaccessible to the community.

![Image](image_url)

**Fig. 5.1.** Painting of “El Corazón de El Paso” mural for Lincoln Park Day, 2009. Photograph on the left by the author. Photograph on the right courtesy of Gabriel Gaytán.

In 2009, a mural titled “El Corazón de El Paso,” was painted on a 30’ x 20’ T-shape freeway column by Artist Gabriel S. Gaytán. Gabriel’s son, Gabriel Itzai, assisted Gaytán in the painting of the mural, as did the members of the Latin Pride Car Club, who also contributed scaffolding and materials (see Fig. 5.1). The idea for the iconic mural came from David González, a member of the Latin Pride Car Club, who commissioned and sponsored the mural. González gave a preliminary sketch of his idea for the mural to Gaytán, who added images of the Franklin Mountains as well as the star on the mountain, and Mexican pyramids to the
composition, to symbolically represent El Paso’s over 85% Mexican-American heritage and population.

In 2010, LPCC joined with residents to create a Neighborhood Association, and joined Partners-in-Parks, which made it possible for them to sponsor four events a year: César Chávez Day in March, Lincoln Park Day in September, Día de los Muertos in November and Día/Day de La Virgen de Guadalupe in December. Proceeds generated from these events offset the expenses of organizing the events, the park’s beautification, and the painting of murals by local artists. The Lincoln Cultural Center and Park has remained a social anchor and meeting place for the community, and meetings and ceremonies are often held outside of the closed center in the amphitheater and park areas. One of the goals of LPCC had been to collaborate with the City of El Paso to make Lincoln Park a cultural tourist destination for the arts. In partnership with the El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau, in early 2010, the LPCC printed 10,000 full color brochures to promote awareness of the murals and the park. The brochure is currently in its second printing. The brochure was designed by artist Gabriel Gaytán.

**LPCC’s Campaign to Save Lincoln Center from Demolition**

In 2010, because of the effort to keep Lincoln Center and Lincoln Park from being demolished to make way for the I-10 Connect Project, the Lincoln Park community became the epicenter for citizen activism and resistance to highway building. Their efforts were directly responsible for the eventual transformation of Lincoln Park into a site of cultural and ethnic pride. The LPCC led the effort against the destruction of Lincoln Park. As mentioned previously, the Latin Pride Car Club, which has the same membership and acronym as the Lincoln Park
Conservation Committee, had sponsored the annual Lincoln Park Day since 2005. Every year, since its closure in 2007, LPCC had asked itself why Lincoln Center hadn’t re-opened.  

In 2011, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) requested the demolition of Lincoln Center by the City of El Paso because it “determined that the Center is not eligible as a historical structure nor its use contemplated in the future.” TxDOT did not see Lincoln Center as a historical site. The city echoed this view by sending its newly hired Historic Preservation Officer to conduct an analysis of the center, and she concluded:

Staff went out to photograph the building yesterday and did some research. This is what we know: (1) the architect is unknown. We haven’t found who designed the building but it’s a duplicate of the Rusk School; (2) the building was constructed around 1915; (3) the building has been altered considerably since it was first constructed (see attached photos). It has been stuccoed over, the windows have been changed, and the parapet (which was a character defining feature) has been removed. It doesn’t look anything like the original design; (4) the building has some additions on the side. Can’t tell if they are original; (5) we have no information on anyone of prominence who attended the school; (6) we have no information on anything of significance that happened in the building; and (7) we have no information on whether or not this site is of archaeological value.

The statement by the Historic Preservation officer that there was “no information on anyone of prominence that had attended the school” nor “information on anything of significance that happened in the building” was unfounded. This dissertation provides substantial proof of the historic importance of the site and adds to a growing body of work uncovering histories of other urban communities of color. These are the challenges of writing the histories of multicultural urban spaces: because significant events in those communities were never documented, the accounts of displaced neighborhoods of color confronting eminent domain are rare. Historic

---

20 On August 2006, heavy rains occurred in El Paso, Texas. During the rains, Lincoln Center was used as an emergency shelter for residents of the Saipan-Ledo neighborhood, where fifty families were evacuated. After the flood in October 2006, citing mold, Lincoln Center was closed by then City Manager Joyce Wilson. Wilson stated that the 2006 flood was the reason for the mold although it was due to the city’s negligence and not the flood.

21 City of El Paso, Manager Joyce Wilson’s presentation on Lincoln Center Proposed Demolition October 5, 2011.

22 City of El Paso, Historic Preservation Officer (Providencia Velázquez) Analysis of Lincoln Center, n.d.
preservation in urban communities of color is challenging, to say the least. Since 2011, in El Paso, Texas, we have witnessed the city’s effort to remove and demolish schools, artwork, and buildings important to the Mexican American community in quick succession, almost as if it were open season on Mexican and Chicano/a icons.23

On March 1, 2011, Richard G. García sent an e-mail to Nanette Smejkal and José I. Rodríguez saying the furnishings and equipment in Lincoln Center needed to be removed from the building. Smejkal stated:

PARD [Parks and Recreation Department] staff are not permitted entrance to the facility. Any salvage should have occurred years ago, and it should not be serving as a storage area for any of our operations. My recommendations would be for all items on site to be removed/disposed by whoever gets the contact for demo.24

On June 2, 2011, Attorney Raymundo Eli Rojas, a Lincoln Park supporter, made a second request, under the Texas Public Information Act to the Office of the City Clerk, City of El Paso for records to be opened to provide the following information: 1) Any results of asbestos analysis performed after October 1, 2006 of the Lincoln Cultural Center located 4001 Durazno which are not in the Sun City Analytical Inc.’s October 2006 Microbial Investigation; 2) Any results of rat infestation investigation or analysis performed after October 1, 2006 of the Lincoln Cultural Center located 4001 Durazno which are not in the Sun City Analytical Inc.’s October 2006 Microbial Investigation; 3) Any interdepartmental memorandum, communication, etc. regarding the demolition of the Lincoln Cultural Arts Center located at 4001 Durazno that were written after October 1, 2006; 4) Any written communication between Environmental Services, or other entity within the City of El Paso, with the Texas Department of Transportation regarding the

23 “Los Lagartos,” (Sculpture by Luis Jimenez Jr.) in San Jacinto Plaza, The Aztec Calendar, Lincoln Center, and Alamo School.

216
Lincoln Cultural Arts Center located at 4001 Durazno.\textsuperscript{25} The documents revealed that Wilson had directed staff to demolish the building with no public input.

At the El Paso City Council Meeting on October 18, 2011, Debbie Hamlyn, the former Director of Quality of Life for the City of El Paso, presented her argument for the demolition of Lincoln Center. Among other things, she argued that the district had lost so much population that the neighborhood no longer warranted a center.\textsuperscript{26} LPCC stated that, aside from its low-income residents, that part of the city had a large undocumented population which has historically been under-counted by the U.S. Census and that there were over 6,000 young people in the immediate area of Lincoln Center. The allegations by the city were designed to erase the community, but upon learning more of the area’s history, they have ended up doing quite the opposite.

At Annual Lincoln Park Day on September 25, 2011, thousands gathered to celebrate the park and unveil a new mural by Gaytán. Lincoln Park Day is one of the largest regional classic car shows in the city, averaging over 5,000 attendees. At the same time, under the threat of Lincoln Center’s demolition, LPCC initiated the “Save Lincoln Park” campaign by hosting a press conference with attendees and Lincoln residents. On that day, LPCC also collected more than 500 signatures for a petition to preserve Lincoln Center, addressed to former El Paso Mayor Jonathan Cook. LPCC subsequently presented those letters and petitions to city representatives and Mayor Cook directly.

Hamlyn stated the building had issues with mold and asbestos due to the floods of 2006, however, as Open Records Requests have proven the city failed to produce any evidence of mold or asbestos. At a city council meeting, City Representative for District 3, Emma Acosta,

\textsuperscript{25} Lincoln Center FOIA cover letter by Raymundo Eli Rojas, June 2, 2011. 
\textsuperscript{26} Three-ring binder titled ”Lincoln Center,” prepared by LPCC for El Paso City Representative Emma Acosta, 2015.
introduced a resolution to grant a reprieve to Lincoln Center for six months while the city communicated with the neighborhoods surrounding Lincoln Center regarding its demolition. The resolution passed unanimously. Several LPCC members, supporters and community residents spoke on behalf of keeping Lincoln Center open and stopping its demolition. LPCC asked for more time to develop plans to save the building citing the community was never notified of the closure in 2006. LPCC then obtained a six-month stay and then began working with the City of El Paso and TxDOT to explore possible options to keep from the building being demolished and to re-open it.

Former City Representative Emma Acosta scheduled two public meetings for input on Lincoln Center, one for Wednesday, January 11, 2011 and another one for Saturday, January 14, 2011. At the first public input meeting, held at the Silva Health Magnet School on January 11, 2011, six years after the public facility had been closed, former City Engineer R. Alan Shubert stated no asbestos had ever been found in the building. It was the first-time city officials admitted they had obviously communicated inaccurate information about asbestos having been the reason to close the building. As the campaign to reopen Lincoln Center has gained traction, other important figures signed on to support LPCC in their efforts to open the building.

At the city council meeting on October 4, 2011, LPCC learned that the city did not own Lincoln Center, and that the Texas Department of Transportation or TxDOT was the rightful owner. At the same meeting, LPCC learned from City Manager Joyce Wilson, that Lincoln Center was slated for demolition and the newly renamed and remodeled O'Rourke Recreational

---

27 Initially, representing the district where Lincoln Park is located, El Paso City Representative Emma Acosta was supportive against the demolition of Lincoln Center, but over time, she was no longer in support of the project. In addition, due to redistricting the Lincoln Park neighborhood was no longer part of jurisdiction, so he didn’t feel it was within her purview to support the re-opening of the center.

28 Correspondence from Hector González, President, Lincoln Park Conservation Committee to Texas Senator José Rodríguez, May 10, 2011.
Center (formerly the YMCA) at Virginia and Montana Streets (located four miles away) was its replacement. The O’Rourke Center was miles away from Lincoln Center and it necessitated crossing Interstate 10 and other busy streets. Wilson had shifted funds from Lincoln Center to the O’Rourke Center named for Pat O’Rourke, Congressman Robert O’Rourke’s late father.

On August 2013, LPCC created a fact sheet titled “Help us re-open Lincoln Center!” The fact sheet presented the following questions: What is Lincoln Center and why is it important? Who owns the building and who want it to be reopened? What requirements does TxDOT have for the reopening of Lincoln Center and who supports the reopening of Lincoln Center? In July 2013, at LPCC’s invitation, Hector Gutierrez Jr. became part of the effort to save Lincoln Center from demolition. Gutierrez had been the first Hispanic Corp Commander of the Texas A&M Corp Cadets. By 2013, he was a retired lobbyist and strategist with extensive political contacts and he agreed to help LPCC as a private citizen. He had served as a board member of the Medical Center for the Americas and had a 34-year professional career as a professional lobbyist which included tenures at El Paso Electric and Hillco Partners. He had also served as Public Affairs Consultant for the City of El Paso, the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board, AT&T, Motorola, and the American Heart Association.29

Having first-hand knowledge of the key players in El Paso, Gutierrez proved to be a valuable guide for the preservationists to navigating El Paso politics. It is important to note that members of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee and supporting members (students, scholars and community activists) all serve as community volunteers. LPCC is not a tax-exempt organization and efforts to turn it into a non-profit have been resisted by core members. The LPCC organizational structure is organized as a neighborhood association.

On July 12, 2013, Dr. Mariana Chew, President of Xicali Engineering, El Paso, Texas, conducted a second walk through of the building and she wrote a report which refuted the center had mold and water damage and was “unsafe.” Her findings stated issues with the building could have been easily addressed by the city. That same year, Senator Rodríguez’s Sustainable Energy Advisory Committee (SEAC) expressed an interest in “greening” the building as an incentive to reopen it.

Engaging Community to Save Lincoln Center: The “Do What’s Right” Rally

There are only two small green signs which designate the location of Lincoln Center, one located at the corner of Raynolds and Durazno and another at the corner of Copia and Durazno. Lincoln Park is an area which attracts thousands of visitors every year and which also serves as an economic booster for the city. From these small signs on July 21, 2013, came the idea to create the “Do What’s Right” rally to raise awareness of Lincoln Center’s possible demolition. The campaign produced a t-shirt and held a petition drive in the park’s amphitheater.

Fig. 5.2. Do What’s Right “Save Lincoln Center from Demolition,” Photographs and graphics by the author.

In summer 2013, the TxDOT still required an institution to consider acquiring the building. LPCC approached El Paso Community College (EPCC) to act as an agency to help
reopen the center, so on August 12, 2013, El Paso Community College staff conducted a walk-through of Lincoln Center and presented their options to EPCC President William Serrata via a report titled “Site Evaluation of 4001 Durazno – Lincoln Center by the EPCC Physical Plant, Police Department and Information Technology Department, 8-12-2013.” The draft report featured a brief history of the building and a summary of what it would take to re-open the building:

The Lincoln Center (4001 Durazno) has been offered to the El Paso Community College (EPCC) by the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) for a low or no cost lease. The purpose of the site visit by EPCC personnel was to determine the estimated budgetary requirements to bring the Lincoln Center up to the minimum EPCC standards. This information will be used to determine if absorbing the Lincoln Center is a sound decision for EPCC at this point in time.\(^{30}\)

EPCC estimated the minimum renovation requirements to reopen Lincoln Center would be $2,437,880.00. EPCC sent a letter to TxDOT Chairman Houghton on August 13, 2013 with electronic copies to Senator Rodríguez, state and city representatives and to Dr. Dennis Bixler Marquez, Director of Chicano Studies at UTEP, asking Houghton to postpone the demolition of Lincoln Center until a suitable sponsor for the building could be found, but he did not respond.

Earlier on August 12, 2013, a letter was sent to TxDOT Chairman Houghton verifying wide-community support for the reopening of the center and asking him to remove the demolition clause he had placed on anyone wanting to acquire the building. The “Multiple Use Agreement” (MUA) was a contract which needed to be signed by the governmental entity who agreed to re-open Lincoln Center. Under Item #7: Termination, the contract specified that the governmental entity who acquired the center had 120 days to make “required repairs and improvements to the facility to bring the facility into compliance” or the agreement would be

---

\(^{30}\) El Paso Community College, “Site Evaluation of 4001 Durazno – Lincoln Center by the EPCC Physical Plant, Police Department and Information Technology Department, 8-12-2013,” El Paso, Texas, 2.
terminated. It meant if the governmental entity did not make the needed repairs and improvements in two months the contract would be revoked. In addition, under Item 10. Restoration of Area, the agreement required the governmental entity “to within (30) days from the date of said notification, [to] clear the area of all facilities, including demolition of any buildings located on the facility and return the facility in a satisfactory condition to the State.” Meaning if the conditions did not work out for the governmental agency they would have to vacate in a month, as well as pay for the demolition of any buildings or modifications they had made to the building.

In addition, under Item 15. Use of Right of Way, TxDOT would not relinquish their “right to use such land for highway purposes when it is required for the construction or reconstruction of the traffic facility for which it was acquired, nor shall use of the land under such agreement ever be construed as abandonment by the State of such land acquired for highway purposes, and the State does not purport any interest in the land described herein but merely consents to such use to the extent its authority and title permits.” Meaning that the governmental entity could acquire it, make renovations, but the State could re-acquire it at any time they needed. In summary, the agreement would lease the building, but not the land. Under these conditions, no governmental agency would enter into the agreement, thus LPCC sent the following letter to Chairman Houghton:

The demolition clause is exclusionary and exemplifies a form of environmental discrimination that seeks to exclude a specific ethnic group because you deem them unfit to open a building in a location with a demonstrated need. EPCC seeks to reopen the building and make it available to the community. We find this behavior alarming, especially from a governmental official who has was born and raised in El Paso, Texas and is now chairing a state department that seeks to improve roads and infrastructure for Texas residents. If you feel this way about a community group

31 Texas Department of Transportation, Multiple Use Agreement, Form 2044 (Rev. 07/2012, 3.
32 Ibid., 4.
33 Ibid., 5-6.
wanting to reopen a center, how will that prejudice cloud your judgment when you are making bigger decisions to benefit Texas’ Latino/a growing demographic? We hope that you take time to reconsider your requirement and withdraw the demolition clause, because without it, the building stands a better chance of being saved and preserved. Do what’s right, Chairman Houghton.34

Like most letters sent by LPCC members, this letter also went unanswered, although it was copied to Senator José Rodríguez, Texas District 29, Texas Representative Marisa Márquez, District 77, Texas Representative Joseph Moody, District 78, Texas Representative Joe C. Pickett, District 79, El Paso County Commissioner, Precinct 1 Carlos Leon, El Paso City Representative Emma Acosta, District 3, El Paso City Representative Eddie Holguin, District 6, El Paso City Representative Lilly Limón, District 7 and Dr. Dennis Bixler-Marquez, Director, UTEP Chicano Studies Program.

The MUA was viewed as a form of posturing because TxDOT operates a Real Estate Management and Development arm within its agency which seeks “to optimize its real estate portfolio by leasing and selling real property assets no longer needed for highway use and exploring alternative strategies that have synergy with existing highway assets.”35 Meaning that they sell properties they no longer need, as they have done so in other Texas cities, but it doesn’t come cheap.36

34 Lincoln Park Conservation Committee sent a letter to TxDOT Chairman Houghton on August 13, 2013 with electronic copies to Senator Rodriguez, state and city representatives and to Dr. Dennis Bixler Marquez, Director of Chicano Studies at UTEP.
The I-10 Connect Project

A Sunday, January 26, 2014 article in *El Paso Inc.*, “Stop ahead: Rebuilding I-10,” by David Crowder mentioned the linking of the Border Highway at the Spaghetti Bowl. This project became known as the I-10 Connect Project. A Press Conference was held on February 14 on the
steps of Lincoln Center to discuss Alternative 8-2 plan (see Fig. 5.5) proposed by TxDOT which would have demolished Lincoln Center. Utilizing political theater, LPCC members created large paper hearts and artist Gaytán created a large heart with a knife going through it with TxDOT letters on it.

Fig. 5.5. The Alternative 8-2 plan proposed by TxDOT would have demolished Lincoln Center.

KFOX News Reporter Stacey Welch broke the story of the demolition of Lincoln Center on March 7, 2014, while it was being presented at the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting, followed by television stations KVIA and KTSM. Lincoln Center was slated for demolition. TxDOT intended to build a super ramp which would connect I-10 to the Border Highway and they needed the airspace above Lincoln Center. In response to the city’s request for
a business plan to reopen Lincoln Center, LPCC provided an 18-page document titled “Business Plan: Lincoln Center for Chicano Cultural Arts, Wellness and Community Archive.” Knowing that reopening the center had long met with obstacles and uncertainty, Joseph Ferguson of the El Paso Community College Small Business Development Center reviewed LPCC’s business plan and sent a summary of it to Mayor Oscar Leeser and the El Paso City Council on April 14, 2014.

**Lincoln Center Stand-Off, City’s Historic Injunction and Occupy Lincoln Center**

The morning of May 20, 2014, LPCC members and Lincoln Park residents attended the city council meeting and urged them to save Lincoln Center from demolition. The same day, at noon, a fence was erected around Lincoln Center and building supporters went head to head with the contractors. TxDOT Chairman Houghton had ordered the contractor go inside Lincoln Center and begin their demolition assessment of the building. News of the contractor’s presence was shared via social media that men were putting up a fence and securing the site for demolition.

When protestors arrived, representatives from JMR Construction stated the site was under their control. Several units of the El Paso Police Department, including a white paddy wagon, were present. Senator Rodríguez arrived on-site and began negotiating with TxDOT officials in Austin to defuse the situation, as did El Paso District Engineer Bob Bielek.
That evening, LPCC began an “Occupy-style” tent city to maintain a presence at Lincoln Park in front of Lincoln Center. The next day, on May 21, 2014, LPCC received a call that contractors had driven up with a Bobcat bulldozer on a trailer. Protesters blocked the trucks. LPCC Member Gonzales stated that things were escalating fast. Meanwhile city representatives were engaged in creating an injunction to stop the demolition. It became a tense situation as activists waited for word on the injunction. Finally, in mid-morning, El Paso city Representative Holguin arrived at Lincoln Center followed by city Representative Lilly Limón, who arrived with copies of the injunction.

Contractors refused to leave the premises and they challenged the legality of the injunction until they were called off by TxDOT officials. This activity signaled a new level of engagement by LPCC and Lincoln Center supporters who were willing to jump in front of
bulldozers, as well as create a human chain to deter the demolition of the building. For a week the Lincoln Center tent city operated as a base camp to monitor the situation (see Fig. 5.6). LPCC members were joined by citizens who camped out overnight at the park. They also received donations of water, food, ice, etc., to support volunteers braving the elements.

On June 1, 2014, Corinne Chacón and Hector Gonzalez were interviewed by KVIA news journalist Maria García about Lincoln Center and a poster created by a local artist which featured an image of Chairman Houghton with the words “Houghton Hates Raza.” LPCC members had shared the image on social media and García asked Chacón and Gonzalez why members were engaged in “hate” rhetoric. LPCC Member Hector Gonzales attended the June 26, 2014 Texas Transportation Commission meeting in Pasadena (Houston) TX where Lincoln Center was discussed as item #6 on the agenda. The meeting was also attended by State Senator Rodríguez, State Representative Joe Pickett, and El Paso Deputy City Manager Sean McGlynn. Gonzales attended the meeting to follow up on the city council’s reaffirmation of LPCC acquiring Lincoln Center to reopen it. In prior discussions with TxDOT, LPCC stated they would acquire and reopen it if they were allowed to do so.

Gonzales presented a brief historical account of the building and its significance to the El Paso community. Senator Rodríguez and State Representative Joe Pickett spoke about the interaction of TxDOT with the community and the lack communication and transparency on their proposed plans which would result in the demolition of the center.\textsuperscript{37} Up to that point, none of the commissioners other than Ted Houghton and Lt. General Weber seemed to have heard of the issues associated with Lincoln Center. Before the agenda item was discussed, in a last-minute

\textsuperscript{37} Texas Transportation of Transportation Meeting, June 26, 2014, Pasadena, TX, \url{http://txdot.swagit.com/play/06262014-688}. 
decision Chairman Houghton asked for a five-minute bathroom break and he informed the public and other elected officials they could leave the building. Over half of the audience left.

Fig. 5.7. The author speaks before the Texas Department of Transportation meeting at the University of Texas at El Paso on October 30, 2014. Photograph with permission of the Ana Reza, El Paso, Texas.

LPCC members again appeared in front of the Texas Transportation Committee on October 30, 2014 at their meeting in El Paso, Texas at the University of Texas at El Paso. Once again LPCC asked TxDOT to present testimony about the importance of Lincoln to the El Paso community and how the neighborhood would be affected by its demolition (See Fig. 5.7). The Commissioners scheduled LPCC members to speak close to the end of the meeting even though Senator Rodríguez had requested to speak at the beginning to allow community members and others to have their voices heard. By the time LPCC members spoke, most of the attendees had already left the meeting. Commissioners were instructed not to interact with the public on the issue of Lincoln Center, even though Lt. Gen. Weber broke the open meetings rule and answered

---

38 Texas Transportation of Transportation Meeting, October 30, 2014, El Paso, TX
LPCC even after being instructed to refrain.

Dr. Max Grossman received an e-mail from Sehila Casper from the National Trust for Historic Preservation on July 3, 2014. Casper was looking for historically significant Latino sites that could benefit from assistance from the National Trust. Grossman contacted LPCC members, and so began a relationship with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to look at ways of saving and refurbishing the center. The National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C. identified Lincoln Center as a historically significant Latino site that could benefit from their advocacy and assistance.

In summer 2011, by teaming up with State Senator Jose Rodríguez and other advocates, LPCC members transformed themselves into preservationists in their pursuit of reopening a building. The story of saving Lincoln Center as an urban space has power. Its power is derived from the activism of individuals gathered to resurrect the vitality of the area. It is an issue of claiming culture and sustaining it versus seeing it as disposable. The topic of preservation is now a global issue because of the Internet—it forms a new dialogue. According to artist Celia Muñoz:

There is a necessity for a culture to exist. Urbanization is not only a national issue but also an international dialogue. Cities need activists to remind them who are they and what they are—big issue is displacement. It is living history.

Ms. Munoz’s statement suggests that activists are usually at the forefront of addressing important issues regarding the changing nature of neighborhoods and when cities overreach and violate people’s lives.

---

40 Artist Celia Muñoz, e-mail correspondence, February 2014.
Artistic Murals of Identity and Symbols of Resistance

Just as highway building became a political act, the painting of murals on the highway pillars at Lincoln Center, was an act to affirm identity and resistance in contemporary twenty-first-century El Paso. In addition, the murals on the pillars supporting the highway exchange above Lincoln Park mirror San Diego’s Chicano Park which also hosts murals painted on its freeway columns (see Fig. 5.9).
Lincoln Park’s monumental murals are tied to the Chicano mural movement which has been the subject of significant scholarly evaluation and research in the fields of ethnic history and fine art. Since 1981, regional artists have painted murals on the pillars (pylons) under the Spaghetti Bowl at Lincoln Center. These monumental works are significant examples of mural production in El Paso, Texas. The collection of murals at Lincoln Park are significant because of the large collection of murals painted by Mexican-American and Chicano artists which are tied to Mexican and Mexican American historical narratives and the Chicano/a mural movement.

El Paso's murals are products of a unique border culture. El Paso and Ciudad Juárez are two cities in two nations, linked via ancestral and historical roots, but separated by man-made barriers--bridges, highways, ramps holding up highways, a concrete lined river and immigration check points.
In 1999, Chicano Artist Carlos Callejo, who years earlier (1993-95) had been commissioned to paint a large mural titled “Our History” in the El Paso County Courthouse in downtown El Paso, proposed and completed a mural project for Lincoln Park in conjunction with the Private Industry Council (PIC) (see Fig. 5.10). He proposed to work with 80 students from various school districts. The mural project, titled “The Spaghetti Bowl Project,” also produced a video on the creation of the murals and sponsored art classes at Lincoln Center. The project hired five artists to work with students and community members to produce the murals. The artists included Cesar Inostroza, Fabian Arraiza, Steve Salazar, and two women who were not artists but youth supervisors. Inostroza and Callejo continued painting murals after funding for the project ended. Callejo said each row of columns was dedicated to various themes: one row was titled “Memorial Walk” and was dedicated to historical figures such as César Chávez, Ruben
Salazar, Martin Luther King, etc. and another row was dedicated to the “Natural Elements”
Mother Earth, Father Son, etc. Callejo, who painted approximately 35 murals at Lincoln Park,
organized a community group which included individuals from the neighborhood to approve the
themes for the murals (see Fig. 5.11).

Likewise, El Paso's murals cannot abandon the regionalism of imagery common to the
border area. In El Paso’s Chicano murals, design motifs were taken from the legacy of the
twentieth-century mural movement of México and its masters—Diego Rivera, David Alfaro
Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco. As in Chicano murals painted elsewhere in the United
States, the themes draw upon ancient Pre-Colombian cultures—Mayan, Aztec and Toltec—not as

---

41 Interview with Carlos Callejo, by the author, September 7, 2008.
icons of the past but as celebrations and metaphors to the richness of contemporary Chicano culture.

**Art of Protest and Community Mobilization**

The creation of Occupy Lincoln Center created an upsurge of creativity and art of protest and community mobilization. The fence surrounding the building put up by contractors became an art piece as activists and community members decorated it with motifs, altars and symbols of Chicano/a identity and resistance. In addition, local artists created images of dissent against individuals like TxDOT Chairman Houghton who were seen as the proponents to tear down Lincoln Center (see Fig. 5.12). Even Artist Hal Marcus recorded a two-minute video on saving Lincoln Center titled “El Paso’s Lincoln Center Will Be Saved 10 Reasons by Hal M.,” on May 26, 2014. He stated that “saving Lincoln Center was the right thing to do.”

---


43 Ibid.
Fig. 5.12. Posters created for the “Save Lincoln Center” campaign. Images with permission by Artist Zeke Peña.

Utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and Change.org, LPCC was able to educate the community about the importance of Lincoln Center, the community and the need to preserve an important building in a historically significant community. Social media in conjunction with broadcast media created project recognition and critical mass about the issue. The Internet played a significant role in democratizing the issues in the preservation of Lincoln Center. People could then relate to it and they could form opinions either for or against the demolition. On-going programming helped humanize the building, but social media transformed it into an emotional issue, so much so that supporters were willing to jump in front of bulldozers.

Beginning in 2005, Lincoln Park has been used by the Chicano community, the Latin Pride Car Club and the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee to present the annual Lincoln Park Day. In 2010, the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee in partnership with Lincoln Park
residents, became a City-recognized neighborhood association and Partner-in-Parks. A Partner-in-Parks designation allows LPCC to present quarterly social and cultural events. The park features an amphitheater where performers present dances and activities associated with the Annual Lincoln Park Days held every third weekend of September. In addition, to the September event, LPCC also presents César Chávez Day, the Annual Día de la Virgen Guadalupe and the annual Day of the Dead celebration.

LPCC thus sponsors four events at Lincoln Park a year, including the Annual Lincoln Park Day attended by thousands of people. A majority of the members of LPCC are members of various classic cars clubs in El Paso who are involved in advocacy and preservation of the Lincoln Park community and Lincoln Center. And in contrast to other Parks and Recreation Centers which focus on sports, Lincoln Center remains the only cultural arts center in a predominantly Mexican-American city; it therefore serves as El Paso’s Chicana/o cultural center.

Present-day recreational facilities include the 23-acre landscaped park, basketball and handball courts, a children’s playground, an amphitheater with a raised stage area, picnic areas and park benches, a flag area and a 120-car parking lot. Lincoln Park is fully accessible from both Interstate 10 and highway access roads, as well as neighborhood streets.
Fig. 5.13. “Save Lincoln Center” Panel in October 12, 2013, at Café Mayapan, 2000 Texas Street, El Paso, Texas. From left to right, Attorney Ray Rojas; Retired Attorney J.B. Ochoa (nephew of Cleofas Caheros); Corinne Chacón, then with Senator José Rodríguez’s office; Hector Gonzalez, Lincoln Park Conservation Committee; Dr. Mariana Chew; the author; and Guillermo Glenn, La Mujer Obrera. Photographer unknown.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Few people know how El Paso’s freeways were built or what, besides progress, the motivations were for building them. Much of the work on urbanization and displacement of communities has centered on the black-white binary and few studies discuss how African Americans and Mexican Americans, as well as whites who lived in the same neighborhoods, were affected together.

Prior to the Great Depression, El Paso was an important Chicano city in the Southwest on par with San Antonio and other cities which now rival it. During the Depression from 1929-1939, the Southwest saw record numbers of deportations and El Paso became a destination for thousands of Mexicans, in a form of reverse migration of the Mexican Revolution, as thousands migrated back to Mexico to be repatriated or who were deported.

Then in the late 1960s, Interstate 10, Highway 54, Interstate 110, etc. ran through the city from east to west, as well as from north to south, displacing neighborhood space and dividing Lincoln Park into four parts.\(^1\) Interstate 10 created a north and south mentality where property values differed north and south of the highway and US 54 divided it into quadrants. Neighborhoods such as Latta’s Woodlawn and Cordova Gardens, were obliterated with the creation of Interstate 110 and the Chamizal Settlement. Early proposals to compensate for the destruction and create Lincoln Park as a communal space included plans to incorporate aspects of neighborhood into it, but they did not come to fruition.

The creation of Interstate 10 had created devastating effects on communities surrounding Lincoln Center. Not only were entire neighborhoods eliminated, but also historical structures

such as *El Calvario* Catholic Church which was located across the street from the former school. The church, which had been built by the community stone by stone, was demolished in 1970, to make way for a highway pillar to hold up Federal Highway 110, but seemingly, no historical survey was completed even though National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was in the books in 1966. It is not known whether a comprehensive study was suggested as present-day Section 106 studies of historical buildings mandate by law. It wasn’t until Lincoln Park Conservation Committee created their annual Lincoln Park Day in 2005, that the space began to be fully utilized by the community.

One of the contributions of this work is linking El Paso’s urban history to other cities which experienced the similar reorganization of space due to transportation, highway building, and redlining, but given its trans-border focus, it is also a very different and unique study. The reorganization of space affected both sides of the U.S./Mexico border. In addition, officials had to work in unison to ensure a smooth transition of a new border which had been in dispute for over a century.

The fight to save Lincoln Center began as an effort to re-open a 100-year-old building in Central El Paso in 2011 and it transformed to become a movement of the Mexican-American community requesting accountability and transparency from the Texas Department of Transportation. This is a history of a building which first opened as a schoolhouse for the children of military families in Camp Concordia in 1912. At the same time, it is a history of the Village of Concordia, one of the first settlements north of the Rio Grande in West Texas. It is also a history of the Lincoln Park community which was established in 1909 but due to the creation of the Federal Interstate system and the creation of Interstate 10 in the late 1960’s, the community was split into fragments. Many of its residents were relocated via right-of-way and
condemnation to make way for a freeway interchange known as the Spaghetti Bowl and leftover land was created into Lincoln Park, which was built under the interchange.

This work is a history of displacement and relocation and how government agencies used legal processes to remove people from their homes and businesses. Space in the creation of freeways coincided with its racialization by politicians. Some Mexican Americans resisted efforts which would displace them; however, the laws were against them. El Paso’s highways became political acts via the city taking absolute ownership of the land and disregarding citizens’ rights and buying them out one at a time. This history shows how displacement and loss of land and homes continued even after the nineteenth century.

This is also a story of two El Paso’s. One El Paso exploits power and influence and the other El Paso is exploited by controlling wealth such as in the creation of highways. Historically, as they are now, those in power capitalized political processes to build the city’s freeways. If we use David R. Diaz’s concept of Latino urbanism as barrio urbanism, then highway building in El Paso divided and obliterated El Paso’s barrios all along its path, while none of the residents who were affected were at the table.

Displacement continued well into the twentieth century and was met with resistance again in the twenty-first century with the car club efforts to restore the meaning and value of Lincoln Center. Highway building impacted the future of the Lincoln Park Community by devaluing properties, splitting the community in half which then led to its demise as a vibrant neighborhood. Highway building was used as structural violence via social-economic issues; it not only disrupted lives, but it destroyed equity of property owners. A pattern and practice of zoning and land use discrimination—is what resulted from Chamizal Settlement. The settlement
was the first step. This discriminatory land use was sanctioned by both governments. It was a driving factor because land with water rights is the most important land in any community.

The challenge before the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) was to translate a volunteer Chicano/a grass-roots organization into a force that could effectively resist efforts by a $9-billion-dollar state agency like the Texas Department of Transportation to demolish a hundred-year-old building that was important to their community. The building did not belong to them and was on the state’s right-of-way. They had to learn how to navigate the wide spectrum of regulatory, statutory and political issues involved. They needed to enlist people who could help and guide them. Finally, this work fills in an absent chapter in the history of the spatial development El Paso, which is reflective of countless communities across the country, but it also presents a blueprint on how to challenge the destruction of community spaces, which in itself is a process and has a great learning curve. The fight to save Lincoln Center, created an opportunity for the Mexican American community to request accountability and transparency from the Texas Department of Transportation. What began as a quest to research a building of importance to the community has yielded substantially more.
PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary Sources: Archives

Border Heritage Center, El Paso Public Library, El Paso, Texas

C.L. Sonnichsen Collection, Dept. of Special Collections, The University of Texas at El Paso

MS 204, The El Paso Department of Planning Collection, 1923-1999, Parts 1-3 (100 linear feet) an unprocessed collection, created on August 2009.


Lincoln Park Conservation Committee (LPCC) Papers, 2005-2016

Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Archives, Austin, Texas

FG 170, Materials at the LBJ Library Pertaining to the Cities and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, WHCF Confidential File, Boxes 39, 40, 41, 182, 196 EX HI, 1963-1969, Box 1, Executive Highway, 11/22/61-

Task Force Reports, Boxes 2, 3, 5, 7-9.

TN Materials in the Johnson Library Pertaining to Transportation, Box 7, Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, 3/2/66 Message on Transportation

Office Files of White House Aides Horace Busby Jr., Box 30.


James Gaither, Boxes 14, 75, 385.

Charles Horsky, Box 89.

Bill Moyers, Box 134.

Matthew Nimetz, Box 14.

Fred Panzer, Boxes 379, 394.

WE 9 LE/We 9, Materials at the LBJ Library Pertaining to the War on Poverty, Box 178.

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.


Texas Department of Transportation Photography Archives, Austin, Texas.

Texas State Archives, Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Building Library, Austin, Texas.


Primary Sources: Architectural Plans, Artwork, Illustrations


Lincoln Center Floor Plans for the First and Second Floors. Courtesy City of El Paso Planning Department.

Artwork by Artist Zeke Peña. “Save Lincoln Center” Campaign.

Primary Sources: Blogs

Refuse the Juice
Max Powers

Primary Sources: Broadcast Media

KDBC News Channel 4
KVIA News Channel 7
KTSM News Channel 9
KFOX News Channel 14
KISS FM 93.1
Univision Channel 26

Primary Sources: Correspondence, Leaflets, Letters

Battle, Joe M., Texas Highway Department, District Engineer, to the Honorable Fred Hervey, Mayor, City of El Paso, Subject: Multiple Land Use Agreement in IH-10 and U.S. 54 Interchange, September 10, 1974.


Greer, D.C., State Highway Engineer, Letter: Administrative Order No. 23-56 to Division Heads, District Engineers, and Engineer-Managers, Subject: Organization and Recruiting, September 26, 1956.

Mars, E. W., correspondence, Texas Highway Department District Engineer to Hon. Ralph Seitsinger, Mayor, City of El Paso, November 5, 1962.

Senecu Fine Arts Society correspondence to the Texas Department of Transportation, 2013-2014.

Texas State Senator José Rodríguez, correspondence to the Texas Department of Transportation, 2011-2015.

Thomas Moore Carson, “Application to the Texas State Historical Commission for a historical marker for the Site of Camp Concordia and Fort Bliss Application,” (Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas, 78711), Title of Marker: Camp Concordia, Marker Number 4740, 4001 Durazno Street, El Paso, Texas, marker approved June 8, 1982.

Correspondence from Joe M. Battle, Texas Highway Department, District Engineer, to the Honorable Fred Hervey, Mayor, City of El Paso, Subject: Multiple Land Use Agreement in IH-10 and U.S. 54 Interchange, September 10, 1974.

Correspondence from Hector González, President, Lincoln Park Conservation Committee to Texas Senator José Rodríguez, May 10, 2011.


Correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Patino by the Texas Highway Department, District 24, 212 Clark Dr., P.O. Box 10278, El Paso, Texas, 79994, regarding the creation of the Chamizal Border Freeway, November 13, 1970. El Paso County, Control 2552-4, CBH L375 (2), Parcel 148.

Correspondence from State Representative Joe Pickett to the Texas Department of Transportation, 2011-2016.
Correspondence, Letter to Texas State Representative Joe C. Pickett, District 79-El Paso on October 25, 2011, by the author.


Court of Civil Appeals of Texas, El Paso, City of El Paso et al., Appellees, v. Mr. John E. Tucket al., Appellees, No. 5116, June 24, 1955, Rehearing Denied July 20, 1955 (documents the annexation of Ascarate Land Grant)


Greer, D.C., State Highway Engineer, Letter: Administrative Order No. 23-56 to Division Heads, District Engineers, and Engineer-Managers, Subject: Organization and Recruiting, September 26, 1956.

Grossman, Max, Vice-President, El Paso County Historical Commission to Hector Gonzales and Miguel Juárez (regarding Lincoln Center), December 27, 2014.

“La Compra Del Derecho De Via,” Departamento de Carreteras de Texas (sp), Impreso por el Departamento de Planificacion de la Ciudad de El Paso en Cooperacion con El Departamento de Carreteras de Texas (sp). No date. The City of El Paso Planning Department Papers, MS 204, Box 6, Folder #20, “La Compra Del Derecho (Right-of-Way) de Via.” C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Letter from Joe M. Battle, District Engineer to D.C. Greer, State Highway Engineer, Austin, Texas, October 15, 1964.


Letter to Texas State Senator Jose Rodríguez, District 29, El Paso by Hector Gonzalez, President of the Lincoln Park Conservation Committee, May 10, 2011.

Letter to Texas State Representative Joe C. Pickett, District 70, El Paso by the author, October 25, 2011.

Letter from Tommy Camarillo, President of the Chicano Park Steering Committee to Mayor Oscar Leeser (in support of Lincoln Center), May 26, 2014.

Letter to TxDOT Chairman Ted Houghton, by LPCC, August 12, 2013.

Mars, E.W., Texas Highway Department District Engineer to Hon. Ralph Seitsinger, Mayor, City of El Paso, November 5, 1962.


Senecu Fine Arts Society correspondence to the Texas Department of Transportation, 2013-2014.

Texas State Senator José Rodríguez, correspondence to the Texas Department of Transportation, 2011-2015.


Yetter, Bruce, correspondence, Assistant City Attorney, Legal Department, the City of El Paso to Jonathan R. Cunningham, Director of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, Re: Lincoln School Renovation Project, May 14, 1975.

Primary Sources: Deeds


Primary Sources: Freedom of Information Requests (FOIAs)


Bertha A. Ontiveros, Assistant City Attorney, City of El Paso (2011), for “Any results of asbestos investigation or analysis perform after October 1, 2006 at the Lincoln Cultural Center located at 4001 Durazno that are not in the Sun City Analytical Inc.’s October 2006 Microbial Investigation,” request by Raymundo Eli Rojas, Attorney-at-Law, released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).


City of El Paso Planning Department (2018), plat maps of Chamizal and Lincoln Park, request by the author, released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) #W051920-022318.


Primary Sources: Government Documents


City of El Paso Planning Department (2018), plat maps of Chamizal and Lincoln Park, request by the author, released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) #W051920-022318.
Community Development Program 1975, prepared and designed by the staff of the Department of Planning and Research of the Public Information Requirement of the Community Development Act. Printed by the El Paso City Printing Department. Published by the Department of Planning and Research, City of El Paso, Texas, March 1975.


Ontiveros, Bertha A., Assistant City Attorney, City of El Paso (2011), for “Any results of asbestos investigation or analysis perform after October 1, 2006 at the Lincoln Cultural Center located at 4001 Durazno that are not in the Sun City Analytical Inc.’s October 2006 Microbial Investigation,” request by Raymundo Eli Rojas, Attorney-at-Law, released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).


Primary Sources: Maps

1923 Map of El Paso, Texas.
1940 Map of El Paso, Texas.


Benson Map of El Paso, Texas, 1943.

Cordova Island, Mexico. City of El Paso Planning Department, City of El Paso Planning Department, Open Records Request #W051920-022318, by the author, March 6, 2018.

Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970, 2017 ProQuest, LLC. All Rights Reserved. (accessed October 22, 2017); available from ProQuest.


General Highway Map Supplementary Sheet showing Detail of Cities and Towns, El Paso County, Texas, prepared for the Texas State Highway Department in Cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Public Roads Data Obtained from State-Wide Highway Planning Survey, 1936 (revised to July 12, 1939-Feb. 1, 1940).


Map of Lincoln Park Addition to the City of El Paso, Texas, October 10, 1909.


Primary Sources: Personal Papers, Curriculum Vitae, Resumés

Teresa Orozco Personal Papers
Michael Patino Family Papers
David Prieto Personal Papers
Ray Elí Rojas Personal Papers
Mauro Rosas, Curriculum Vitae, n.d.
Oralee Smith Personal Papers
Nestor Valencia Curriculum Vitae, n.d.

Primary Sources: Photographs

The Bankhead Freeway (Highway 80) ran through Alameda Street in 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas.


Members of “The Charms.” Photographer unknown. Photograph Courtesy of Mrs. Oralee Smith, El Paso, Texas.


Photographer unknown. Demolition of El Calvario Catholic Church.


Photograph of Lower Valley farmland, 1953 by Banes Aerial Photography. Courtesy of the Texas Department of Transportation.

Photographer unknown. Photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson’s visit to El Paso with unidentified residents. Photograph with permission of El Paso Times, September 1964.

Photograph by Teresa Orozco. Church services being celebrated where El Calvario Catholic Church once stood, underneath freeway pillars, 1970. Photograph with permission of Teresa Orozco.

Photographer unknown. Saxophonist Martin Fierro playing at the Alameda Festival, May 1967, Mexico, D.F. Photograph with permission of Teresa Orozco, Fierro’s sister.

Photograph of Mauro Rosas (b. 1925) Rosas served as El Paso’s first Mexican American State Representative during the Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh Texas legislatures (1959-1962).

Photographer unknown. The Prieto Family at Lincoln Park, Christmas, 1958. David is the youngest child on the left-hand side of his father, Francisco Prieto. His father attended Lincoln School up to the fifth grade. Photograph with permission of David Prieto.

Photographer unknown. Two unidentified Southern Pacific Railroad Sleeping Car Porters load food and beverages on a dining car in the 1940s. The El Paso Union Depot can be seen in the background. Photograph with permission of Roy Platner Collection.

Reza, Ana. Photograph of the author at Texas Department of Transportation meeting at the University of Texas at El Paso on October 30, 2014.

Villalba, Federico. Photographs of Lincoln Center, October 2013. Photograph courtesy of the late Manuel Aguilera.

Primary Sources: Oral History Interviews


Primary Sources: Oral History Interviews by the author

Tom Diamond, El Paso, Texas, August 5, 2106.
Mateo and Lydia Hinojosa (husband and wife), El Paso, Texas, April 20, 2015.
Alex and Robert “Robi” Rosas (Brothers), El Paso, Texas, June 27, 2016.
Oralee Smith, El Paso, Texas, October 1, 2016.
Rebecca Valdez Sterling, El Paso, Texas, September 8, 2010.
Dan White, El Paso, Texas, June 12, 2017.
Henry Williams, El Paso, Texas, October 1, 2011.

Primary Sources: Additional Interviews, Conversations, Social Media

Conversation with Olga Camacho by the author, May 25, 2016.

Facebook chat with Lorena Martínez, former educator, by the author, August 26, 2016.

Telephone Interview with Pedro Martínez by the author, July 3, 2017.
Facebook e-mail chat with Mari Primero, former Lincoln Park resident by the author, December 20, 2016.

**Primary Sources: Reports for Re-opening of Lincoln Center**

Chew, PhD., Mariana, “Facts refuting the concern of mold and water damage, Lincoln Center at 4001 Durazno, El Paso, Texas,” Xicali Engineering, El Paso, Texas, n.d.


Lincoln Park Conservation Committee, “Response to Tracy Novak on Lincoln Center,” presented to El Paso City Manager Tommy Gonzalez, Novak was the past Director of the El Paso Parks and Recreation, August 14, 2014.


**SECONDARY SOURCES**

**Secondary Sources: Directories**


**Secondary Sources: Magazines and Journals**

*The Black Worker*

*Magazines*

*American Highways*

*El Paso Today, Official Publication of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce*

*Fusion Magazine*

*Highway*

*Password, Journal of The El Paso County Historical Society*

*Texas Highways*
Texas Parade

Secondary Sources: Newspapers

Desert Mountain Times
El Diario de El Paso
El Paso Herald Post
El Paso Inc.
El Paso Times
El Paso News (online)
El Fronterizo, Cd. Juárez, Chih.
Frontera NorteSur (online), Las Cruces, NM
Newspaper Tree (online), El Paso, Texas
The Prospector
Río Grande Digital (online), Las Cruces, NM
El Continental, Cd. Juárez, Chih.

Bibliography

Secondary Sources: Published Books, Chapters, and Articles


Behnken, Brian D. The Struggle in Black and Brown, African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.


________________, G.S. Johnson, and A.O. Torres, “Dismantling Transportation Apartheid through Environmental Justice, *Progress* 10 (February/March, 2000); available from [http://www.transact.org/progress/pdfs/february00.pdf](http://www.transact.org/progress/pdfs/february00.pdf)


Carson, Thomas Moore, Narrative on Camp Concordia for Application for Official Historical Marker, Texas Historical Commission, El Paso, Texas, August 9, 1981.


259


Feagin, Joe R. Urban Revitalization and Displacement: Types, Causes, and Public Policy. Austin: Center for Energy Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1981.


Lincoln Park School Reunion, Class Reunion, 1912-1987 Memory Book, hosted by the City of El Paso Parks & Recreation (Lincoln Arts/Cultural Center).


“Old Lincoln Park School,” song, n.d.


Texas Highway Commission Public Hearing on Regional Development, El Paso, Texas, December 1, 1966, Exhibit Number 7.00, 1 of 1.


Secondary Sources: Online Articles, Dissertations, Thesis, and Websites


Campbell, Scott, Urban Planning 540, University of Michigan, “Planning History Timeline: A Selected Chronology of Events (with a focus on the U.S.),” (accessed March 27, 2018); available from University of Michigan.


“General Location of National System of Interstate Highways, including all Additional Routes at Urban Areas Designated in September 1955.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, Internet Archive (accessed August 15, 2016); available at https://archive.org/stream/generallocationo00unitrich#page/n0/mode/2up

General Location of National System of Interstate Highways Including All Additional Routes at Urban Areas Designated in September 1955 (accessed February 26, 2017); available at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/links.cfm


Miriam Hospodar, “Martin Fierro Bio,” Martin Fierro Estate, P.O. Box 379, Corte Madera, CA, 94976, (accessed December 4, 2011); available at http://wwwthemeester.com/biography,


Save Lincoln Center (accessed March 26, 2018); available from https://www.facebook.com/groups/246940218672679/.

“Save Lincoln Center/School (El Paso) from Demolition” (accessed March 26, 2018); available from https://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-Lincoln-CenterSchool-El-Paso-from-Demolition/129518087126056


Texas Department of Transportation, “Former Commissions” (accessed March 2, 2018); available at https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/administration/commission/former.html.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AECOM</td>
<td>An American multinational engineering firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASHO</td>
<td>American Association of State and Highway Officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPCC</td>
<td>El Paso Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCC</td>
<td>Hispanic Cultural Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACHOS</td>
<td>Mexican American Committee on Honor Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEChA</td>
<td>Movimento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPO</td>
<td>Metropolitan Planning Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUA</td>
<td>Multiple Use Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPCC</td>
<td>Lincoln Park Conservation Committee or Latin Pride Car Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LULAC</td>
<td>The League of United Latin American Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARD</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation Department (City of El Paso)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POE</td>
<td>Port of Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project BRAVO</td>
<td>BRAVO was an acronym for Building Resources and Vocational Opportunities (Community Action Program, El Paso County, El Paso)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROW</td>
<td>Right-of-way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TxDOT</td>
<td>Texas Department of Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTEP</td>
<td>The University of Texas at El Paso</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

Miguel Juárez was born and raised in El Paso. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1985, a Master of Arts degree in Library Science (MLS) from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo in 1998, and a Master of Arts degree in Border History from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2012.

He has taught as a Visiting Instructor at El Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua; as a Teaching Assistant (Doctoral level) from 2009 to 2017 and as a Lecturer in the Department of Borderlands History from Summer II 2017 to present. In 1998 to 2013, he worked as an academic librarian at: the State University of New York at Buffalo in Buffalo, New York; as a Fine Arts Librarian, at the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ, as a Hispanic Studies Curator and Assistant Professor in Library Science at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX; as an Associate Librarian at the Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California at Los Angeles; as a Librarian at the El Paso Community College; and as an Archives and Rare Books Librarian at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX.

He has published two books: Colors on Desert Walls: The Murals of El Paso (1997, Texas Western Press), a bilingual book, chronicling El Paso’s rich mural movement and its artists; and co-edited (with Rebecca L. Hankins, CA) the book Where Are All the Librarians of Color: The Experiences of People of Color in Academia (2015, Library Juice Press). Miguel is also on the editorial board of Latinx Talk, an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, and moderated forum which formerly published as Mujeres Talk from 2011 to 2017.

Migueljuarez.soha@gmail.com

Dissertation was typed by the author.