

**Investing in Youth for Community Well-Being:
The Case of the Fruitvale in Oakland, CA**

By

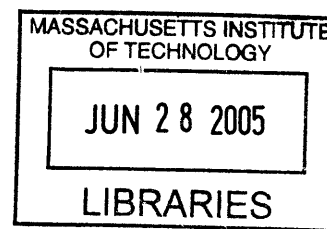
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Bachelor in Development Studies
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master in City Planning
at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2005



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By

Diana Bernal

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, School of Architecture and Planning on May 19, 2005 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in City Planning (MCP)

Abstract:

In this thesis I explore how youth spatially perceive their environment in the Fruitvale, an inner city neighborhood in Oakland, California. Through my fieldwork I created a visual map of how youth view their spaces in the neighborhood and what constraints are being imposed on their space with little consideration. In studying the spatial patterns of youth my goal was to uncover the extent to which spatial constraints might be affecting their opportunities for positive development and integration into the neighborhood. I explored their situation within the context of a harsh-on-crime political climate in California over the past fifteen years.

In the case of the Fruitvale historical economic and population shifts leading to the concentration of poverty, have caused the creation of informal aggressive subcultures involving drugs, gangs and prostitution. These have grown to dominate youth space on the street and have had large implications on safety. The lack of neighborhood safety is limiting the way youth use space, further limiting their access to greater neighborhood services which can potentially provide them with the support that they need to develop in positive ways and in their transition to adulthood. Given the situation I focused on neighborhood strengths to develop recommendations for addressing the concerns of youth spatial safety. I found these strengths in the amazing work of neighborhood institutions.

The Fruitvale neighborhood has a diverse concentration of institutions which have triggered many local changes to improve the conditions of residents. In my recommendations I propose expanding spatial safety by building on community strengths and lessons through the collaboration of neighborhood institutions. Using a similar concept to the Main Streets program currently existing on the eastern side of the neighborhood, I propose the creation of a Youth Empowerment Zone (YEZ) for community well-being. The YEZ would use physical, collaborative, and youth integration methods to link neighborhood institutions and provide a safe, fun and empowering spatial environment for youth while offering all the essential needs for positive youth development.

Thesis Supervisor: Langley Keyes

Title: Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning

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Introduction

In this thesis I will explore how personal safety concerns, shape and impact how youth use the physical space in their neighborhood. Focusing on the Fruitvale neighborhood in Oakland, California, the study explores how young people experience space through the lens of personal security of the various streets and city blocks of their neighborhood. Using their spatial experience with the neighborhood as it relates to safety I will make recommendations for how existing neighborhood organizations concerned with the neighborhood and youth can link together to better address issues of access to space and safety.

My motivation behind choosing youth and their use of space as a focus of my research is due to my personal experiences during adolescence and beyond. I grew up in a low income minority neighborhood in Long Beach, CA, during a national epidemic of violence in the late 80s and early 90s. During this time gang wars and drug trafficking increased dramatically impacting the way people in the inner city felt about space. I as many others, saw many friends fall into drugs, teen pregnancy, gangs, violence and incarceration. At this time officials became desperate and implemented harsh anti-crime strategies targeting gangs, however these new strategies impacted more than those involved in criminal activity. Youth in these neighborhoods became the targets of not only criminal acts within the neighborhoods, but were also harassed by police and other public agents. Schools implemented strict dress codes while private security guards enforced regulations that restricted the way space was used in commercial areas by prohibiting youth dressed in particular ways (baggy clothes) from entering these spaces or limiting the number of youth entering a store at one time or limiting how many could walk in a crowd. Until recently, solutions meant to solve issues associated with youth in California, have focused on increasing criminal punishments in particular, Proposition 21 made the incarceration of youth easier by converting misdemeanors into felonies. This political climate created by a real threat of violence, constrained the spaces and ways in which youth could occupy space. Therefore I am interested in how youth experience

spaces within their neighborhood and how constraints can limit their relationship to the environment.

Before I began my field research my hypothesis was that youth spaces which can increase exchanges for positive development were being limited legal regulations and public attitudes stemming from a negative perception of youth. My assumptions were that merchants, the police and physical redevelopment projects were restricting and even reducing the amount of spaces youth could occupy. I thought that strategies to increase economic investment and make the Fruitvale a cultural and commercial destination for non-residents, could lead to the substitution of informal youth spaces for new public planned spaces for non-residents. This could then block the use by youth of these new spaces by prioritizing merchant needs through the enforcement of no loitering and nuisance laws. I was especially drawn to how adult activity and attitudes about youth, might be reducing the spaces for their leisure use, by not incorporating them spatially into neighborhood plans. If this was the case then adult actions could be limiting the opportunities for youth to interact in public positive spaces and at the same time be pushing them into less positive more isolated spaces.

To explore this hypothesis I chose to focus on the Fruitvale neighborhood because of the diversity of the population, the concentration of Latino immigrants and my access to the community. During my undergraduate education at UC Berkeley, the Fruitvale was a place where some of our student community involvement efforts concentrated and some alumni now coordinate many of the current youth programs. I also became interested in the possible impact that new redevelopment projects could be having on the youth in the neighborhood, including the new Transit Oriented Development (TOD) surrounding the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station. In addition during the winter and summer of 2004 I held an internship with the Unity Council (UC) a Community Development Corporation (CDC). These factors contributed to my accessibility to the community and local knowledge.

In my initial hypothesis I had assumed that the sources limiting how youth could move in urban spaces would be related to new physical changes in the neighborhood, vigilance by police, merchants and other policies that restrict movement and use. However, once I began engaging youth and community organizers in conversations, workshops and interviews, I quickly realized that neither legal regulations nor the development changes in the neighborhood were dominant factors in preventing youth from hanging out⁴ in public areas. Instead I found that from the perspective of the young people their dominant concerns over space came in the form of their own personal safety involving the violent environment and illegal activity in the neighborhood. From the perspective of community organizations in the Fruitvale I found that although they were familiar with the safety concerns of the neighborhood they hadn't explored the extent to which fear and the lack of safety, impacted the spatial patterns of youth within the neighborhood.

Therefore this is a study about how youth experience space, how to make them feel more secure and how community institutions might help them achieve that sense of security. It is organized in the following way. In Chapter 1, I describe how California's political climate during the 1980s and 1990s was driven by a national increase in unemployment, economic stagnation coupled with a crime epidemic. The results of these strategies greatly transformed inner city spaces and the way youth are perceived today. In Chapter 2, I will describe the city of Oakland and the Fruitvale as a product of these trends. I then bring the reader up to date on the current state of the Fruitvale, its characteristics, assets and challenges. Chapter 3 will present my field research in three parts. First, I will review my research methods for finding out how youth perceive spaces within the neighborhood. Second, I will describe the differences between three groups of youth divided by spatial patterns and how they feel about space in the neighborhood. Third, I will focus on how safety constraints including drugs, gangs, prostitution and bullying/robberies impact the spaces youth occupy. In Chapter 4, I will describe the existing neighborhood institutions and how they impact the programs they offer to youth. The I will analyze the challenges and opportunities of each of these constraints beyond

⁴ hanging out- the act of spending leisure time.

space. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I will suggest a strategy to create spatial safety for youth and the community by building upon the strengths of the neighborhood institutions and create a Youth Empowerment Zone. In this section I suggest tools and strategies that could begin to create this type of environment.

Ch. 1: California's Political Climate and Its Effects on the Youth Environment

In the late 1980s and early 1990s many large cities in the United States experienced an epidemic violence which dramatically increased the incidence of youth homicides. During this time unemployment rates were at the highest rate of the last two decades. Between 1985-1993 the homicide victimization rate for 14-17 year olds increased by almost 170% from 4.5 to 12.1 per 100, 000 population (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2004). At this same time an increase in unemployment paralleled increases in crime rates for the same years. Trends between the two seem directly related, pointing to the influence of unemployment on crime.

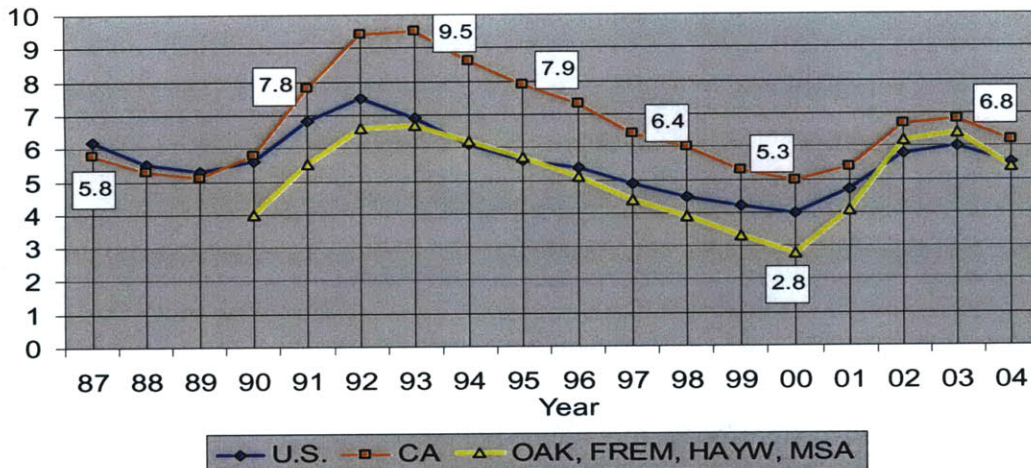
California's economic shifts in the 80s and 90s, such as increasing oil prices and the shift of a manufacturing sector to a service oriented sector; contributed to a great loss of jobs in cities (Miranda, 2003: 10). The impact of these shifts was exacerbated by the concentration of poverty in the inner city caused by the relocation of the middle class to the suburbs (Miranda, 2003: 16). The concentration of poverty coupled with unemployment and economic stagnation contributed to the crisis of violence, as can be seen when comparing unemployment to crime in Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2. As the unemployment rate increased, so did the crime rate and in an urban area such as the city of Oakland, crime constantly remains above the CA and U.S. rate. From 1987 to 1991 the unemployment rates for California increased from 5.8 to 7.8 to 9.5 in 1993 (see Figure 1-2) (California Employment Development Department [CA EDD], 2005).

During this period of economic downturn the drug market gained easy access to the poverty stricken urban centers. This sparked a wave of panic and fear of youth of color who were televised perpetrators of these acts. A wave of anticrime policies followed in an attempt to control the violent crime happening in low income communities.

In 1995 the California juvenile incarceration rate reached an all time high at 110.7 persons per population of 100,000 (see Figure 1-3) (CA DOJ, 2003). The majority of

Figure 1-1

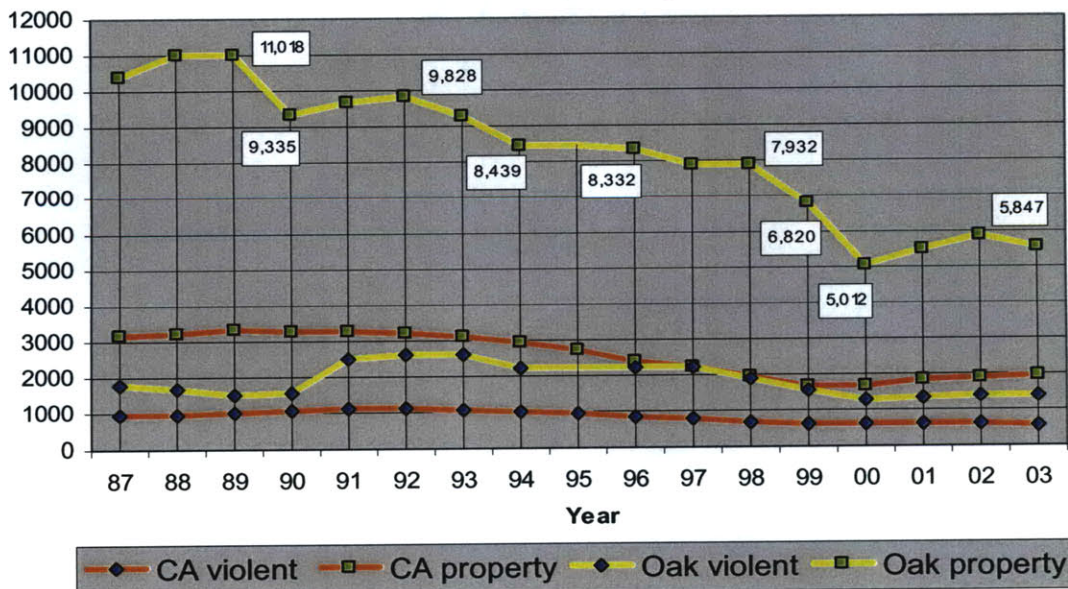
Average Unemployment Rates 1990-2004



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.
California Employment Development Department, Labor Market, 2005.

Figure 1-2

**California & Oakland Violent and Property Crime 1983-2003
Rate Per 100,000 Population**



Note: Oakland 1995 rates not available
Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

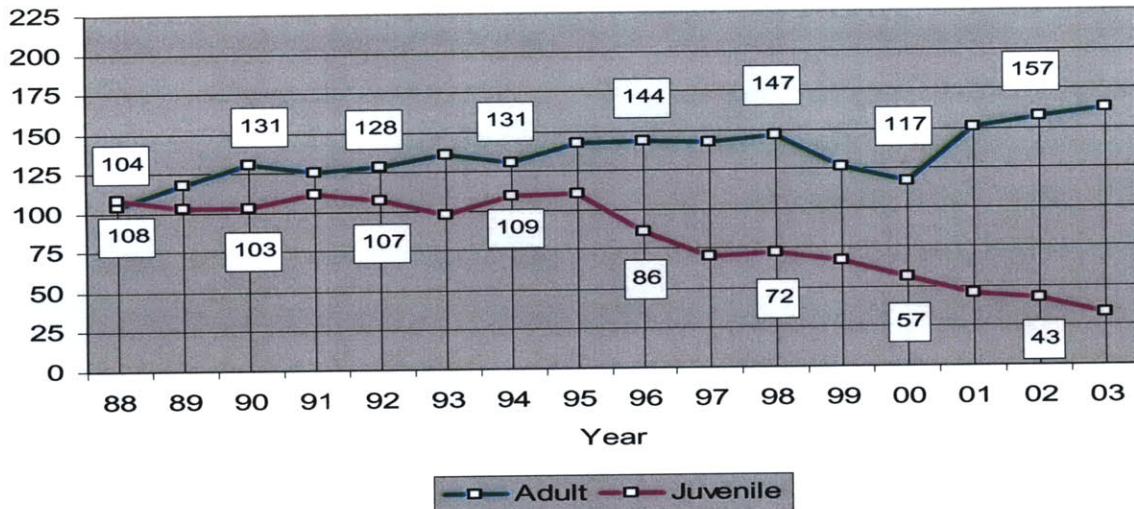
these enforcement measures had specific implications on low income youth of color living within these zones. The violence was real and frightening for all that lived in those neighborhoods. The environment became so violent that youth were carrying weapons for protection rather than with intent to commit a crime. In California this period was one of constant bombardment of restrictions imposed on low income youth in an attempt to eradicate the “gang culture” however, it was an ambiguous category that resulted in widespread suspicion of youth of color and racial profiling. The streets and public spaces became the sites of major enforcement, where gang characteristics had racial implications and adults sought out those who fit the stereotypical profile. The police began conducting routine searches in public spaces and stopping youth wearing baggy clothes or hanging out in groups.

Mistrust of police increased in these low income communities due to aggressive enforcement strategies. In a way, the growing frustration from the conditions of poverty, crime, racism and enforcement that these communities were experiencing erupted in 1992 when a jury acquitted four police officers for the beating of Rodney King. The results were six days of rioting in Los Angeles County resulting in 54 deaths; 2,383 injuries; 13,000 arrests; and \$700 million in property damage (CA DOJ 2003a). The negative experiences of communities were finally being brought to light and in 1999 after nearly a decade of anti-gang enforcement programs a scandal erupted when a former police officer in a plea bargain revealed widespread police corruption in California’s largest city anti-gang programs (CA DOJ 2003a).

The physical environment in which low income youth of color lived was being restricted both by figures of institutional authority and the culture of violence existing in their neighborhoods. Youth found their spaces restricted not only within their neighborhoods by widespread violence and gang and drug territories, but also restricted by authorities implementing no loitering rules and constant vigilance by: police, store clerks and private security. In addition to local level restrictions, policies were also being implemented at a

Figure 1-3

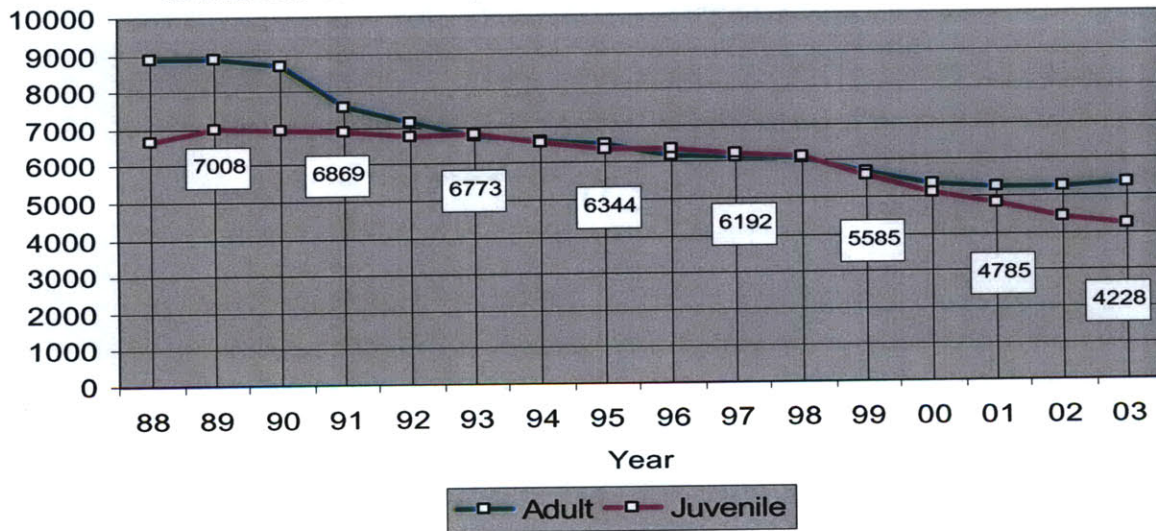
**California Incarceration Rates 1988-2003
Per 1,000 Population**



Source: CA Department of Justice, Crime in California 2003.

Figure 1-4

**California Arrest Rates 1988-2003
TOTAL LAW VIOLATIONS, RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION AT RISK**



Note: Juvenile data are not available for 1960-1987.
 Total at-risk population: 10-69 years of age; Adult at-risk: 18-69 years of age;
 Juvenile at-risk: 10-17 years of age.

Source: CA Department of Justice, Crime in California 2003.

national and state level adding to the negative circumstances youth of color were already experiencing at the local level.

Despite a declining crime rate, as seen in Figure 1-2, the crime epidemic of the early 90s haunted the public and in 2000 Proposition 21 the “Juvenile Crime Initiative” was placed on the California ballot. It would authorize adult prosecution of those 13 years of age and older charged with certain serious violent crimes (CA DOJ, 2003a). It targeted “gang violence” and enacted six new gang⁵ related felonies and increased prison terms for gang related crimes (California Secretary of State, 2000). The image of youth was severely damaged during this period of violence and unemployment and California voters approved Proposition 21, as stated by the CA DOJ it would require more juveniles to be tried in adult court and certain juveniles to be held in jail or state correctional facilities (CA DOJ, 2003a).

As a result of major economic and population shifts including loss of manufacturing, white flight and urban sprawl, the concentration of poverty and the outbreak of the crack epidemic, youth of color in low income communities over the last fifteen years have had to encounter, poverty, unemployment, violent crime and racial profiling. These have had the effect of limiting the available safe spaces in which youth can develop in positive ways. In addition this period greatly shaped the negative ways in which inner city youth are portrayed and marketed in the media.

Considering this situation, I am proposing that spatial youth patterns and their causes be studied to implement strategies that create and expand their safe spaces and opportunities for positive youth development⁶. In the absence of safe spaces or minimal safe spaces youth will be inhibited from fully taking advantage of the resources they have in the neighborhood. This can limit the amount of positive experiences that they are exposed to daily and with them the tools that can be gained in order to become successful as adults. Concerns about youth are ever increasing even though the years of the violent epidemic are behind us. However, at a time of budget cuts national, state and local

⁵ California law defines "gangs" as any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of certain crimes.

⁶ Positive Youth Development- Acquiring positive social assets which allow youth to reach their full potential as adults. These assets should satisfy physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and social needs.

attention around youth is now centered on building a generation of skilled, competent and responsible adults. “Yet at least 25% of adolescents in the U.S. are at serious risk of not achieving “productive adulthood” and face such risks as substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure and involvement with the juvenile justice system. In addition many youth are entering the labor market with inadequate knowledge and skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and prepare for and succeed in a job interview” (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). Major cities with a high concentration of poverty and local disinvestment face many challenges in light of these facts and the city of Oakland is a prime example of such impact.

The city of Oakland is one example of a city with great challenges lying ahead, but with a large amount of social capital, new ideas, constant forward movement and a passion for social justice. Residents and advocates refuse to give up and work diligently to acquire their vision for a healthy Oakland. In November of 1996 voters prioritized youth by passing Measure K, the Kids First! Initiative. This law sets aside 2.5% of the City’s unrestricted General Purpose Fund to pay for services to children and youth under the age of 21 (City of Oakland, 2001: 2). The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) has resulted in an estimated \$5.6 to \$6.8 million investment in youth per year (International Child Resource Institute et. al., 2001: 2). These funds have proven to be an essential component for youth empowerment and positive development despite challenging times. In this thesis I will explore how amongst negative statistics and perceptions, opportunities for forward advancement lie in the work of local advocates, residents and specifically in youth, if a safe empowering environment is to be created and maintained. In the next chapter I will explore how historical trends have affected the character of the city of Oakland and in particular the neighborhood of the Fruitvale. I will also describe the current state of the local level and what economic, housing, and population characteristics the neighborhood will have to overcome when attempting to create a safer community by investing in youth.

Ch. 2: Oakland and Fruitvale Background

City of Oakland History and the Fruitvale

In the book The Land that Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century, William Shutkin describes the origins of Oakland. “Oakland was first inhabited by the Ohlone Indian tribe and later became a vast land holding of the Mexican general Peralta into the nineteenth century. The city began as a series of farms and estates established by squatters, who eventually got title to most of the Peralta’s property by the mid 1800s. With local access to the Western and Southern Pacific Railroads, Oakland farmers could easily transport their produce” (Shutkin, 2000: 168).

This sparked the Fruitvale district, known as Brooklyn until the late 1800s, when it was renamed by a German immigrant who planted an orchard of cherry trees in 1856 and called it the “Fruit Vale” (Shutkin, 2000: 168 and Younis, 1998: 225 in Miranda, 2003: 9). Like the orchard planter the area was settled primarily by German immigrants and was a major fruit-growing and canning center. It was considered the center of commercial activity of Alameda County until it was annexed by the city of Oakland in 1909 (Shutkin, 2000: 168). Fruitvale then became known as Oakland’s second downtown because of its vibrant business and civic culture (Shutkin, 2000: 168). The district attracted major retail establishments in the 1920s and developed a manufacturing base centered on the many canneries that served local orchards. The area was renowned for its mansions and gardens as wealthy San Francisco merchants and businessmen settled in this section of East Oakland (Chavez and Hupman, 1996: 13 in Turner, 1997: 18). The Fruitvale merchant community quickly grew as the

Street Car on International Blvd.



Figure 2-1

Source: Eastside Arts Alliance. Eastside Cultural Center: Project Summary 2004.

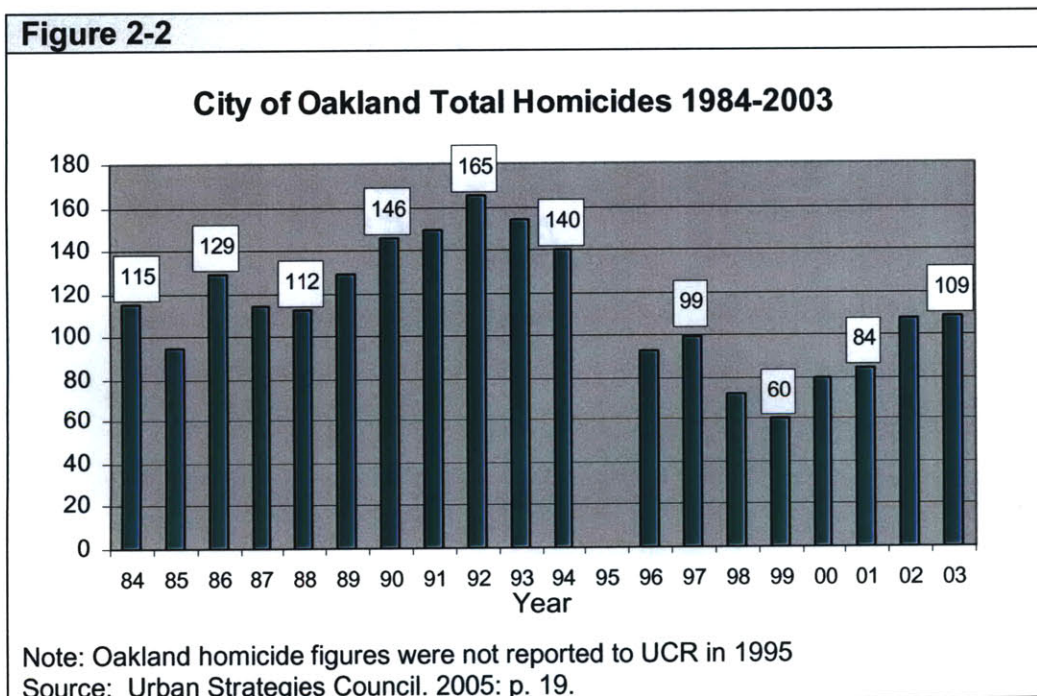
East 14th Streetcars line brought more settlers and businesses to the area. In the 1920s, the intersection of Fruitvale and East 14th became known as “Oakland’s second downtown” (Chavez and Hupman, 1996: 13 in Turner 1997: 18). In her ethnography of the Fruitvale, Miranda (2003) writes about how World War II brought many changes including war-related industries resulting in the development of the waterfront. She states that a wartime boom created many jobs and attracted large numbers of African-Americans from the South and Mexican Americans from the Southwest and the African American population tripled within five years. It was during this period that Oakland became the site of a number of military and defense related industries, and the port was expanded for shipbuilding and repair. In addition while Oakland’s shipbuilding brought prosperity through war time manufacturing, the area also attracted retail establishments which contributed to further development of the central city.

Using Younis’s historical piece, Miranda (2004) describes how the postwar economic boom increased federal expenditures for infrastructure including the construction of freeways and made the way for suburbanization and white flight from the urban core. She explains that the suburbs and hills of Oakland became predominately White and middle class. Those who remained in the center suffered from the loss of public projects and services (Miranda, 2004: 14). As housing construction in the city center diminished, low income minorities occupied the older housing. By the 1960s one quarter of the city’s population lived in poverty and had lost five large employers and many small ones (Miranda, 2004: 14). Cal Pak food processing who employed from 1,000 to 5,000 people seasonally moved to the central valley. Nordstrom Valve left for Texas and Nebraska taking 1,200 jobs and \$5.7 million annual payroll, between 1958-1963 Oakland’s employment dropped by 3,200 jobs (Miranda, 2003: 14). It was in the midst of this poverty and inequality that the Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland along with numerous other bay area social justice movements. However, with each decade the Fruitvale experienced greater disinvestment and white flight. As Shutkin describes it, “jobs, housing, tax revenues, and other essential ingredients of community life dwindled, displace to the suburbs to Oakland’s east and south.” (Shutkin, 2000: 169).

When the crack epidemic hit Oakland in the late 1980s it devastated it and continues to haunt its reputation. East Oakland was characterized by poverty, high rates of unemployment, crime, violence and drug and alcohol abuse. Mario Turner in his 1997 MIT Master's thesis in city planning wrote on the situation of the Fruitvale:

“In 1989, welfare assistance was six times the county average and average household income (\$24,000) was the lowest in the county and the state. Residents and external observers viewed East Oakland as a "drug war zone." Some 65 percent of all calls to the police and 55 percent of all drug "hot spots" in the city were in East Oakland, according to the Oakland police department. In 1991 'Oakland had the highest murder rate of any large city in California, and a higher per capita homicide rate than Los Angeles or New York” (Turner-Lloveras, 1997: 18).

Overall crime rates for the Oakland metropolitan area remain above the California and U.S. average, but showed a paralleled decreasing trend between 1999 and 2001. Homicides on the other hand showed a dramatic decrease in 1999, but from 2000-2003



have shown an increasing trend reaching their highest points in 2002 at 108 and in 2003 at 109, however the rates are still lower than the pre 1994 and last year dropped to a total of 88

(see Figure 2-2). The increase in violent crime interestingly coincided with an increase in the unemployment rate in the Oakland metropolitan region from 2.8 in 2000, to 4.1 in 2001, to 6.2 in 2002 and finally to 6.4 in 2003 (see Figure 1-1).

These statistics are a misleading indicator to the diversity and strong political culture stemming from the civil rights movement. Regardless of crime, negative economic trends and harsh-on-crime initiatives, these communities have managed to overcome with resilience. Those living in these communities are ultimately what make it such a vibrant and passionate place. The struggle for social justice and change lies in the history of these neighborhoods and the Fruitvale is only one of many of these examples. Below I will review the demographic, household and income characteristics of Oakland and the Fruitvale as of the 2000 census.

City of Oakland and the Fruitvale⁴ Today

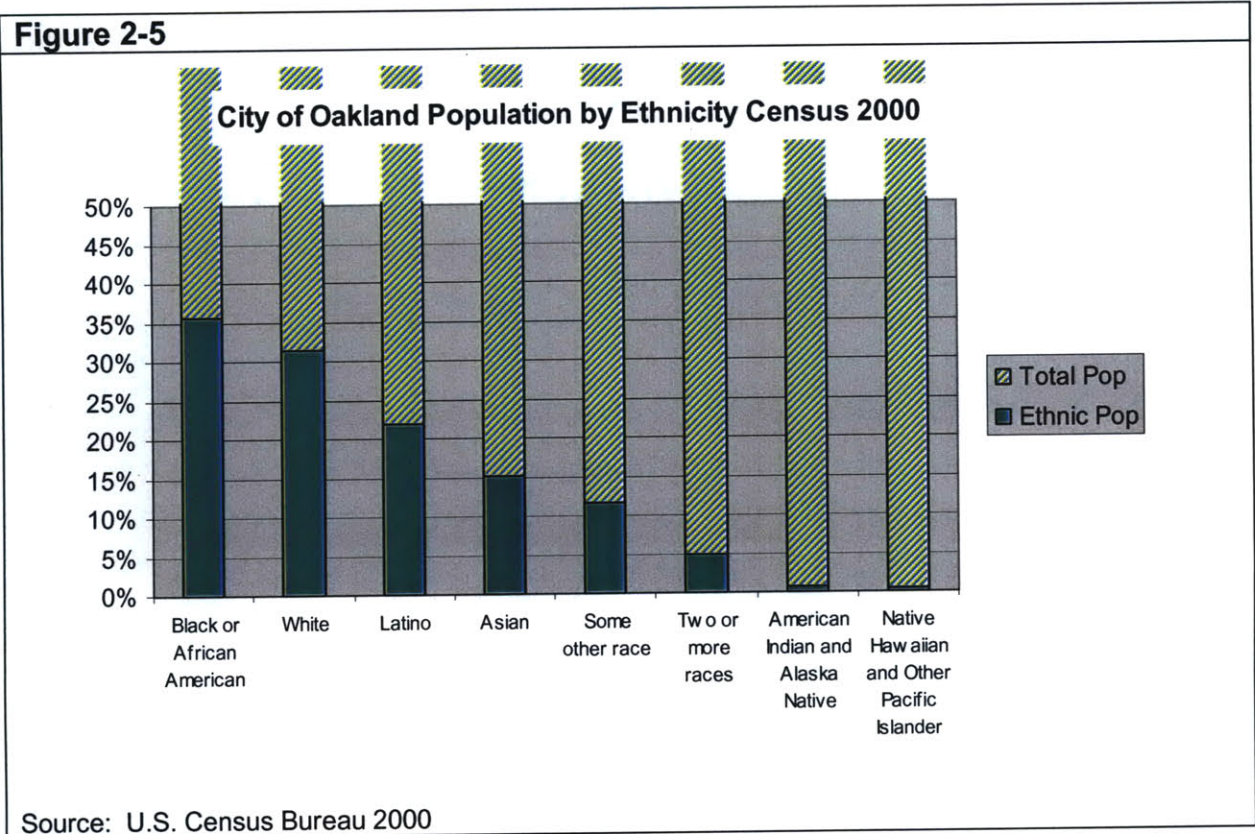
Figure 2-3	Figure 2-4
<p style="text-align: center;">City of Oakland, CA Selected Population Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Under 18: 25% • Latino Population: 21.89% • Black Population: 35.66% • Foreign Born: 26.6% • Median Family Income: \$44,384 • Vacancy Rate: 4.3 • Rental Occupied: 58.6% • Average HH Size: 2.6 • Families Below Poverty: 16.2% • Percent of Related Children Under 18 Living Below Poverty: 27.9% <p>Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Fruitvale Neighborhood Selected Population Characteristics Census 2000 Tracts Combined: 4062.01, 4052.02, 4072</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Under 18: 32.7% • Latino Population: 63% • Black Population: 12.4% • Foreign Born: 53.1% • Median Family Income: \$29,858 • Vacancy Rate: 3.4 • Rental Occupied: 76% • Average HH Size: 4 • Families Below Poverty: 26.1% • Percent of Related Children Under 18 Living Below Poverty: 40% <p>Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000</p>

City of Oakland Racial Demographics

As of the census of 2000, there are 399,484 people in the city of Oakland. The population density is 7,126.6 per square mile. The ethnic makeup of the city is 35.66% African American, 31.29% White, 21.89% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 15.23% Asian,

⁴ Fruitvale- 2000 Census Tracts 4062.01, 4062.02, and 4072

11.66% from other races, 4.98% from two or more races, 0.50% Pacific Islander and 0.66% Native American. Figure 2-5 shows the proportion of the total Oakland population that each of these ethnic groups make up. In contrast to the city's population the Fruitvale has a high concentration of Latinos and a low concentration of African American's or Black population. The top three ethnicities that make up the Fruitvale are Latinos at 63%, Whites at 30% and Asians at 17%.



Oakland Housing Characteristics

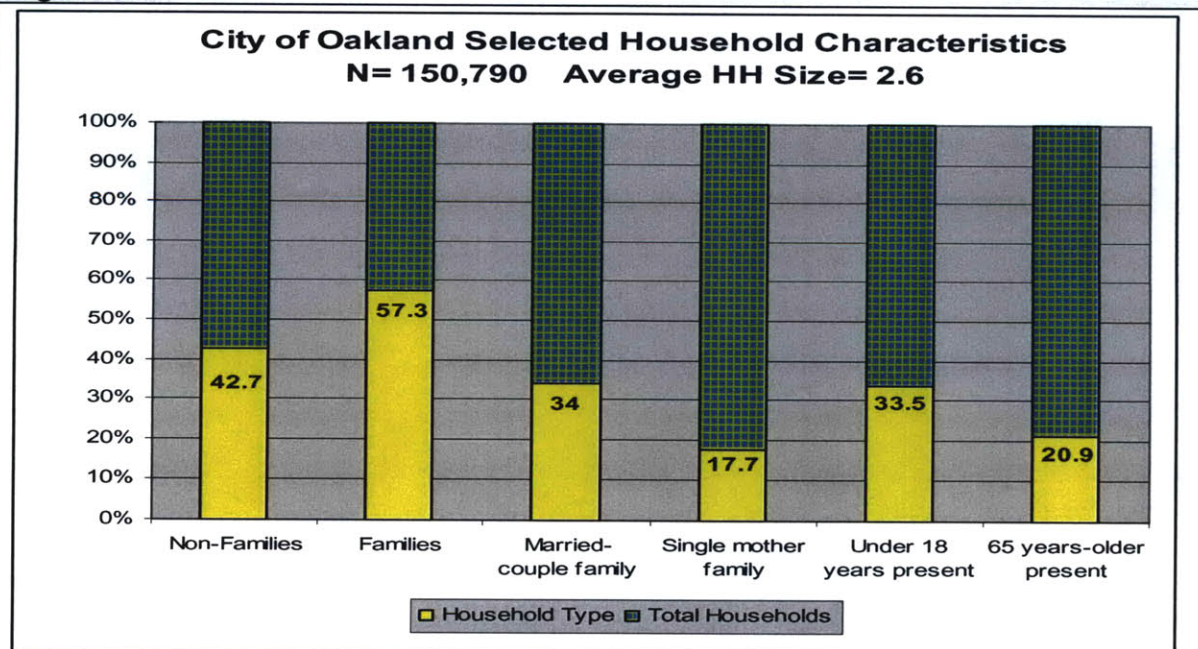
The city of Oakland is currently experiencing a situation not unlike other surrounding urban centers where homeownership continues to be out of reach for most renters in a city with 58.6% renter occupied housing units. Even if a renter were able to find a home at the price of \$150,000, (which is virtually non existent in Oakland) they would need to have an income level of over \$40,000. Although, this meets the median household income for all of Oakland it fails to meet the median household income of renters which is valued at \$29,278 the same as it is for the Fruitvale.

In addition the lack of affordable homeownership is not the only burden that low income renters face. Oakland’s market rate rents are above what is affordable for the typical Oakland renter. Affordable gross rents are those that don’t exceed 30% of household income. According to the 2000 Census the median household income for renters was \$29, 278, at this income an affordable rent is \$700-\$725 plus utilities. This affordable rental rate is \$200 below what the Department of Housing and Urban Development lists as “Fair Market Rent” for a studio \$936. Although, a studio is not the most appropriate housing for the average household size of 2.6, it is the closest to affordability.

City of Oakland Household Characteristics

A majority of Oakland households are family households of which 33.5% have a child less than 18 years of age present, while households with someone over 65 year of age is about 21%. Out of the total families 34.0% are married couples living together and 17.7% have a female householder with no husband present. The average household size is 2.60 and the average family size is 3.38 (see Fig 2-6) (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

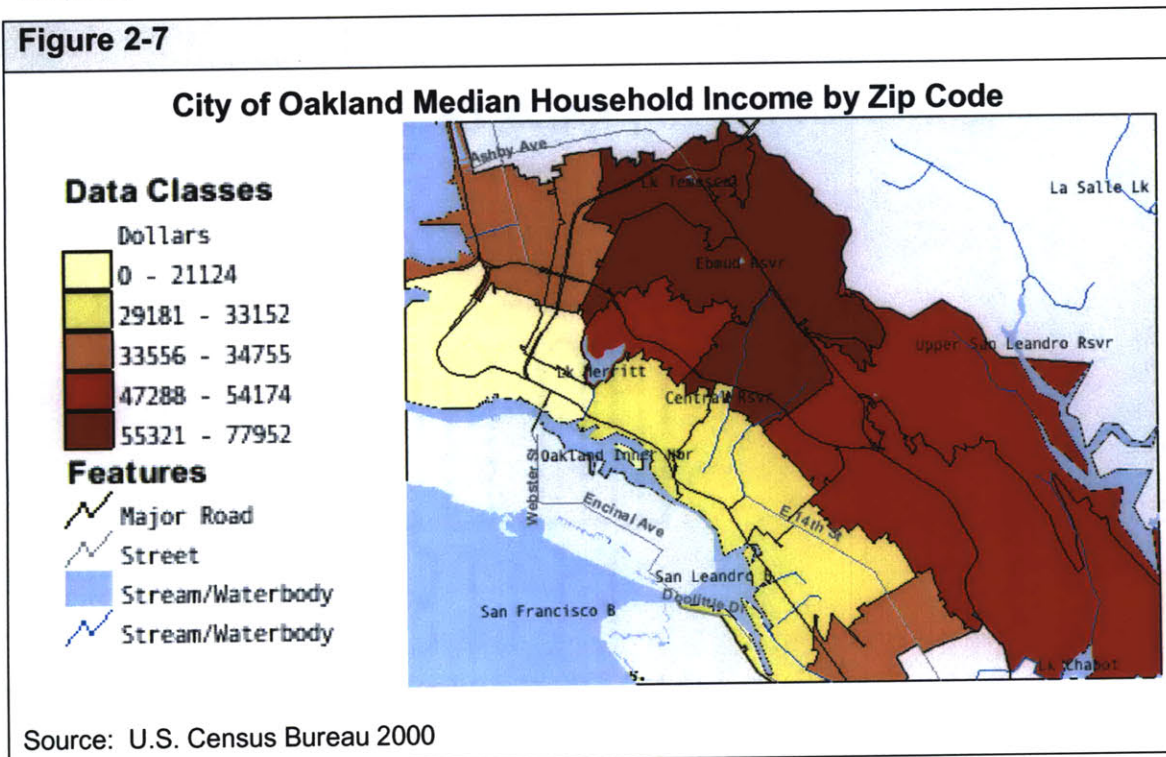
Figure 2--6



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

City of Oakland and Fruitvale Income and Poverty

The median income for a household in the city is \$40,055, and the median income for a family is \$44,384. The per capita income for the city is \$21,936 with 19.4% of the population and 16.2% of families living below the poverty line. In the Fruitvale out of 3,624 families with children under 18 years of age, 26% are living below the poverty level. As a point of comparison, the “2001 Federal poverty guidelines are that a family of four with income of \$17,650 is below the poverty level; the poverty threshold is \$23,690 for a family of six. Households with a total annual income under \$10,000 are 15.5% where 40.1% earn under \$25,000” (International Child Resource Institute et al. 2001: 15). Please see Figure 2-8 for a comparison of median household income in the city by zip code, the Fruitvale’s median household income is \$30,382 while the zip code area’s is \$33,152.



The Fruitvale

Today the Fruitvale managed to maintain part of its history through its commercial corridor that lines the Boulevard once the site of the east 14th Street trolley.

The commercial corridor is organized through the Fruitvale Main Streets program⁷ and is a Business Improvement District (BID). The predominately Latino neighborhood is filled with rich community resources and social networks. It has great access to public transportation as well as private transportation, with two major highways bordering it and the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station.

The new Fruitvale BART station is now site to the new Transit Oriented Development (TOD), unlike many city imposed economic developments, this project was proposed by the community after it rejected the Bay Area Rapid Transit system's proposal to build a multiple story parking facility on the station's existing nine acre lot in 1991.

Fruitvale Transit Village



Figure 2-8

After about ten years of community mobilization and collaboration with city and BART officials the Transit Village opened in summer of 2004. The final product is a transit oriented development which focuses on concentrating moderate and high density housing, retail and community services near regional transit systems. The concept of a transit oriented development includes a central transit stop with a strong surrounding commercial area to reinforce a pedestrian oriented environment. The development is a mix of housing, commercial and public uses to tailor to community needs as well as the outside market. There are a total of 47, one and two bedroom units with 10 of them at 80% area median income affordability.

⁷ Main Streets Program- <http://www.mainstreet.org/>

Fruitvale Census Tracts and Zip Code Boundary

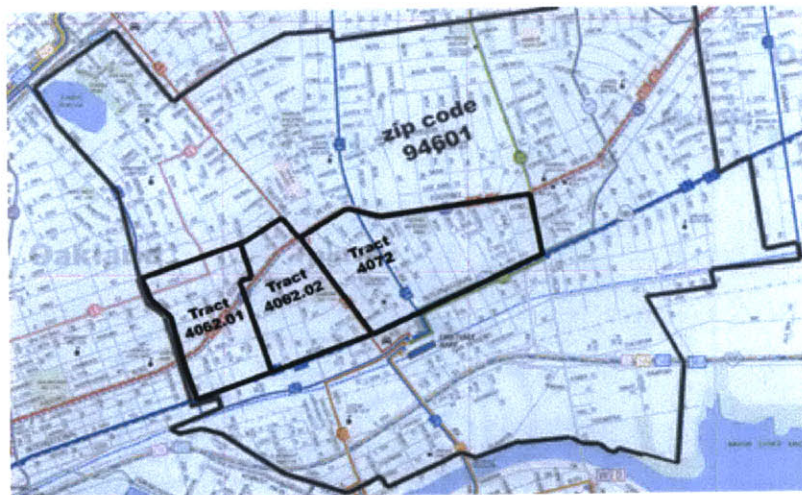


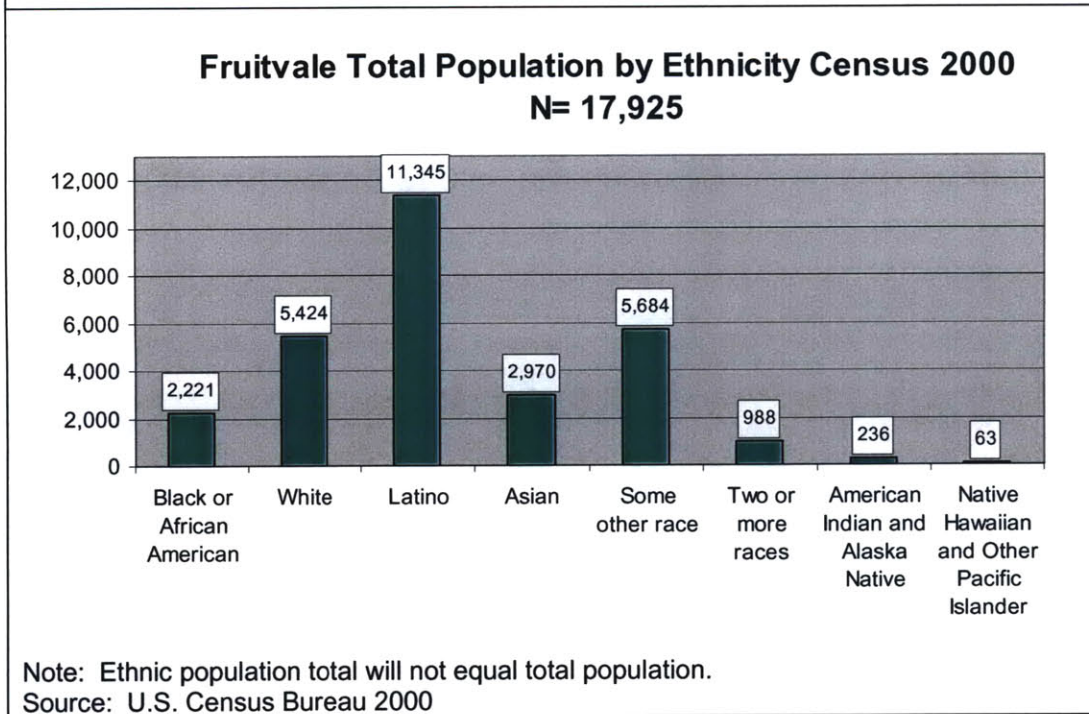
Figure 2-9

Sources: AC Transit Map and U.S. Census Bureau 2000

The Fruitvale border varies depending on who you ask, but for the purpose of this report I will focus on the area which is connected through services and will contextualize my data in a few ways. The immediate area that my field research and mapping activities focused on is composed of three census tracts which expand the length of about 1.5 miles and a depth of about .5 mile along Fruitvale Ave. from International Blvd. to Foothill Ave., with a total population of 17,925. When I refer to statistics describing the Fruitvale the census tracts I am referring to are: 4062.01, 4062.02 and 4072. In addition to help me place within its surrounding context I used the city zip code to better compare the neighborhood area to others in the city of Oakland.

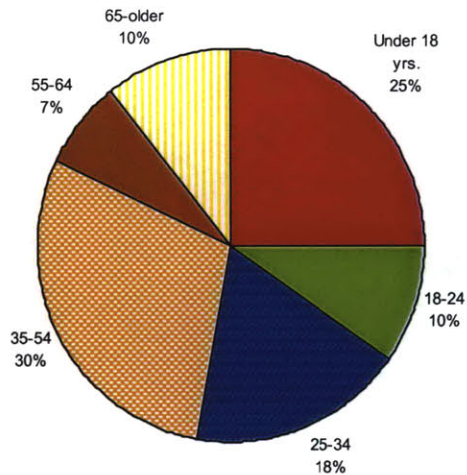
The neighborhood is one of the most densely populated districts in the city of Oakland with an average household size of 4.25 persons as opposed to the city average of 2.3. According the 2000 census 63% of all persons defined themselves as Latino. The racial division not including the Latino category was 30% White, 12% Black or African American, 17% Asian, 1% Native American, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 39% are other. The total foreign born population within these three tracts is at 54% percent with 78% of persons 5 years and older speaking another language other than English at home.

Figure 2-10

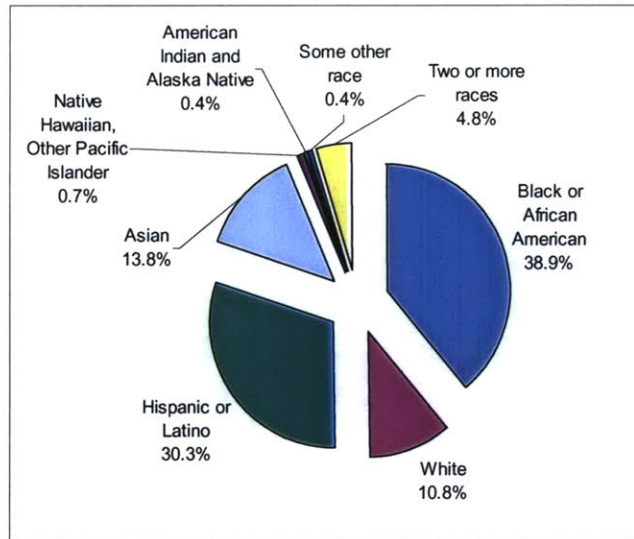


Conditions of Youth in Oakland and the Fruitvale

Out of the total population, 27.9% of those under the age of 18 are living below the poverty. Overall, Oakland is still a young city with the median age according to the 2000 Census of 33.3 years, up only slightly from 1990 when it was 31.1 years. There are almost three times as many youth under the age of 18 in Oakland as there are seniors 65 or older. However, the largest group is in the 25 to 34 year age group, which accounts for 18.1% of the population.

Figure 2-11**City of Oakland 1999 Total Population by Selected Age Categories**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Figure 2-12**Ethnic Breakdown of Oakland Youth 2000**

Source: International Child Resource Institute et al., 2001. p. 9.

Within the three Fruitvale census tracts for 2000, households with youth and children less than 18 years of age was 58.7% while the total percent of persons under 18 years of age was 32.7%. Of this young population the percent of those 16-19 years of age that weren't enrolled in school in and didn't have a high school diploma was 22.5%. In 1999-2000 the local Fruitvale public high school formerly known as Fremont High had a four year drop out rate of 35.9% and in 2001-2002 had a total of 252 drop outs (Unity Council, 2004: 9). Most recently since 2001 the Oakland Unified School District has experienced dramatic changes including: state appropriation, school closures and a small autonomous school implementation initiative.

Given the level of poverty and high density that Oakland youth are surrounded by and the challenges they encounter, it is crucial to study how these factors are affecting the opportunities and spaces in which they can develop in positive ways. During times of high unemployment, crime rates tend to increase and youth become subject to the violence while at the same time their opportunities shrink due to budget cuts in program funding. This creates an unstable situation where they must look into informal activities

that provide them basic needs such as protection and income. Given that 40% of those below 18 years of age in the Fruitvale live below poverty level, the impact during difficult times can potentially be dramatic when youth have little options to turn to in order to become self subsistent as they get older. Given these trends I have taken this thesis as an opportunity to explore the spatial constraints placed on youth in the Fruitvale and the extent to which their spatial mobility is limited decreasing their opportunities to develop in positive ways within the neighborhood.

Ch. 3: Mapping Youth Spatial Constraints and Safety Concerns

Research Methods and Procedures

I began my field research with the intent of determining the spatial and social constraints that limit youth's space for social interaction. As a starting point I focused on youth leisure spaces outside of home and school, but within the neighborhood. A large part of the analysis involved mapping how youth felt spatially in the neighborhood. For example I asked whether particular places existed that they regularly hung out in or that they enjoyed for particular reasons. In this same way I asked them about negative spaces where they felt threatened or didn't like to go to due to particular reasons. I assumed that areas existed where they were not welcomed and where they did not feel like they could fully participate. I set out to explore the constraints placed on their spatial incorporation into the neighborhood and city, which would include a review and analysis of: policies, laws and regulations, rules imposed by social actors, formalization of space and the roles of race, class and gender. Through youth mapping workshops meant to reveal spatial patterns and gain information about these spaces, the most prevalent limitations of space were revealed and had little to do with formal authority and instead focused on safety.

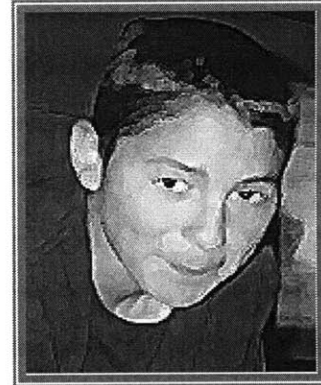


Figure 3-1

Photo taken by Fruitvale youth

I first proposed my idea of researching youth spaces within the neighborhood to the Unity Council which I had worked with during the summer of 2004, so that I could use the organization as a point of departure to connect to other neighborhood organizations. At the same time I used my previous knowledge from my work at Berkeley to connect with the programs being run at the different agencies. Once I received a positive response from a few anchor organizations in the neighborhood I identified important stakeholders and used the month of January of 2005 to conduct youth workshops, collect questionnaires and perform interviews. I also went back in March during spring break to finalize my findings. My primary information came from the youth in the neighborhood, the neighborhood community based organizations

with youth focused programs and the Oakland Police Department. I contacted the aide to the city council representative, but due to time conflicts was unable to meet with him. I also contacted several funding entities, but received no response.

The research methods used to collect my primary data included interviews; with youth and youth advocates; youth mapping workshops; fill-in questionnaires and group discussions. The principal tool used to collect my data was a neighborhood public transit map, which was used to stimulate discussion. It proved to be a very effective tool by which to collect rich neighborhood knowledge on spatial patterns and social dynamics. In total I conducted three mapping workshops and one small group discussion. Due to the demographics of the neighborhood the majority of the youth were of Latino background. In addition the majority of the participants were males with young women accounting for about 36% of participants.

The interviews and workshops conducted were neither a random sample nor a scientifically representative sample of the neighborhood. The workshops were conducted at three organizations that gave me access to speak to the youth during the time that I conducted my field research. Although, the youth workshops included many diverse aspects of youth in the neighborhood including home location, ethnicity, affiliation and gender, the representatives came from youth who were part of programs run by three separate community organizations. Only two of the youth participating in the workshops were not affiliated to any of the organizations instead they were recruited by one of the youth that I interviewed. In addition due to the dynamics of the neighborhood I was minimally exposed to the viewpoint of the rival gang members located to the east of my area of study.

The mapping workshops included a public transit bus system map of the Fruitvale, small group color coding of spaces, discussions and questionnaires. Two of the three group youth workshops were conducted in January through two already organized youth group meetings. The youth ranged in ages from 14 to 18 years of age and each group had at least 16 participants present. The third workshop also conducted in January was a smaller discussion focused on gang dynamics in the neighborhood with a three youth and an advocate. The fourth workshop was conducted in March, with a classroom of 15 middle school students, ages 13 to 15, to compare

spatial constraints of younger youth versus older youth. All four workshops varied in components due to time constraints and institutional preference. Overall the workshops revealed that safety was the largest constraint to the spaces youth hang out in within the neighborhood. When talking about the lack of safety to the youth, they spoke about it as it related to the real or perceived threat of being physically injured, robbed or approached by those involved in illegal or harmful activity. Their safety largely depended on who their friends were and what cliques they belonged to. After layering all of the workshop maps over each other I was able to find patterns in the neighborhood of dominant constraints that limited the spaces in which they felt safe, these included: drug dealing, muggings, prostitution and gangs. All of these threatened the safety of youth and limited their positive spaces.

Table 3-1			
Youth Workshops Participants and Components			
Workshop #	Participant Qty.	Ages	Workshop Components
1	16	14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and small group discussions • Mapping activity • Fill in questionnaires • Youth individual interviews
2	16*	14-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large group discussion • Large group mapping activity
3	4**	14-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussion using map
4	15	13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and small group discussions • Mapping activity
Total Youth	50		
* Quantity estimated			
** One of the four participants was and advocate and not a youth			

Youth Advocates/Adults Interviewed	Total Youth Agencies Visited	Youth Individual Interviews	Oakland Police Officers Interviewed
13	9	5	3

Fruitvale Youth Workshops: Neighborhood Trends

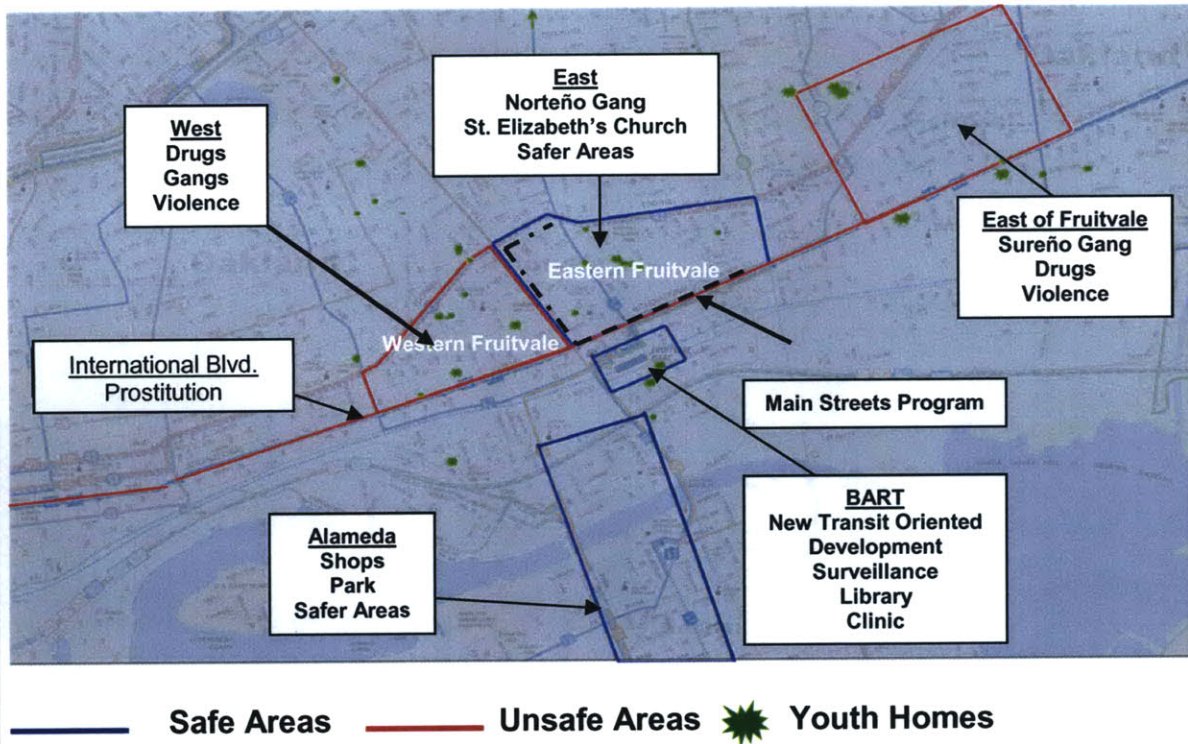


Figure 3-2
Sources: AC Transit Map 2004 and Youth Workshops Jan & March 2005

Table 3-2 Fruitvale East and West Differences	
West	East
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native American Health Center • East Side Arts Alliance • Tummies Art and Design • Cesar Chavez Learning Center • Hawthorne Elementary School • Sanborn Park • St. Joseph's Medical Center • Less pedestrian friendly 5 lane street • Underutilized Lots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruitvale Main Streets Program • St. Elizabeth's Church and High School • Spanish Speaking Citizen's Foundation • National Latina Health Organization • Cesar Chavez Park • Fremont Federation Schools (Fremont High) • Fruitvale Transit Village (TOD) • La Clinica • Commercial concentration • Streetscape improvements • Four lane road with pedestrian island

Field Research Results: Mapping Youth Spatial Patterns

After talking to the youth and looking at the maps I was surprised by the lack of popularity of the main commercial corridor or International Blvd., although it is a place where many go eat and shop, it is not an area that is welcoming or a major hang out for youth. This unpopularity is due to the presence of prostitution and sexual harassment by older men. The sexual harassment varies from whistling, to staring to being solicited for sex. However, when dividing the street in half by west and east there are distinct differences characteristics the two (see Table 3-2). Some of the most apparent differences between the western and eastern parts of International Blvd. are that the western part is less commercially active and has buildings with larger footprints, car uses and less active buildings while the eastern side just had major streetscape improvements, has a strong Main Streets Program and is the entrance to a brand new Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Continuing with the west and east division, the west had the most spaces posing threats to youth safety. These were related to muggings, drug dealing and gangs, while the eastern residential part seemed to be the safest in addition to being one of the areas where the neighborhood gang has a strong presence. Directly to the east of this safer area lies the territory of the rival gang which is the site of great danger. In between these two contested territories lies the local public high school, Fremont Federation of Schools, formerly known as Fremont High. Fremont Federation Schools was described by the youth as an unsafe place with drug clusters located right outside of it. However, it was also largely a positive place because this is where they get to see all of their friends. In general the unsafe spots were largely areas as opposed to places while the safe spots were specific places either homes, institutions, parks or particular stores.

Beyond these spatial constraints, the places youth hung out were mostly determined by the buildings they had to frequent either because they lived there, went to school there or because they were part of particular youth programs. Overall their positive spaces included: home, community institutions with youth programming, St. Elizabeth's Private High School, the BART Station, Alameda and the public library. The activity that they enjoyed the most within the neighborhood was the sideshows⁶. Outside of the Fruitvale the places most mentioned for

⁶ Sideshows: Informal illegal street car stunt shows.

hanging out were: Alameda, Berkeley and Bay Fair Mall. Each of these places is accessible by either BART or the local bus line and contains a movie theatres and shops.

Figure 3-3

“In 1997 the Oakland Child Health and Safety Initiative (OCHSI) study asked youth where they go to have fun, the study found:

- The most common places where youth go to have fun after school are friends’ homes (29%) and their own homes (24%). On weekends, more youth hang out at friends’ homes (37%) and less stay at home (18%).
- 10.5% of youth reported having “nowhere” or “don’t know” where to go for fun after school. The percentage is higher for Asians (14%), youth 19-21 years old (14%) and males (13%). This figure dropped to 4.5% for not having anywhere or knowing where to go for fun on weekends
- 11% hang around outside on the streets after school for fun, and 19% do that on weekends.
- 15% of youth go to malls for fun after school, and almost twice as many (29%) go to malls on weekends.”

(Public Policy Data Library, 1997 in International Child Resource Institute, et. al. 2001: 60)

Youth Spatial Pattern Groupings

The spaces youth occupied were greatly impacted by who their friends were and what youth spatial groupings they were a part of, in this section I will describe three that I distinguished. I also want to clarify that the impact of gangs on space will appear in two forms the first will appear in this section as a youth subculture and second it will appear as a physical force over territory posing a safety constraint. Through the mapping activities, interviews, discussions and observations I was able to group the youth into three categories based on how their spaces were limited. For comparison reasons I will refer to them as the insiders, outsiders and young women. Although, many differences exist within each of these groups there are some determining factors that define what classification youth fall under based on 1) the spaces they feel safe or unsafe in, 2) how they are affected by the different factors threatening their safety and 3) how they grouped each other



Figure 3-4
Picture taken by Fruitvale youth

when dividing into small groups. Based on the workshops and observations I would say that the majority of youth in the neighborhood belong to the outsider group rather than the insider group.

The **insiders** were those that felt they could relate to the dominant and more aggressive “street culture”¹ of the neighborhood which involved a direct or indirect relationship to one or all of the following: hip hop, *Norteño* gang affiliation or drug activity. These youth vary in ethnicity and if they come from immigrant backgrounds tend to be second generation Latinos, rather than first generation. For example in my first workshop one of the small groups was composed of youth living near one particular block, when asking them if they felt unsafe in the neighborhood they said no, but quickly pointed to the rival gang territory as being unsafe. Although their mapping patterns demonstrated they felt more secure than others within the neighborhood, all of their safe areas were on the eastern side of the neighborhood. Although they were insiders within their neighborhood as soon as they would step into rival gang territory they would become outsiders and their safety would be jeopardized.

The **outsiders** are those that have the least dominance over space within the neighborhood and don’t relate to the “street culture”. One characteristic might be that instead of listening to hip-hop they might listen to music that might be part of a different subculture for example: heavy metal or Spanish music. These different types of music might be characteristic of the skateboarders, *salseros*² or *vaqueros*³, which will largely determine the activities that interest them. In my first workshop for example I had a small group describe themselves as the “losers” because they did not fit in since they were into skateboarding and played in a heavy metal band. They felt at risk of being robbed or bullied everywhere in the neighborhood and told me stories of how they had gotten jumped or on one occasion held up at gun point. For the most part they chose to hang out either within each other’s homes or in places outside of Oakland, such as Alameda or Berkeley.

¹ Street culture- a direct or indirect relationship to all or some of the dominant street traits: hip hop, *Norteño* gang affiliation or drug activity.

² *Salseros*- those that dance or listen to salsa

³ *Vaqueros*- Those that dress and associate with a culture more characteristic of rural Mexico (Mexican country style).

Outsiders are also made up in large part of first generation immigrants who constantly get harassed by all other groups whether it be, gangs or other ethnic groups. Gang activity, prostitution and police harassment posed threats to the feeling of spatial safety for first generation immigrants. Gangs were brought up in relation to shootings and killings, however in a more personal way they said that they feared being approached by gang members, who might question them about gang affiliation due to colors they might be wearing. They said that the identification of gangs by color and clothing made areas feel unsafe and youth feel scared. Within the outsiders I would also place the rival neighborhood gangs, which occupy territories either on the margins of the neighborhood or directly beside it.

Although, the neighborhood has a large immigrant population and many services tailor to it, these 1st generation young people are most vulnerable to being attacked or harassed. This was demonstrated in my second workshop where most of the youth were first generation Latino immigrants, they spoke to me about being vulnerable to “pocket check” or getting robbed/ mugged anywhere they went, even if they were in spaces that they enjoyed such as the flea market, parks or even where places are supposed to be safe such as school. The youth program they were a part of seemed to provide a great place for them to safely come together, expand their spatial territories through group activities, skill development and interaction with other youth.

Young Women are in a different category because their spatial patterns and constraints greatly differed when compared to the guys. One major difference was that they had to withstand a major amount of sexual harassment which affected where they go. Another distinction in the severity of its impact was prostitution, where they feared that they would be confused for a prostitute. Through the workshops and questionnaires they revealed feeling threatened by International Blvd. due to the sexual harassment by older men and existing prostitution.

Figure 3-5
Questionnaire Results
Q: Do you feel you can hang out safely without harassment?
A: No, because there are a lot of places you go to where young women are harassed.
Q: Places you can't hang out?
A: Corner: people will think you're a prostitute
Source: Fruitvale Youth Questionnaire Jan 2005



Figure 3-6

Photo taken by Fruitvale youth

However, with the exception of International Blvd. they demonstrated the most flexibility in the diversity of safe territories that they could occupy within the neighborhood and outside of it. However their spatial shadings largely pointed to specific spots rather than zones. For example in their questionnaire answers of spots they could hanging out in, they mostly mentioned houses of their friends or places where their friends gathered. Spaces to “see and be seen” were the most popular for hanging out. Due to the location of some of their homes being on the eastern part of the

neighborhood near the rival gang’s territory, they were able to move in and out different gang territories without personally feeling threatened, but recognized that others including some of their friends from outside those neighborhoods would greatly compromise their safety.

Youth Spatial Constraints

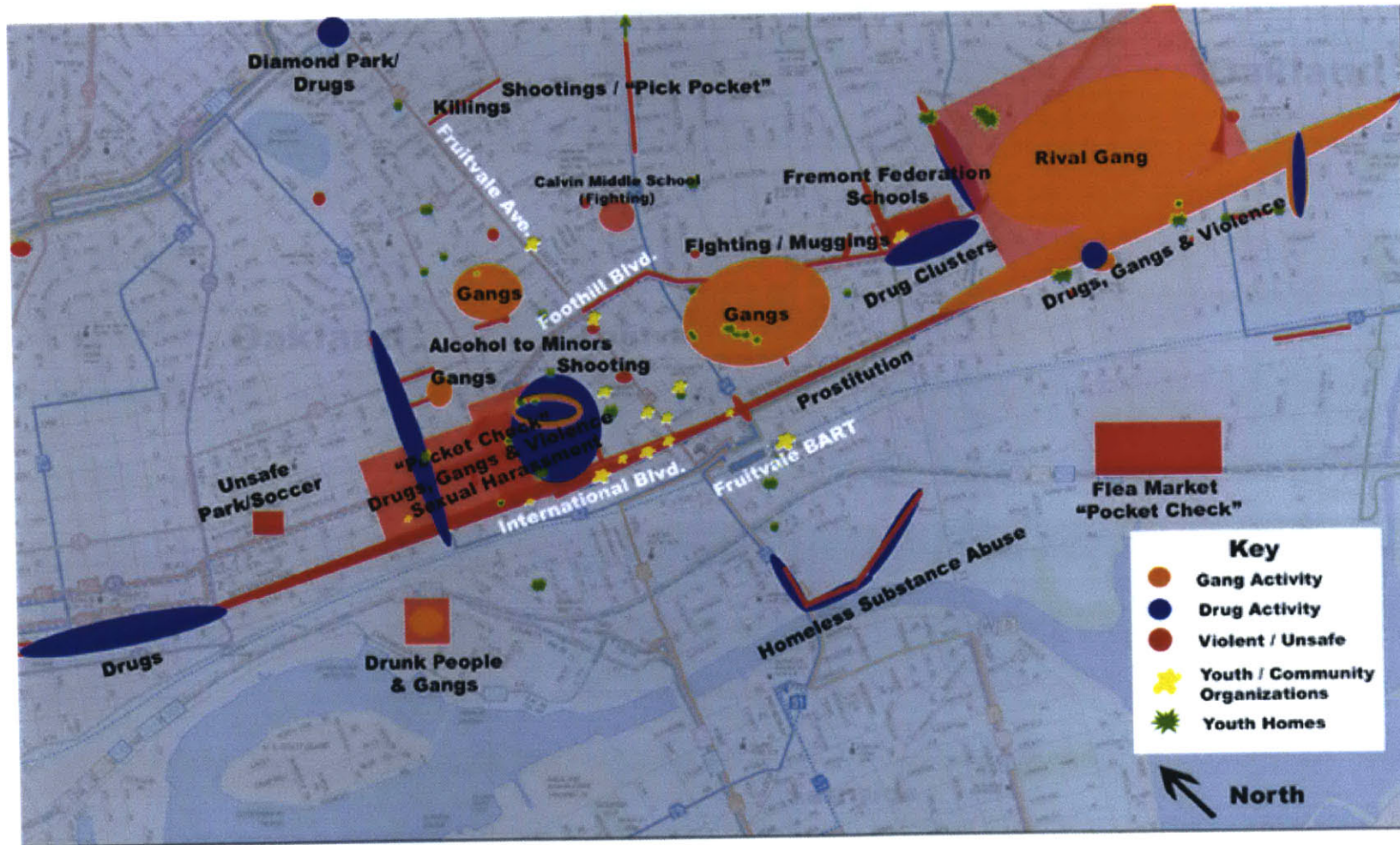


Figure 3-7
 Source: AC Transit Map and Fruitvale Youth Workshops Jan & March 2005

Spatial Constraints to Youth Spaces: Drugs, Gangs, Muggings and Prostitution

In this section I will describe how drugs, gangs, muggings and prostitution constrain spatial youth patterns within the Fruitvale limiting the places where youth can develop in a safe positive manner. These top four constraints were taken from the youth themselves through the mapping workshops when they highlighted areas that were safe and unsafe. The different functional and organizational systems of each of these constraints contributed to separate spatial dominance over territory by each one within the Fruitvale. I use the word dominance and not exclusivity because more than one constraint can exist in one area. However after layering the maps one on top of the other, spatial patterns were created where the western part of the neighborhood was dominantly constrained by drugs, the eastern part was dominated by gangs and the southern edge (International Blvd.) was dominated by prostitution. The levels of safety vary within each of these where although the dominant constraint on the eastern side of the neighborhood are gangs it was perceived as one of the safest parts of the neighborhood. Muggings along with getting jumped were overall concerns almost anywhere in the neighborhood, but varied in threat depending if the youth was an insider, outsider or young woman, with outsiders being the most vulnerable (see Appendix for Additional Maps).

Each one of these constraints stands alone in the way that it affects space or how one relates to the other for example when juxtaposing drugs and gangs. A gang member could sell drugs or use drugs, but it does not mean that all drug dealers are gang members, nor does it mean that all gang members sell drugs or use drugs. These relationships are important to understand because it means that the gang system is not one in the same with the drug system, at times they could overlap, but one does not determine the other. Prostitution also functioned on its own system, where the main strip was not contested by those within the drug and gang systems. In part the ability of sex workers and pimps to occupy International Blvd. is due to large visibility, more patrolling, high traffic and hiding spots in closed storefronts. The occupation of this Boulevard would not serve the purposes of drug dealers, gang members nor muggers very well, due to higher police surveillance. Although more police surveillance exists, prostitutes aren't necessarily threatened because for the most part the only enforcement that can be done is stopping them for questioning.

The stories that I collected painted an image of young people being selective and afraid of where they walk in the neighborhood while they go to school, shop or engage in extra curricular activities. It is a place that constantly tests street dominance and power. Their patterns and stories revealed a picture of limited engagement outside of their homes because they felt they had to constantly watch their backs afraid that they would be jumped, mugged or get caught in the crossfire of drug activity. Prostitution along International Blvd. posed a greater threat to the young women, where they felt they would be harassed by men, be solicited for sex or looked at as prostitutes if they walked down the main commercial strip. Gangs proved to be a great source of safety and dominance of territory within the neighborhood for those that identified with them, however, their dominance and safety ended once they stepped into rival gang territory or if they were at war with rival gangs.

Drugs

A strong spatial pattern arose between drug dealing and the way youth spatially feel about the neighborhood. The mapping activity patterns showed that heavy drug dealing was concentrated on the western side of the neighborhood and outside of the local high school, Fremont Federation. Gang conflicts are also high on the western side of the neighborhood and it is where shootings have increased within the last six months. When I asked people how drugs affected them directly most answered that knowing it existed made them feel unsafe, while others referred to the existence of the homeless population in the area as “crack heads”, possibly inferring that homeless people that are substance dependent are viewed as dangerous.

Drug dealing perceived as a threat just by mere existence can be related to the violent culture created to sustain its existence. It requires a sense of ownership of the territory that dealers operate in, which is usually acquired through aggressive or violent behavior or by posing confidently as if on the look out on the streets. Whether it is school, a corner or a block, posing with this aggressive confidence causes young people not involved in the activity to feel unsafe because they feel vulnerable to being jumped or being caught in the crossfire of possible conflicts. Although, drug dealing ended up functioning on a separate organizational system than the gang system, being member of a gang helps to provide the protection that drug dealing

requires. Some gang members sell drugs, but the gang power structure and activity does not function to strictly accommodate drug activity. The drug dealing in the Fruitvale functions beyond the gang structure with some dealers being part of a gang while others are not. However, due to the danger of drug dealing, more established dealers would benefit from having a source of protection which might be a gang. An excerpt taken from a study by RAND Public Safety and Justice, in Figure 3-8, provides a more detailed account of safety threat drug dealing poses.

Figure 3-8

“Violence in East and West Oakland”

“To sell drugs in East or West Oakland, one must belong or have a connection to a specific neighborhood in which the drugs are sold. The drug trade generally occurs out in the open all day long, unless there has been some police presence, in which case the drug trade will move into residences. Some neighborhood associations are known for specific drugs (e.g., heroine). In some areas, one person controls the drug trade and violence (i.e., a “shot-caller”), has underlings who commit the violence, and further underlings who sell the drugs. If a drug seller leaves (e.g., is incarcerated), a power vacuum can occur. Those underlings who are connected to the neighborhood association can replace the drug seller with relatively less violence occurring (depending on how many want to fill the void) than if someone from outside of the neighborhood association attempts to acquire the market. Other sources of violence in these neighborhoods include disagreements over who will control certain sales within the neighborhood and who will handle sales on the fringes of neighborhoods. Likewise, those who are “doing well” in terms of drug sales, those who are shot-callers, and those who do not follow the neighborhood rules are also susceptible to violence. Although the street-level drug sellers must be associated with their neighborhood market, those who supply drugs can be unaffiliated with the neighborhood.”

(WILSON, J.M., RILEY, J.K., 2004: 14)

Neighborhood Latino Gang Dynamics

Unlike the corporate L.A. gang structure drugs are not the dominant force imposing structure on Latino Oakland gangs, instead gangs were more a matter of protection, identity, belonging, pride, history and neighborhood power. The case of the Latino Fruitvale gangs is much like the non-corporate or non-entrepreneurial kind that authors Carl S. Taylor and Jankowski described in early 1990s writings. They noted that turf gangs as opposed to the corporate or entrepreneurial gangs are minimally involved in the sale of illegal drugs, due to the lack of structure and coordination. Instead the involvement with street sales is episodic and

disorganized, far from the media image of sophisticated drug trafficking operations (Taylor C., 1993 and Jankowski, 1991 in Miranda, 2004: 18).

Gangs are the most dominant force controlling space within and outside the neighborhood. Patterns of gang dominance over space appeared in all small group maps as a major constraint to their feeling of safety. Those associating with this entity felt more at ease walking within the neighborhood as long as they were part of that neighborhood gang or the *Norteños* rather than the rival gang (the *Sureños*). Although being part of the neighborhood gang provides some safety it does not protect them from internal conflicts within the gang or the existing divisions by street blocks (*sets*). It is through these divisions that they must continuously prove their dominance over each other by defending their blocks. The set divisions are by street numbers, for example the 20s, 30s, 40s, etc. even though they may belong to the same gang conflicts arise between “sets” (see Figure 3-9). In the past it is this very division that has led to the inability of forming truces.

Gang Territorial Claims

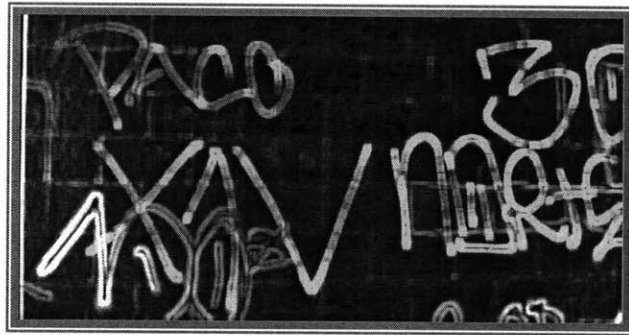


Figure 3-9

Photo taken by Fruitvale youth

The non-corporate structure of the Fruitvale gangs includes sectional divisions of gangs by blocks or street “sets” and poses a challenge when attempting to coordinate a peace process between rival groups, this is related to the fact that gaining compliance of one “set” doesn’t mean that all others will comply with peaceful resolutions. The lack of top down enforcement where there is no one leader calling giving orders that everyone must follow prevents uniform decision making. The non-corporate gang model provides challenges in negotiation, but provides less enforcement from the top creating more opportunity for individual members to make decisions as to their involvement in gangs.

Latino Gang Divisions

The Fruitvale is spatially dominated by *Nortebños* (Northerners), whose color is red and are a dominant force when it comes to spaces in the neighborhood. Although, some shaded the eastern side of the Fruitvale as threatening due to gang activity, most maps showed it as one of the safest zones in the neighborhood. The *Nortebño* (Northern) gang members are not as apparent in clothing style as might be seen in Los Angeles gangs; instead they blend more easily into the abundant Bay Area Hip Hop Culture which is a popular part of the youth culture. In addition this gang is majority Mexican-American, but has a mix of people from other ethnicities.

Latino Gang Territorial Divisions

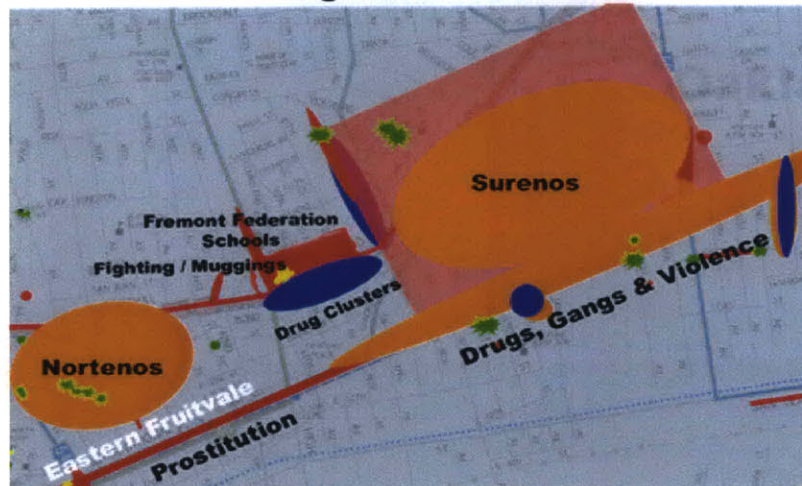


Figure 3-10

Source: AC Transit Map 2004 and Youth Workshops Jan and March 2005

Outside of the neighborhood just to the east lies the rival gang's territory or the *Sureño* (Southerner) gang. This gang affiliates with being from Los Angeles or Southern California and wears the color blue. Traditionally the North and South are large rivals. In Northern California those that make up the *Sureños* in addition to wearing blue, attempt to wear gangster clothes similar to that worn by Los Angeles gangs. The rival gangs were described by many as being made up in large part by first generation Latino immigrants or people that come from Southern California rather than second generation Latino bay area natives. I largely missed out on the perspective of the rival gang since I concentrated my data collection within the neighborhood and it was biased towards the neighborhood gang. However, spatial patterns showed that those that lived in rival gang territory either affiliated with it, or were limited to hanging out in front of

their homes. It was depicted as a highly violent zone with existing patterns of drugs, violence and gangs.

The generational division reveals a classic conflict within minority immigrant groups, where first and second generation immigrants have conflicts with each other. Those that have adopted a more American culture and were born in the U.S. tease and at times harass those that have not completely assimilated to the dominant U.S. culture. The first generation in turn also rejects the second generation's claim to the descending country's culture and language. This problem is related to a lack of understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and to the conflicting development of one's own personal identity. This strong cultural divide largely determines gang divisions, where first generation youth are seen as deviant and easy targets for asserting dominance and so might resort to joining the gang for protection.

Rival gang members or *Sureños* are now being seen along the streets where more public surveillance exists and are slowly spreading their territory from the eastern side of the neighborhood. Although, I didn't receive any clear answers as to why their numbers had increased, when looking at the statistical census data I found that the zip code location of the rival gang is more poverty stricken and had higher incidences of violent crime.

Another contributing factor might be that young first generation immigrant youth, might feel pressured to join due to the large amount of harassment that they receive. Regardless of the reason a result of this increase is that members on both sides are beginning to look as young as twelve years of age. Gang violence in the form of shootings has also recently increased within the last year, but not to the levels of previous time periods. It is unclear however, whether the violence will continue to increase due to contested territories and expansion or whether it is only a result of personal conflicts. The effects of gang rivalries not only have large implications on the safety of the gang members, but have a large impact on the spatial safety of all youth and residents within the neighborhood.

Recent violent outbreaks in the western part of the neighborhood along E. 15th Street have been said to not be occurring between *Sureños* and *Nortebños*, but instead between a third

gang: The *Border Brothers*. The reasons behind the homicides this past winter between the *Norteños* and *Border Brothers*, are not clear. However, there are several theories on why this violence was sparked, some say that it is the younger members that started it and that the older ones have nothing to do with it. Others say that it is a tactic the *Sureños* are using to get the two gangs to fight so that they can take over. For example they say that the *Sureños* making themselves pass as the opposite gang have gone into rival territory and vandalized walls and or caused problems to spark conflict.

Fruitvale Homicide Locations 2000-2004

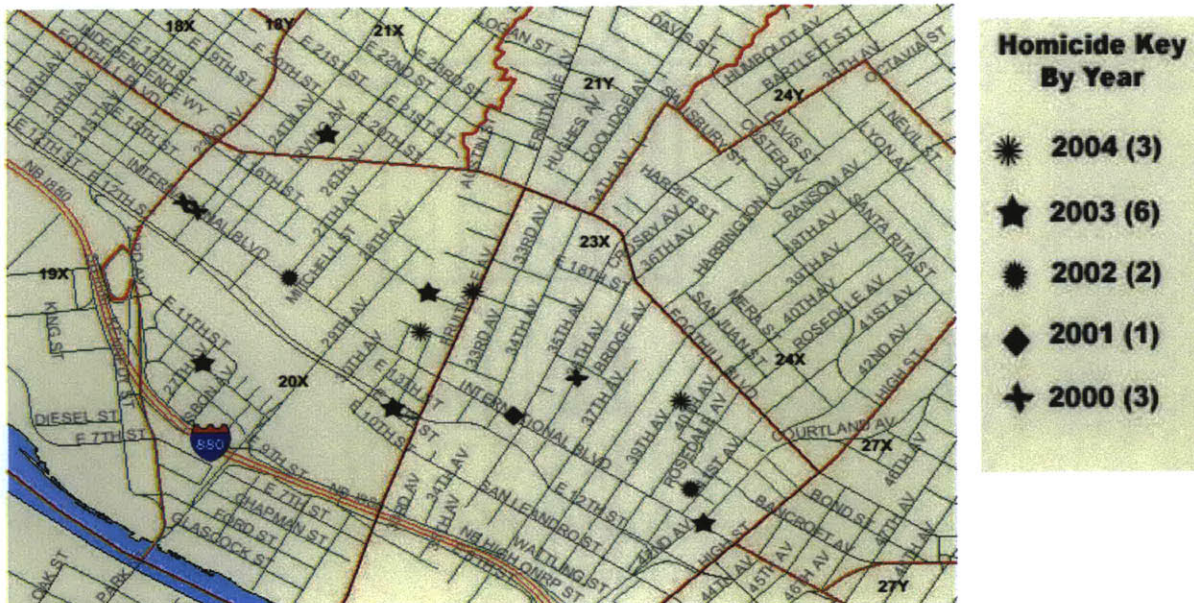


Figure 3-11

Source: Source: City of Oakland Police Department
<http://www.oaklandnet.com/cw/cwmain.jsp>

Muggings and Bullying

Muggings are a dominant fear in the neighborhood where the outsiders who are the most vulnerable get attacked. Just as drugs aren't directly related to gang dynamics neither are muggings nor bullying. The mugging or bullying can be committed by anyone in the trying to assert power over the other or for the acquiring of money or property. In addition *jumping* people or beating up on people is a way that some youth in the neighborhood assert their dominance over territory or at times gain respect. This is a reason why it is a prevalent fear when youth

walk down the street and they see another group of youth hanging out on a block. The spatial extent of this factor can be seen in Figure 3-7, through the red shadings.

Perception of Crime

When I asked people whether they felt that violence had increased in the neighborhood in terms of violent assaults they told me that it was either the same or that it had slightly increased due to some current shootings (see Figure 3-13 and Figure 3-14).

Figure 3-12

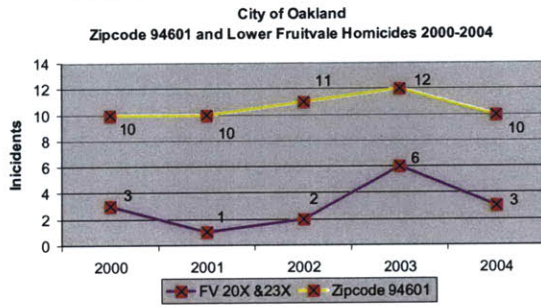
In general, crime and violence impact the daily life of many of Oakland's children and youth. This was demonstrated by the Oakland Child Health and Safety Initiative 1997 study, where 30 youth ages 16 to 19 were hired and conducted Youth to Youth Interviews with their peers. These interviews consistently found that youth were regularly facing safety issues such as:

- Personally experiencing thefts and robberies
- Reporting living among violence, assaults and harassment
- Drug-related safety problems such as drug dealing or problems with people under the influence of drugs

In fall 1999, New York University conducted a phone survey with 750 Oakland youth. This survey found that 35% of youth contacted did not feel safe the day before the survey was taken, and 50% of youth did not feel safe at school. (International Child Resource Institute et. al., 2001: 57,58)

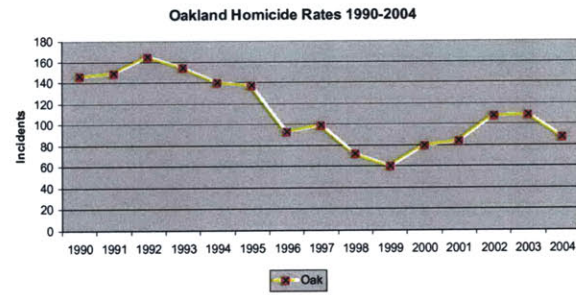
From those that I spoke to it seems that youth advocates who had moved to the neighborhood only in the last five years perceived an increase in violence, while those residents that grew up in the neighborhood felt it was the same or normal with a possible slight increase. This difference in opinion is due to the cycles of violence that have existed in the neighborhood throughout the years. Where older residents remember more violent times for example I asked a 19 year old resident when the last time he remembered there had been a gang violent outbreak similar or worse than now and he told me it had been worse around the year 2000, the decline shortly after that was attributed to incarceration of perpetrators. When I asked a youth advocate who grew up in the neighborhood when she remembered a more violent time she stated that it had been in the early 90s. Violence is not something new to the neighborhood and although people don't feel safe they have learned to adjust to it as seen through the spatial patterns that the youth have depicted.

Figure 3-13



Source: City of Oakland Police Department
<http://www.oaklandnet.com/cw/cwmain.jsp>

Figure 3-14



Source: City of Oakland Police Department
<http://www.oaklandnet.com/cw/pdf/HistoricalData.htm>

Prostitution

During my workshops, questionnaires and interviews prostitution was a consistent topic. At first in every mapping activity the main commercial corridor at International Blvd. was consistently color coded in red, as an area seen as unsafe or bad for the youth to hang out in. Both males and females identified this major Boulevard as a place where prostitution took place and both saw it as a negative thing. However, the females felt more affected by it especially when it came to its relationship to sexual harassment. In the questionnaires responses, when asked to pick two spaces (positive or negative) that they wanted to describe, International Blvd. came up as an area where the young women felt they would be sexually harassed, solicited for prostitution or viewed as prostitutes. In addition one of the young women responded feeling unsafe standing at a corner to cross the street because she felt people would think she was a prostitute. International Blvd. is known as one of the popular strips where people come to solicit sex. As a street it serves these purposes because it is a main thoroughfare and at night closed shops provide dark storefronts that the women can hide if the police drives by, in addition the area has several bars and liquor stores.

Figure 3-15

Excerpt from: Teen prostitution in East Oakland by *Apollonia Jordan* 3/16/05

"The streets of East Oakland are rough for young women caught up in this game called prostitution. International (a.k.a. East 14th Street) is where you can find the majority of the young girls who have become victims of the cold Oakland streets. Mini skirts, short dresses and high heels are the usual preference of clothing for young, mainly Black girls selling their precious bodies in the hyfee streets of East Oakland....

...Being an emancipated foster youth, I've experienced a lot of situations with young girls, and a lot of the young girls who are out there prostituting come from a variety of group homes around the Bay Area. The pimps come off as if they're trying to holla at the female – say all the right things and then it's a wrap!...

...They figure she has no family to run to; she probably already has low self-esteem; she's probably been abused or raped by someone before, so she's no stranger to a good beating or unwanted sex; she's probably been running away a lot, so she's no stranger to walking all night. These guys come along and prey on these girls because they know that they've already been through it. In the beginning they show them a lot of love and comfort, sort of like a big brother or father figure. But when the pimp knows he has taken over her mind, he mistreats her, and at that point he knows she has no one to run to and no place to run to but the streets. I've talked to a few of the girls who were prostituting in East Oakland and a lot of them said that they made good money, that they didn't have any family and that no one is forcing them to do it, they're doing it on their own. ...

...While living on International, I ran into a few pimps and Johns too, thinking I was out there prostituting, when I was coming home from work. I can remember one incident when a pimp in a Lexus tried to pick me up at a bus stop on Fruitvale and International....

... The young pimps, some as young as 16, are usually very aggressive with the young girls. They rob and chase them or get their other women to beat them up....Most of the older pimps, however, take a smoother approach and comfort the young girls like a father figure to keep them. ..." (Jordan, 2005) .

When asking youth advocates and insiders, what they thought in regards to the subject, I found that gang activities did not clash or pay much mind to the pimps or prostitutes along the International Blvd. The territory was not a contested one for the same reasons that the dominant gang tends to stay away from the main commercial corridors, due to visibility, police surveillance and possibly merchant harassment. In addition territorial ownership is associated more with the block they live at within the residential portion of the neighborhood. However, one youth advocate noticed that at one point a group of gang members had moved into a corner previously occupied by prostitutes and pimps causing them to move down the street. This demonstrates how spatial occupation using natural neighborhood dynamics can be used to counter undesired uses of space.

Another observation that came up was that the ages of these women out in the street have gotten lower. Currently, adolescent girls around 14 years of age can be seen soliciting work.

One of the youth advocates who works at different high school sites told me that in her opinion this could be the source of various factors. One of them being the role of the media and rap culture which glorifies “pimp” culture in songs and videos, an example of this was seen when “Nelly”, a popular rap artist awarded a college scholarship named the P.I.M.P. scholarship (Positive Intellectual Motivated Person Scholars Program). Secondly, she mentioned that women become attracted to these older men who have money, a nice car and buy them nice things. The advocate also told me that older men can be seen after school waiting outside in their fancy cars. Third, she said that sexual abuse is not an unfamiliar occurrence and that at the local high school a few cases per year come out to light about affected girls. She mentioned this being a huge problem especially in Latino families that don’t know how to deal with the issue, deny the whole situation and in the end might blame the girl.

In order to gain a better perspective on how the police view the neighborhood I went on a Ride Along on a Wednesday night from 8pm-10pm within the Eastern part of the district (Beat 23). The beat officer explained to me that generally there weren’t any major problems, but that the largest one is prostitution. He no longer had to deal with the *sideshow*s in the area because there was a special unit that dealt with them, so that he could respond to other emergency calls. It was only after the ride along that I finally realized why young women in general would be concerned about being confused for being a prostitute. One of the girls pointed out to me by the police officer as one that had been previously identified in photographs, was dressed much like any other teen would be, the only difference was that she was walking around during the evening hours along International Blvd. when most shops are closed and not many people are seen walking around. However, even before the sun begins to set many of the women are already out soliciting work.

As I continued my ride along, we stopped at the site of a special police task force dedicated to the outreach and counseling of sex workers. He informed me that the task force would stop the women, give out their card and provide services out of a van including counseling and services if they wanted to *get out*. A large focus is to get the under age girls off the street. He described prostitution as being a difficult issue to deal with, however, due to the drop in age of many of the prostitutes, the Oakland Police Department has created a special unit that

conducts outreach and offers counseling services to the sex workers. I saw the unit and an outreach officer as we drove by. After contacting the officer in charge of the special prostitution unit he placed the issue into national context, which I will address in challenges and opportunities to confronting these problems head on.

The special victims prostitution unit is a merge between the special victims unit, which deals with crimes involving children and the vice crime unit. When the Oakland Police Department saw that teenage prostitution increase dramatically last year, they changed their approach from one of trying to criminalize prostitutes to one of intervention and victimization. The unit is in its first year of operation after receiving a grant from the federal government for training and the running of operations. The special unit works in collaboration with two non-profit organizations specializing in domestic and international human trafficking. They offer counseling and services in an attempt to get the young girls out of abusive and life threatening situations. Unfortunately, in the realm of prostitution Oakland and the Fruitvale are one of the hottest tracks in the national circuit with the highest demand for young sex workers. Since prostitution is a problem that transcends state and international borders the Oakland Police Department has joined up with the FBI and other federal agencies to tackle this problem.

The girls range from the ages of 9 to 17, where some are from Oakland, but most are from out of town. The girls most at risk for being targeted are those that have low self esteem, come from broken homes and or have been abused. Other tactics used by pimps also include drug addiction and kidnapping. In addition, along International Blvd., it seems that it is not uncommon for young residents to be asked if they are working or to be approached for recruitment. In addition both the ages of prostitutes and pimps are getting younger and the younger pimps who are targeting young girls aren't necessarily part of the circuit or have experience. The problem has gotten so large and is a national phenomenon that he compared to the crack epidemic in the late eighties and early nineties.

When I asked what the officer in charge what he thought was causing this problem to increase to such a level he said it is an easy way to make money and that sex sells in addition to the lack of enforcement by cops. He also thought the criminalizing approach was not effective

where prostitutes were arrested rather than provided with counseling and services. Now that they are seen as victims the focus is largely on catching the pimps and the Johns⁷. Part of the city's campaign to stop the demand side of the equation has been to place the picture of Johns on large billboards around the city.

In dealing with prostitution the Oakland Police Department seems to be taking a proactive role through their taskforce by coupling the enforcement side with intervention, by collaborating with national enforcement efforts and local agencies that provide counseling and social services for the women, while using public exposure of the solicitors to curve demand. Some of the challenges in tackling this issue are 1) that Oakland and specifically the Fruitvale has acquired a reputation in the prostitution circuit, 2) it is not a local issue but is a national issue transcending state and international borders, 3) the demand is there and is profitable, and 4) lastly, the abusive situations that some of these women are in, protect the pimps. Although, many of the aspects pertaining to this issue are being addressed by the police, community involvement is needed to truly make it a safe place for everyone. I will address these further in the spatial recommendations section.

Beyond Spatial Constraints: Poverty and Lack of Safety

As youth grow older they seek opportunities to interact, gain skills, and feel self sufficient. However, in the absence of jobs, the existence of high poverty and the lack of places for activities of pleasure, informal activities and power dynamics become dominant forces not only by providing these opportunities for youth, but by making the involvement or association to them necessary to survive the violent environment. Selling drugs or gaining membership to a gang then provides two fundamental needs in such an environment: access to money and protection.

Before I describe how prostitution, drugs and gangs create access to money and power I want explore how they relate to larger issues. Many of these relate back to the fundamental lack of opportunities to a sustainable income coupled with a high cost of living and lack of

⁷ Johns- Men that pay for or actively solicit sex.

opportunities to acquire skills and upward mobility. When thinking about the statistical makeup of this area the families living below the poverty level are at 26.1%, while persons under 18 living (or the children of these families) living below poverty is 40% (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). This means that as the children get older their ability to generate income becomes very important, not only to contribute monetarily to the family, but also to be able to supply themselves with their needs as they get older since their clothes and goods become increasingly expensive with age and they become an important part of fitting in. This coupled with the high cost of living, limited opportunities and living in an environment controlled by the culture of threat and violence leads to the dominance of drugs and gangs in the neighborhood. More recently these activities seem to have been increasing as many advocates point to younger levels of involvement in these activities.

Poverty and the lack of opportunities to access money in formal and positive ways is especially relevant when it comes to drugs and prostitution. In the case of prostitution, it has expanded because of similar reasons to the crack epidemic, where high unemployment is providing access to money for low income persons and youth. These factors combined with the high demand for the activity create an opportunity for those that have little formal access to decent wages. This was revealed to me when the prostitution task force officer compared the national prostitution phenomenon to the national crisis of crack in the late eighties early nineties during high unemployment. This further supports the argument that prostitution, drugs and gangs are such dominant forces because at a time when opportunities are few they provide either access to money or protection for youth living in a hostile poverty stricken environment.

Drugs and Gangs: Access to Money and Protection

It is important to be aware of the provisions related to the dominant street culture when trying to make spaces safer for everyone. As mentioned before, drugs are one way of becoming an insider and acquiring dominance over space for protection. The dealing of drugs and in particular the widespread access to marijuana has created a less threatening opportunity for youth to gain access to money, where acceptance of it makes it less dangerous since a person doesn't

need to be connected to a cluster to deal drugs. Instead they can simply buy it from a friend and sell it to an acquaintance for a higher price than it was sold to them.

The popularity of involvement in drug dealing is due to several financial reasons. First the demand is there to make it a profitable endeavor, second, accessibility is relatively easy and third the need of youth to generate income. In addition to income their need to find an alternative means of safety, through their association to aggressive subcultures coupled with the lack of real alternatives strengthens its existence. These factors continue to validate aggressive street subcultures rather than increase the popularity and feasibility of alternative positive activities for youth. Spatially this means that the drug activity areas won't diminish if youth do not have reasonable access to formal income generating opportunities or activities that contribute to their positive development in order to become successful as adults. However, due to the situation of poverty and the need of government assistance, I want to caution that strategies that increase access to youth income should consider not letting them affect the receipt of their family's government assistance. If this is not addressed then illegitimate ways of earning money will remain more practical than the formal alternatives.

In addition, since being involved in this activity provides some status, protection and control over territory creating safe spaces using the spatial location of institutions can provide an alternative to relying on aggressive subcultures for safety. This can be done if programs take advantage of their physical location and link themselves in visible ways outside of their buildings. Once connected, these links can lead to the creation of a safe zone which can make it easier for youth to become involved in positive activities.

Protection is a large component of gang membership and therefore if formal institutions aren't providing it, then the hostile environment youth live in will increase the chances of them joining a gang. Issues related to gang violence may require more than prevention strategies, for example if the violence reaches extreme levels, immediate direct intervention might be needed through the mediation of conflict or the increase of policing to make the streets safe for everyone.

The role of police in providing safety is key and very important, but requires cautious involvement because there general mistrust exists due to the history of spatial intimidation tactics used, one of these is referred to as “drop offs”. Drop offs were said to be conducted by police by using territorial gang divisions to intimidate gang members. This is done by picking them up and dropping them off in another part of town that might not be their gang territory, putting the gang members in serious danger. However, workshop responses varied where although, some felt harassed by the police, others including some insiders, felt that more police surveillance would increase safety. This confirms the need of formal authority to replace the informal system of protection which uses aggression to gain dominance.

Gang rivalries as they manifest themselves through space are also divided along lines of generational conflict between first generation and second generation immigrant youth which adds another facet to the spatial contesting of territories. Where 1st generation immigrants that are part of the outsiders and the most constrained in terms of safe spaces might feel the need to join the rival gang to protect themselves from 2nd generation insiders. This dynamic might be a factor in contributing to the growth in gang membership for those that seek protection. If formal spatial safety is provided to this group than the need to find alternate means of protection such as gangs can be reduced. In addition the large underlying cultural divide existing between these two rivals can provide an opportunity for dealing with the gang conflicts before they become gang conflicts. This can be through the provision of safety through cultural awareness, with programs that deal with cultural tolerance, anger management and positive identity development.

Learning From Gangs to Create Opportunities

By focusing on gangs or drugs I do not want to insinuate that most youth are part of a gang or that they are involved in drugs. I have focused on these because based on youth spatial patterns they show to have the greatest dominance over space whether they are the minority or majority. Being realistic about what it means to be part of a gang and its relationship to spatial pride and dominance, I would say that gangs will not disappear. Their existence however, doesn't have to be so numerous, nor violent. Given that they are not hierarchically connected to the drug dealing structure their nature creates an opportunity for individuals involved to choose

to change. If positive alternatives exist that youth enjoy, gang membership could diminish, and violent activity decrease.

Some of the things that organizations need to substitute, that gangs provide include providing programs that will strengthen youth's sense of identity, sense of belonging, sense of power/control over their environment while offering protection in a hostile environment. The effectiveness of the gang structure in providing these things was demonstrated by spatial patterns of perceived safety by the "insiders" in the neighborhood. These are all positive factors that youth need and should have however, when an environment provides minimal formal institutions that provide these, informal subcultures will gain popularity and dominance over other alternatives. The norms of these informal groups will then take precedence to dominate social structures, which is what has happened in the Fruitvale.

It is also important to recognize the large presence of this phenomenon and begin to include gang members in formal activity. As individuals to be associated with or considered part of a gang/insider demonstrates great ability to connect, influence and lead. These skills can be transformed into neighborhood contributions if effective transition tools are provided to formalize their skills, such as mentorship and opportunities they enjoy and that reward them. Inclusion will allow them to confront many of the realities they are dealing with rather than isolating them further into the alternate subculture. In addition once youth become older adolescents they begin to seek ways in which to integrate themselves into the more mainstream adult world and it will be an especially difficult task to accomplish especially for many of the ex gang members whose membership into society involved a very isolated marginal culture, which might have included a correctional facility. Integrating youth into neighborhood projects can help them develop some of those very skills that they use for informal activities to benefit them as adults. However, in order to create a neighborhood that provides a setting and opportunities for positive youth development, spatial safety must first exist to strengthen the impact that these programs can have.

One way that gang authority can be used positively to provide safety on to space is by displacing other undesired uses through their occupation of space. For example if International

Boulevard becomes a place that at the very minimum the insiders begin in part due to activity from institutions that draw them there other negative uses might become displaced. One youth advocate mentioned this when he noticed that a few youth perceived as gang members began to gather on a corner on International Blvd. it displaced some of the prostitution activity on that corner. This could be further built upon by the programs by creating opportunities to break down the barriers between insiders and outsiders, so that the presence of the insiders doesn't block program access to the outsiders.

Providing safety for youth would increase the accessibility to programs that provide them with positive opportunities and activities rather than allowing them to function in an unsafe spatial setting where they are constantly threatened by drugs, gangs, prostitution and theft. Spatial safety through their lens is not only positive for their development, but would have large implications on the rest of the neighborhood and contested spaces that create safety concerns. Moreover given the economy and instability in the political system, these issues will not disappear in the short run. Knowing that the gang, drug and prostitution trends are all susceptible to economic conditions, I will focus on spatial safety as an immediate strategy that is more resistant to such trends because it builds on existing strengths and lessons within the Fruitvale.

Taking what I learned from these constraints I used space both as a tool to reveal dominant forces in the Fruitvale as well as to provide some analysis and recommendations for the creation of a safer and more empowering environment for youth. I took the stories of youth to better understand how the world is viewed through their eyes and how to improve their mobility and positive exchanges. Creating safer spaces for youth as a way to increase opportunities for positive development begins by focusing on some of the primary constraints that impede this type of development. Where if youth feel unsafe going from home to school or from a youth program home they are less likely to engage in neighborhood activities and their spaces will be constrained to fewer locations and opportunities for positive interaction and growth. However, improving safety is not as easy as saying lets get rid of the drugs or the gangs, instead it requires a deeper analysis of the root causes and reality of their existence, which I will now expand on by looking into what they provide given the dynamics of the neighborhood and how they must be considered when seeking strategies to improve safety.

La Clinica Mural



Figure 4-1
Photo Taken by Diana Bernal

After reading about all of the negative constraints that youth encounter in the Fruitvale, a question that may be asked is, “what is being done about it?” The answer to that is that many organizations exist within the neighborhood trying to change some of these trends. However solutions aren’t simple, and these programs and organizations are working to reverse years of disinvestment in these inner city neighborhoods. Many of the issues related to safety are partly due to the concentration of poverty in these cities where the level of crime fluctuates depending on increases or decreases in unemployment (see Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2). However, many positive changes have happened over the years due to the hard work of neighborhood agencies and slowly the community is changing to resist these negative trends. However, as this happens, spatial awareness of problem areas are important to address when increasing safety throughout the entire neighborhood and not just displace it. In the following section I will describe some of the youth programs existing within neighborhood institutions and how they impact the neighborhood.

Many of the assets that exist in the neighborhood can be attributed to the number of organizations involved at different levels. Whether it is through community revitalization projects, merchant programs, the neighborhood clinic, senior housing, or a variety of active youth programs the institutions were rich in their involvement with the youth. There is a strong sense of pride and commitment to the neighborhood. The descriptions I will give only account for the institutions I visited and the services they provide to youth in the neighborhood. I have

divided them by east and west so that they can be layered on top of spatial safety constraints described by youth. Later in the recommendations section I will build upon these assets and identify ways in which these organizations can strengthen the neighborhood to create a place that is promising for youth and increases safety.

Location of Community Based Organizations in Youth Spatial Constraint's Context

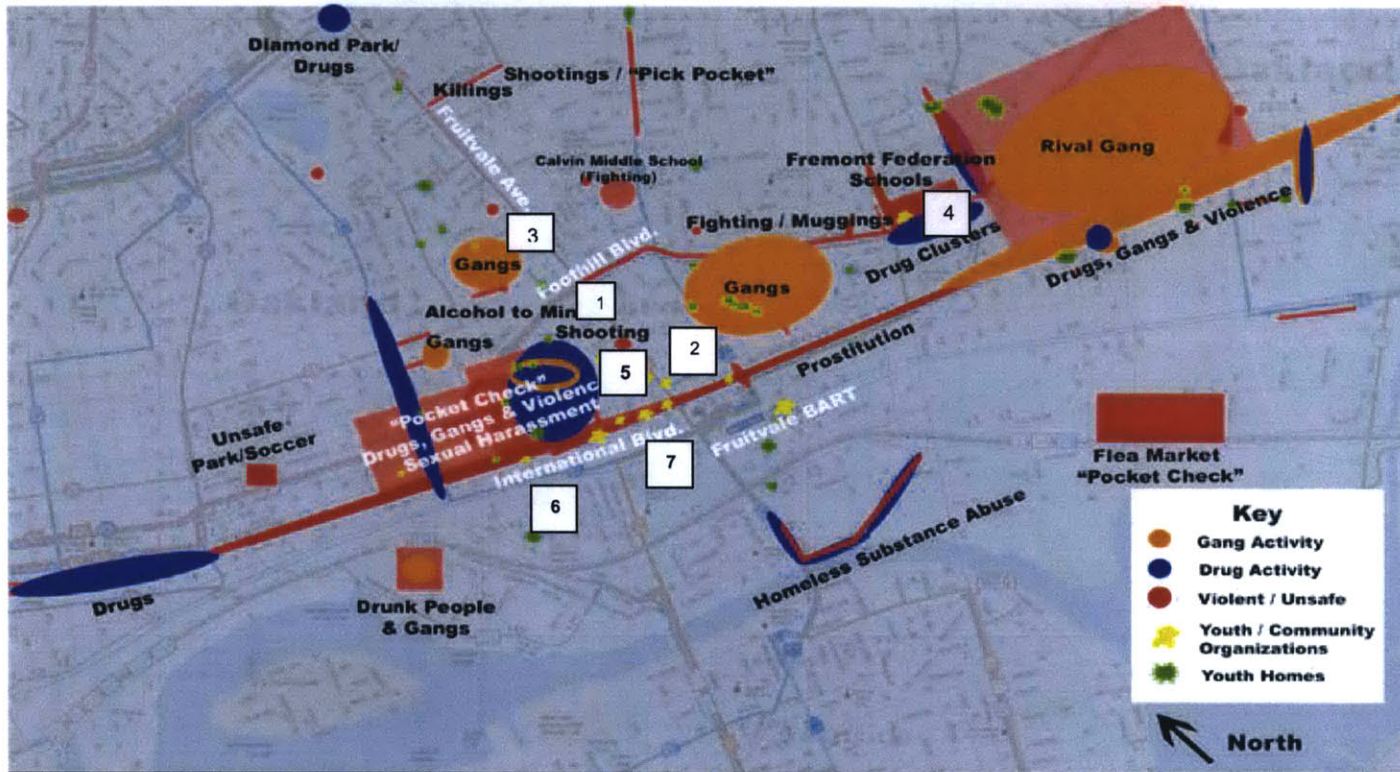


Figure 4-2

Note: Locations approximate, not exact.

Source: AC Transit Map 2004 and Fruitvale Youth Workshops

Table 4-1	
West: Youth Program Organizations	East: Youth Program Organizations
1. Unity Council (FROSI)	5. La Clinica (Youth Brigade)
2. Spanish Speaking Citizen's Foundation (La Raza Youth Empowerment Program)	6. EastSide Arts Alliance
3. Centro de Juventud	7. Native American Health Center
4. Youth Together	

Unity Council Fruitvale Recreation and Open Space Initiative

The Unity Council Community Development Corporation was founded in 1964 and is an influential entity and liaison between the neighborhood and city institutions. It spearheads many projects in the neighborhood which include the development of housing, the management of the new Transit Oriented Development, job creation programs, offer daycare and run the Main Streets Program in addition to other programs. They also house an Americorps program for youth in the neighborhood and in 2003 created a youth group to support the Fruitvale Recreation and Open Space Initiative (FROSI) which was established to address the lack of park and recreational assets in the neighborhood. Youth Advocates for Open Spaces and Recreational Facilities was established after receiving a grant from Team-Up For Youth. The grant enabled the Unity Council to recruit 16 youth from the neighborhood to help in surveying community needs on the type of sports activities young people would like to have. The youth meet once to twice a week to receive assignments that promote this agenda, perform community service and go on recreational field trips.

Currently they are increasing accessibility for the community's youth and residents. This is a significant in that it will mean spread recreational use and programming further throughout the neighborhood into places that were previously inaccessible. Many of these spaces have involved dealing with the bureaucracy of the Oakland Parks and Recreation as well as the Oakland School District. The Unity Council Initiative for Open Spaces and Recreational Facilities broke down these bureaucratic barriers associated with these entities that were preventing the community from using existing public facilities. Now these spaces will be open to be used in collaboration with other neighborhood organizations.

Spanish Speaking Citizen's Foundation

The Spanish Speaking Citizens' Foundation was established in 1965 to improve the lives of low-income Latinos in the Oakland area, the agency has evolved into a family resource center that provides a range of services. Within these services, those tailored to youth currently include the

Summer Youth Employment Program and will soon reinstate the La Raza Youth Empowerment Program, which has been inactive for about two years due to lack of funding.

In the past *La Raza* Youth Empowerment Program helped 40 high-school students per year to attain the skills, knowledge, and self-confidence necessary for emerging leaders. The in-class curriculum covers Raza history, definitions and models of leadership, and concepts of government. Additionally, youth received training on facilitating meetings, speaking in public, and conflict resolution. At the program finale, students take part in six-week internships with local businesses and non-profit organizations, in which they put their newly learned leadership skills to use while acquiring valuable work experience. This program is crucial in identity formation and to begin to break down cultural barriers such as the influence the gang rivalry between 1st and 2nd generation immigrant youth.

Centro de Juventud

Centro de Juventud offers a safe environment for youth 6-18 years of age to participate in: alcohol and drug education workshops, social and recreational activities, after school tutoring and mentoring services. These programs are to promote and support positive alcohol and drug-free life style choices. Their facilities include a large computer/tutoring classroom, half court basketball indoor gym, theatre stage, counseling rooms, kitchen and small outdoor space. The hours of operation for youth services are Monday-Friday 10:00 am-9:00pm and Saturday 10:00am-7:00pm. Currently they have 55 members enrolled in their program. They divide the day into age groups where elementary programming runs from 4pm-7pm and high school programming runs from 7pm-9pm. They are located north of the neighborhood above the census tracts I focused on, but provide an important resource to the neighborhood related to drug intervention.

Youth Together at Fremont Federation Schools

Youth Together was created as a community-based response to inter-racial conflicts and violence in school communities. It was a result of a convening between community leaders,

activists, parents and school officials, which led to the formation of Youth Together in 1996 (Youth Together Web). Within the Fruitvale Youth together operates at the site of the Fremont Federation Schools formerly known as Fremont High, which was divided into six separate smaller schools in 2003. Youth Together's goals are to address the educational inequities by fostering multiracial youth organizers and engaging school community allies to promote positive school change. They focus on developing youths' leadership, resiliency, self-esteem, problem-solving and coping skills (Youth Together Web).

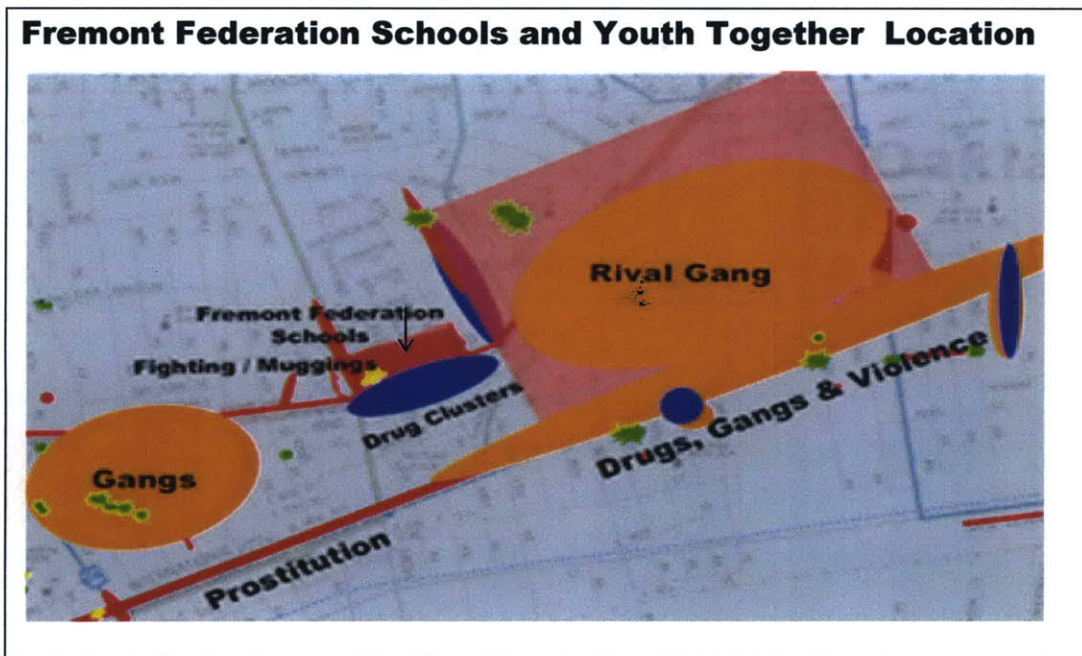


Figure 4-3
Source: AC Transit Map 2004 and Fruitvale Youth Workshops Jan and March 2005

In the neighborhood, they represent a crucial physical link between the High School campus and the community, where they run programs within the school, but their offices are located outside of it. In addition they directly deal with the problems that follow youth into the school whether they are related to neighborhood violence or home. The location of the school is crucial to understanding the violence that it is surrounded by, as seen on the maps the campus is in the middle of the two contested gang territories and its immediate surroundings are a hot spot for violent outbreaks and drug dealing. One of the homicides committed in the last year happened about three blocks east of the school. This emphasizes important role of Youth Together as a mediator between the high school and the community. Their efforts to expand the

role of the schools as a community actor are essential to dealing with issues of safety within the neighborhood.

West Fruitvale

La Clinica de La Raza: Youth Brigade

Established in 1971 La Clinica de La Raza is a full service clinic that provides culturally and linguistically appropriate health care (La Clinica Web). Their programs expand throughout the neighborhood at various locations with their main clinical facility at the BART station's new Transit Oriented Development. Within the general health services they also provide programs strictly focused on youth, including a teen pregnancy program. One of the youth programs I met with was the Latino Youth Brigade which is housed within La Clinica de La Raza's Community Health Education (CHE) department. Their primary focus is on health education to foster a link between the clinic, school and home health education.

Currently about a thirty adolescents take part in activities that promote positive self-esteem, community involvement, and leadership. The group receives training on specific topics like family life education, sexual health and nutrition. Following their training, they decide on and implement community action to promote health messages among their peers. They also receive tutoring once a week and are very active in the community, participating in local events and health fairs. The summer months provide daytime hours necessary for educational trips and exchanges with other youth groups. They provide a safe place for recent immigrant youth which are some of the most spatially unsafe in the neighborhood.

EastSide Arts Alliance

Formed in 1999 the EastSide Arts Alliance (ESAA) is an organization of artists, cultural workers, and community organizers of color who live and/or work in the San Antonio district of Oakland which is just to the West of the Fruitvale. ESAA offers a range of arts and cultural programs in the community tailored to youth.

After-School Arts Workshops:	Classes in visual, performing, and computer arts for youth ages 10-18.
Youth Leadership Development:	Internships and employment opportunities with ESAA member organizations for older youth.
Entrepreneurial Arts Programs:	Training programs for older youth, ages 16-24, that introduce job skills and connect youth to employment opportunities that will enable them to earn an income through art skills.
Beats, Flows, & Videos:	A digital audio workshop allowing students to produce audio CD's.
Performance Workshop:	A dance & performance workshop.
Visual Element:	A community murals and public art workshop.
After-School Arts Workshops:	Classes in visual, performing, and computer arts for youth ages 10-18.
Youth Leadership Development:	Internships and employment opportunities with ESAA member organizations for older youth. (EastSide Arts Alliance Web)

Most recently it has acquired and rehabilitated a vacant building which will expand their services as well as provide affordable live work space for artists. This organization is a key part of the neighborhood providing innovative activities that truly interest youth while integrating them in leadership positions and helping them build skills.

Native American Health Center Youth Services

Established in 1972 the Native American Health Center first located in San Francisco and then moved to the Fruitvale in the 1980s, set out to meet the health care needs of one of the largest populations of American Indians in the country. The concentration of the population in the Bay Area was a result of the 1950s Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Program. As a result of the relocation program Native people from all over the United States moved to the San Francisco Bay Area. Oakland was a major destination of this program, and once there, Indian people arriving from rural and reservation areas had to adjust to urban living. Today the health center much like La Clinica de La Raza provides medical services as well as prevention programming, with a large component focusing on youth. (Native American Health Center Web)

In the 1990s the Native American Health Center saw the need to create a Youth Services component which currently provides culturally relevant and family centered activities and programs. They combine intervention, and treatment to address the changing needs of Native youth in an urban environment. Available programs include traditional arts, urban Indian film project/indigenous media program, educational support, tribal athletics, violence prevention/anger management, unlearning racism and diversity training for youth leaders, drug and alcohol prevention and education and assistance in obtaining health care services. Although they focus on Native American youth which must comprise at least thirty percent of the population serviced, they are a multicultural service agency.

All of these organizations and their residents make the Fruitvale a dynamic, unique and empowering place. Despite many of the safety concerns the neighborhood faces these organizations are continuously striving to improve the lives of the residents. Each and every advocate is an asset to the community and is here my hope lies as to the positive future of the Fruitvale. In the next chapter I analyze the complexities involved in confronting the concerns that youth raised and will build upon the strengths of these organizations to explore how the use of space through neighborhood collaboration can provide some solutions.

Ch. 5 Using Space to Provide Safety: A Youth Empowerment Zone for Community Well-Being

Several strategic approaches exist for dealing comprehensively with the safety concerns that the youth from the Fruitvale posed. One approach is the personal transformative method which focuses on transforming youth behavior, through a conversionary religious process, another takes the police enforcement anti-crime path as we have seen in dominant anti-gang strategies, while another might focus simply on an economic route through job creation.

These strategies can be grouped into two prevalent responses. One is **law enforcement** which uses harsh-on-crime strategies to deter criminal behavior. The second uses **preventive strategies** to address the root causes of unsafe behavior on the other (Wekerle, G. and Whitzman, C., 1995: 6). The more dominant trend in California as I have demonstrated is the law enforcement response that has added to the constraints that youth already encounter in high crime areas. In addition these harsh-on-crime policies have increased incarceration to unprecedented levels and have caused another dilemma when those previously institutionalized return home. On the other hand attempting to implement preventive strategies at times of economic hardship is risky and the approaches are often criticized because they are long term strategies and don't yield immediate high impact results.

In the end both these strategies work together to maintain safer streets, however both are limited as to how much they can do to truly create safer places especially when factors involving unsafe activity such as prostitution and drugs are really impacted by the economic situation. Due to the limitations that both these responses face, I will propose focusing on space, as a third approach to safety that complements and strengthens the impact of these interventions. I propose a more confined local strategy that recognizes the limitations of holistic conversionary and repressive approaches and focuses more on creating safe spatial zones in the Fruitvale.

One well-known theory that focuses on space as a way to increase safety is Oscar Newman's defensive space strategy, which uses physical design to maximize surveillance, territoriality, and symbolic barriers (Einwalter, M. 2001: 2). His model creates defensible space by adding neighborhood gates and the forming mini-neighborhoods, to increase the feeling of

private space as a way to regulate and provide safety (Newman, O., 1997: 3). However, my use of his approach will focus on increasing the feeling of community space to provide safety and to build on the ideas proposed by Wekerle and Whitzman in 1995, which go from Newman's residential applications to public spaces.

Wekerle and Whitzman's approach focuses on communities and citizens as experts in urban violence, they are seen as the best people to develop solutions. The authors argue that, "Rather than giving up or retreating into privatized cocoons, citizens [can] start with their concern and fear from themselves, their families, homes, neighborhoods and workplaces." (Wekerle, G. and Whitzman, C., 1995: 6). This can usually start in the environment surrounding their daily lives where micro-changes can have large impacts. Although, my research stems from the premise of the community as experts, I will focus on youth as experts of neighborhood safety rather than follow Wekerle and Whitzman's assumptions of youth as the perpetrators of crime. Given the limitations to the existing approaches I will focus not on substituting or preventing these, but instead on strengthening them by building on the existence of community based organizations in the Fruitvale, to tackle the safety constraints affecting the youth and the community's everyday environment.

My focus on the power of spatial safety should not be thought of as a substitute to the other strategies or youth programs offered, rather it is meant to provide an environment that will help to improve access to such programs. I see it as a way to provide a place safe enough for youth not be afraid to engage in activities that will be positive for their development. This space can also go beyond providing a safe setting, to consciously expanding and increasing the opportunities for positive development or fun leisure activities specifically for youth.

The power of space in providing safety can be seen in the existing constraints that prevent youth from freely walking in the neighborhood. For example, gangs have taken ownership of some blocks by making their linkages to each other visible and imposing authority unto space. Space can provide safety not in of itself, but instead through the connections that people create and make visible. Institutions and people can strengthen safety boundaries by

visually imposing positive activity onto the streets and linking buildings through physical design interventions via collaboration and a neighborhood-wide vision.

Building on Neighborhood Strengths

Currently the situation in the Fruitvale is one where programs exist separately from each other without fully capitalizing on the spatial concentration of institutions which if focused on, their environment might be able to spread neighborhood safety. As they exist, youth programs in the Fruitvale provide immediate spatial safety while youth are in the buildings under the program's supervision, but as soon as the youth step out, they enter an environment where their safety feels threatened. In addition the way the organizations are currently structured limits their capacity to expand safety beyond their building walls. Although, intervention programs for positive youth development are offered at different institutions located near each other, spatial connections are missing which can strengthen their impact. Spatial location should be taken advantage of, since the existence of safety or the lack of it, affects the access to these youth intervention programs.

Examples can be found within the neighborhood of how physical changes coupled with programming can increase safety. As previously mentioned the Main Street program exists on the eastern side of the Fruitvale which was perceived as a relatively safe area while the western side seemed overcome by drug dealing and violence. Some distinct features of the eastern side are: a vibrant commercial zone along International Blvd., an active Main Streets Program, streetscape improvements, a pedestrian island, textured crosswalks and the new TOD at the BART Station. In addition St. Elizabeth's Church and High School has constantly been referred to as a safe place. The western side on the other hand is perceived as much more dangerous and has less commercially vibrant uses along International Blvd. which are less conducive to foot traffic. In addition, the width of the street is much wider and has less crosswalks and light signals, despite a large school being located there. However, physical changes have begun on the western side with the construction of the new Cesar Chavez Education Center and the expansions of EastSide Arts Alliance (ESAA) and the Native American Health Center (NAHC).

These last two institutions have rehabilitated underutilized lots which will provide a combination of housing and community services.

These institutions have formalized their role in space by creating a community development component to their organizations which will take care of the management of the buildings and build on their wider community vision. For example ESAA has partnered up with a CDC to change 23rd Avenue into a vibrant artist community. These recent expansions as well as the visions that these organizations have for the community create a great opportunity to affect change on this side of the neighborhood. However, they need to conceive of themselves as a spatial actor in the environment rather than just a provider of services.

EastSide Community Cultural Center New Location



Figure 5-1

Source: Eastside Arts Alliance. Eastside Cultural Center: Project Summary 2004.

In the context of all these specific constraints, I will focus on providing safety for youth not by eradicating gangs, drugs and prostitution, through heavy police enforcement or changing the behaviors of youth, instead I will focus on how to expand safety by providing a zone that promotes safety by providing physical markers, creating destinations and connecting “safe havens” for positive youth development opportunities. In order to create this zone I also suggest the creation of an intermediary agent to facilitate and focus on this vision. As an example of what an intermediary agent can do for linking separate entities I will use Main Street program components, as they exist on the east side of the neighborhood. I will now describe some of the components that have succeeded in the Main Street program and how they have improved safety.

Main Street Model: Using Space to Create Safety

The National Main Street program encourages economic development by advocating, “a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.”¹ The Main Street program in the Fruitvale has made great strides to improve the safety by incorporating physical changes in the commercial corridor and the construction of the new Transit Oriented Development. It has almost been ten years since it was adopted in the Fruitvale in 1996. Turner (2003), in a project on the Fruitvale, was concerned about the adaptability of the program in the neighborhood due to the high amount of crime and disorder. However, today although many

International Boulevard Streetscape Improvements



Figure 5-2

Photo taken by Diana Bernal

of the problems he spoke about such as public drunkenness, prostitution and sexual harassment still exist, the program has definitely made a positive impact on the area. It has strengthened the identity of the neighborhood as a restaurant district, while providing a merchant support system. In addition, the street cleaning program and physical streetscape improvements have greatly impacted the attitudes of people. As a way to increase accountability of city service providers outreach personnel walk along the commercial corridors on a daily basis disseminating

¹ The Main Street- <http://www.mainstreet.org/>

information, documenting neighborhood crime and making phone calls to the proper authorities.

The phone calls act as an accountability tool to hold parties responsible for various problems from trash pick up, to fixing a street light or reporting public drinking. This keeps the commercial district fairly safe during the daytime when shops are open, but when evening hits it becomes an environment dominated by prostitution. The Main Street program has made many changes to the neighborhood. The Main Street program goes beyond using special design to increase eyes on the street to encourage, educate and support residents to make the calls in addition to providing their own personnel to maintain these norms. Although, the program may have improved safety, especially in the eastern part of the neighborhood, youth continue to see it as a threatening area due to the existence of prostitution. This suggests that youth need to be integrated into neighborhood projects as a way of increasing safety and greater community well-being.

Focusing on Youth to Increase Safety and Community Well-Being

My strategy focus on the safety of the youth by acknowledging that the threats that gangs, drugs and prostitution pose to youth are different than the threats they pose to adults. For example, adults are less likely to be confused for a gang member, sought for recruitment or need gang or drug clusters to provide them protection. Adults are also less likely to be challenged by gang members to acquire power. Therefore, expanding safety on a commercial strip without integrating youth needs may be pushing the visible problems deeper into the neighborhood while providing a safe space for adults and leaving youth to still deal with these problems.

Given these factors I have taken a similar strategy used by Main Street to address the specific needs of youth by suggesting the creation of a **Youth Empowerment Zone (YEZ)** which would link youth service rather than merchants. I suggest that this can be done by combining three components: creating physical links between agencies to build a safe zone, creating an intermediary agent to facilitate this vision, and by further integrating youth and influential actors into neighborhood projects.

Breaking Institutional Silos and Building a Neighborhood Vision

The array of services that the neighborhood has to offer is impressive in its diversity and depth; however, as I have demonstrated many safety concerns continue to limit the spaces frequented and used by youth. To discover why the safety issues are still prevalent despite the many institutions and youth programs, I interviewed some of the agencies. When I presented the youth's story and the spatial mapping some were shocked while others were not. Each youth program advocate spoke to how they were working on tackling issues within their own organizational context; some did it through health and others through art. Those that had direct contact with the youth did not seem so surprised at some of my findings; instead their observations and assumptions were confirmed. One thing I discovered is that their networks are expansive within their topic area, but there was little collaboration and communication between organizations within the neighborhood. Part of this was due to lack of staff and time to engage in collaborative efforts, ideological differences and competition at times for the same funding.

The diversity of these local non-profits is a great social asset to the community; however, due to the complexity of some of these I found that there was a lack of communication, strategizing and collaboration between them to address the issues I have documented in the neighborhood. This is due in great part to the overwhelming work that each of these organizations has within their own silos². There is a rich amount of networking and collaboration that exists with actors that compliment the focus of each of these agencies, but little cross pollination between neighborhood agencies. For example, EastSide Arts Alliance is a network of local artists, Native American Health Center is connected to other Native American serving agencies all over the bay area, while the Unity Council holds its strongest agency connections at the city level. These are only some of the strengths of the institutions and they do not even speak to the national and international ties that exist within some of these, in each there is a world of networks at different levels. The richness and diversity in strategies, ideologies and networks that exists within each of these agencies is valuable, but could expand its impact on the neighborhood if it were connected beyond the individual organization to a neighborhood system strategy that deals with neighborhood issues.

² silos- limiting work to that which meets focused agency and program needs.

In some ways some of these institutions seemed just as limited in the spaces they occupied as the youth. When I asked the youth and advocates about other youth programs in the neighborhood they were not able to provide me with much detailed information about them or their current projects. In one extreme case one of the agencies symbolically represented the disjunction that exists. In this case the organization was so concerned about security that the building they occupied looked vacant from the outside. When I approached the grey dark windowed gated building and pulled on the door it was locked with no sign near it indicating hours of operation. The only evidence that it provided youth services was a hanging advertisement banner on the side of the building with their phone number and a list of some of the programs they offered. Previously it had been mentioned by several advocates as an organization that provided effective drug intervention programs, but they were unsure of its current activity. After I called the phone number one of the counselors answered and told me that they were open, but had to keep the door locked for security reasons he indicated that there was a doorbell on the side of the door. When I went back, the doorbell blended into the grey color of the wall and had no sign indicating it was there. Once I entered I found a great facility and plenty of programming which included alcohol and drug counseling, a stage, basketball court, computer facility, tutoring room and a snack schedule. In order to sign up, each youth had to return a parent permission slip and was given a schedule of activities. The staff seemed limited however, and they had just opened up two positions for youth specialists.

The physical appearance of this institution is an extreme example not representative of the other buildings occupied by youth programs; it does however symbolize the isolation of each entity. Each organization had great things to offer, but communication flow between each is limited. National budget cuts across all levels of government have impacted many agencies that provide social services. In the Fruitvale, agencies that provide major services to youth, including schools and non-profits find themselves struggling and competing to get funding. However, this reality is also starting to provoke that agencies work together and build upon each other's strengths. Due to the spatial limitations caused by safety concerns, it is critical that these institutions that do provide safe places for youth to spend time in inform their members of all the resources that are available to them and collaborate with each other on projects.

Envisioning a YEZ

My vision for the Fruitvale is for youth needs to be prioritized as a way to expand greater community well-being, much like merchant's needs are prioritized through the Main Street program. The program has managed to be successful, even with the difficult task organizing competing entities. It has been able to link businesses through an area wide vision. Just as the Main Street program links small businesses through the goal of maintaining a successful Business Improvement District (BID), my vision is that such an intermediary can link youth service providing agencies to prioritize a safe and healthy youth environment and form a YEZ.

A Youth Empowerment Zone

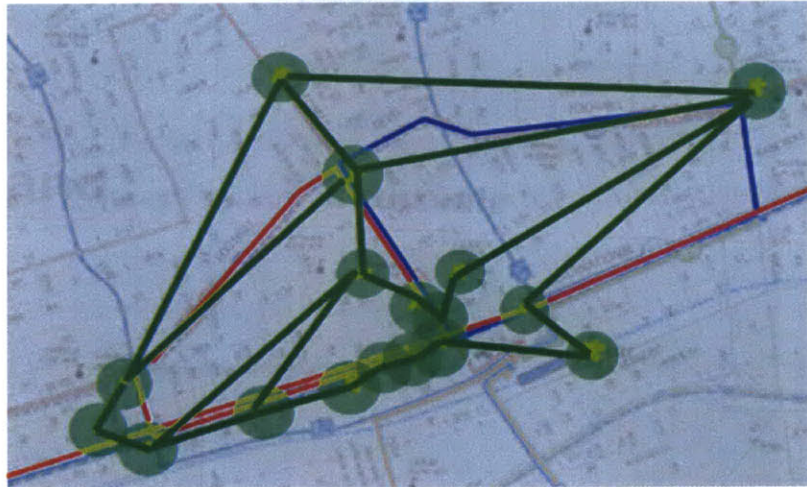


Figure 5-3
Source: AC Transit Map

The YEZ would function as a neighborhood system of youth service providers that offers all the essential needs for positive youth development: a sense of personal safety, some structure, a sense of belonging and membership, a sense of self-worth, the opportunity to master skills, access to learning opportunities beyond the classroom, a chance to take on roles with responsibility, and one that renders support and guidance from caring adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Fortunately many of the Fruitvale youth service institutions have led the way in implementing many of these principals and they are successfully impacting youth in positive ways. However, as seen in the mapping activities large challenges still persist and can't be singularly solved by one agency. This sets the stage for creating an effective YEZ where organizations can begin to link to each other visibly and through collaboration and build upon their strengths so that youth can have a system of services and destinations they can go to rather than one location .

In order to reach the youth empowerment vision I propose a three part strategy that should include: 1) creating physically visible links between institutions through collaboration, 2) the creation of an intermediary agent to manage and facilitate the neighborhood's vision, and 3) to integrate the youth and influential actors into neighborhood projects, so that the youth empowerment zone will truly be a zone rather than a network of community organizations. First, collaboration amongst agencies can be used to increase the spatial connectivity between agency locations and expand spatial safety by connecting "safe havens". The second part to the strategy or the intermediary will function as the convener and implementer of neighborhood wide links. Third, youth must be integrated as part of the neighborhood spatial system rather than being seen as another client. Integration can begin with the active involvement of youth in their own development through activities that they not only enjoy, but that support them in acquiring the skills and networks they will need in the future to become successful adults. It should also expand beyond the youth programs to expand their roles as planners, assessors, small business innovators and take advantage of their creativity and energy. In the following section I will focus my recommendations on how the Fruitvale can create a youth empowerment zone by building on its strengths and incorporating all three components: collaboration, an intermediary and integration of youth and influential actors to youth.

The Spatial Creation of a YEZ

Although, these agencies are becoming more influential components in space they are still functioning largely within their own institutional silos where they only have time and resources to branch out to agencies that connect to their purpose whether it is health, open spaces, cultural development or art. These connections are extensive and rich, however, they need to be built on and expanded into the street, by creating physical linkages to other agencies that provide different services and visually the goal of the physical linkages is to impose safety onto space.

Looking at the spatial patterns of the unsafe areas in the neighborhood and the location of neighborhood institutions many times these are in the center or near the problem areas including the Main Streets program. Viewing spatial location as a strategy, institutions could begin to

create physical connections between each other that visually let people know that there is constant work being done to provide safety in the neighborhood. Some ways to physically create these safety zones is by increasing pedestrian traffic to and from institutions. This can be done by expanding youth knowledge about these places so that it increases the spaces that they are familiar with and the buildings become something more than just structures that line the street.

Pedestrian Traffic Flow Increase

Pedestrian traffic flow can increase vigilance and security if collaboration and interaction through joint projects between staff and between youth would increase in ways and traffic would flow between each of agency locations. The way the pedestrian perceives space is also key to increasing the feeling of walk ability. For example the wideness and dispersed crosswalks on the western side of the neighborhood make it feel dangerous to cross the street to get to the other side, possibly limiting the amount of people moving from one side of the street to the other.

23rd Avenue Artist District Vision (Western Fruitvale)



Figure 5-4

Source: Eastside Arts Alliance. Eastside Cultural Center: Project Summary 2004.

In order to facilitate pedestrian traffic between institutions pedestrians need to feel safe from traffic. Some techniques to do this might include crosswalks at critical spots such as schools and public service agencies. If traffic speed is a problem one consideration might be reducing the number of lanes or adding raised crosswalks. Once pedestrians feel safe against traffic then enhancements can be added to attract them down these paths. Using visual markers

whether they be signs, building improvements or cleaning of the street can create a visual presence affecting the type of activity that happens in this area.

Visual Markers

Part of creating a zone is to visually complement it so that there are synchronized markers that represent the zones purpose and character. These markers can create a great opportunity for youth to take ownership of the streets and develop artistic ways to show that this is an area that is meant to empower them and provide safety. One art form that already exists in the neighborhood are murals, however signs, banners, sculptures in front of the agencies, plants or even painted footprints going from site to site can also delineate the zone. A map can also be placed in a public setting pointing out the youth resources and community organizations in the neighborhood

Creating Destinations: Youth Expansion of Silos

Thinking back to the youth spatial patterns within the Fruitvale they were mostly limited to paths they had to take to get to school, occasionally shop and attend the youth program they were a part of. It is also important to note that these are all destinations and places where they know people or are familiar with what happens inside of or at these destinations (see Appendix A). Each individual agency that they were a part of was labeled as a safe place to be, if these institutional spaces would increase, where the youth and staff would attend multiple facilities and get to know the programs their safe spaces could begin to increase by expanding familiarity and safe locations. For example rather than youth going from home to school, to eat out at a local restaurant and then to one youth program once or twice a week at one location, they would have more options with familiarity of different programs throughout the Fruitvale. In this way their safe locations, activities and paths throughout the neighborhood would expand. In addition the increase in contact with different groups of youth will increase the familiarity with people they might have previously perceived as threatening.

In the diagram below I have simulated the path of one youth from one of the mapping activities, this youth perceived himself as an outsider and spoke about feeling unsafe throughout the neighborhood. The purple circles show the places he limited himself to due to the lack of safety that he felt in the neighborhood. These places include school, a popular restaurant near the high school, the youth program at the Unity Council which they attend once to twice a week for about two hours and their home. When he wants to engage in fun activities he goes outside of Oakland to Alameda, Berkeley or Bayfair mall. If the youth empowerment zone was created and organizations tailored to a variety of youth to provide many opportunities along with safety, the green circles show by how much more the safe spaces of this particular youth could be increased.

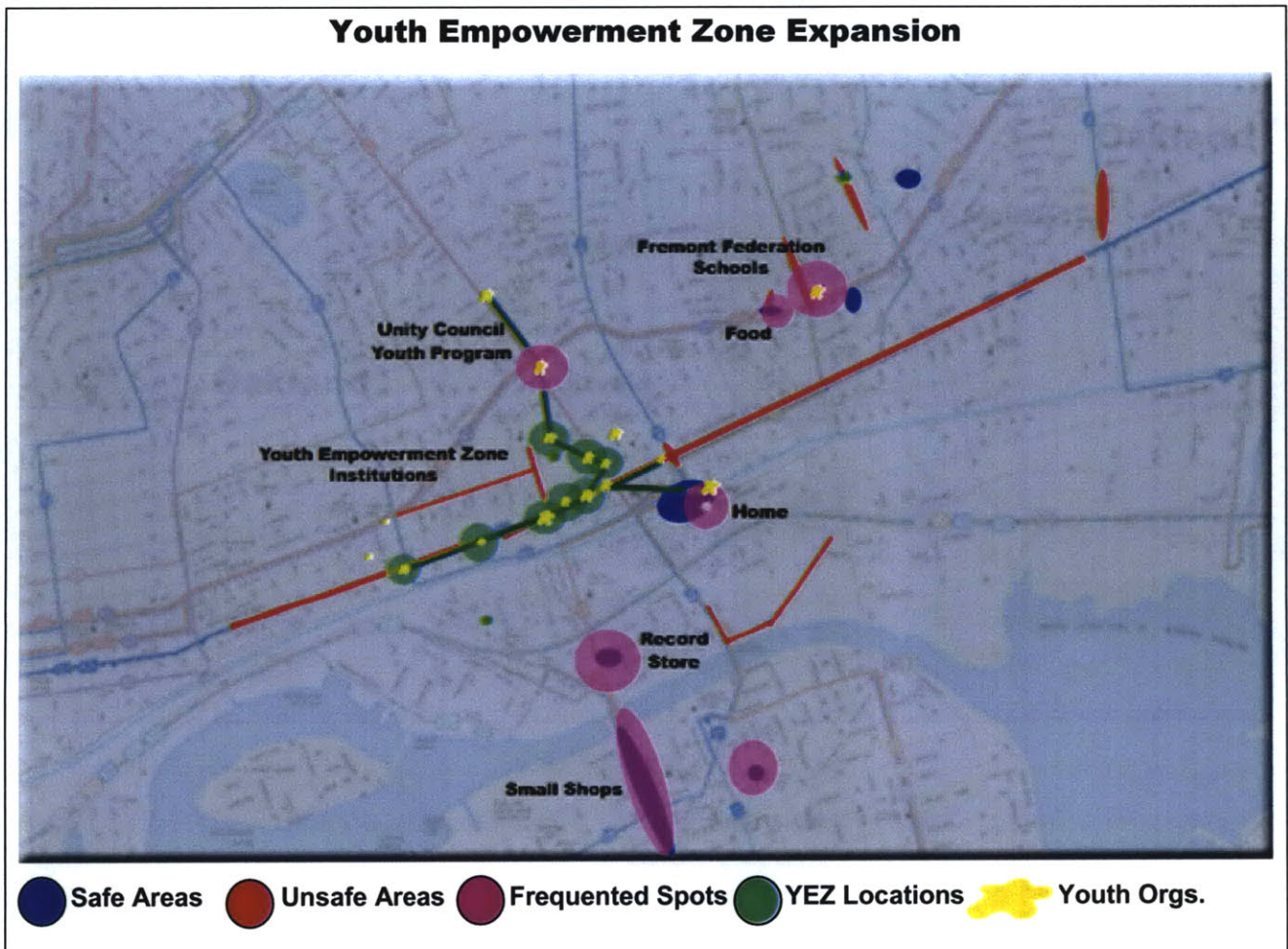


Figure 5-5
 Sources: AC Transit Map 2004 and Youth Workshops Jan & March 2005

Creating a YEZ will also mean expanding destinations beyond youth programs to places where youth can spend safe leisure time in. For example when youth were asked about where they like to spend time in versus where they feel safe most youth expressed not having very many options when seeking leisure entertainment within the neighborhood. If they want to do something fun they had to travel outside of the neighborhood to engage in fun activities, some of the most popular places were those that combined shops and a theatre, for example Berkeley and the Bayfair Mall. In this way providing safe entertainment for youth in new development projects is important for their positive interaction. In this way a YEZ would be a safe place where youth can engage in building their skills, having fun and interacting in a safe way.

A Neighborhood Intermediary Agency for the YEZ

Due to the overwhelming work within each institution I suggest creating a neutral intermediary to manage and foster this neighborhood wide vision. The intermediary would be a neutral entity existing to serve and link the neighborhood institutions in the Fruitvale much like the Main Street program links the businesses on International Blvd., where they would provide technical support while facilitating communication between agencies. Communication would be the primary tool through which institutions build on a wider neighborhood wide vision of the YEZ. Furthermore they could act as an additional voice to communicate neighborhood youth needs to funders, the city and policy makers (see Figure 5-6).

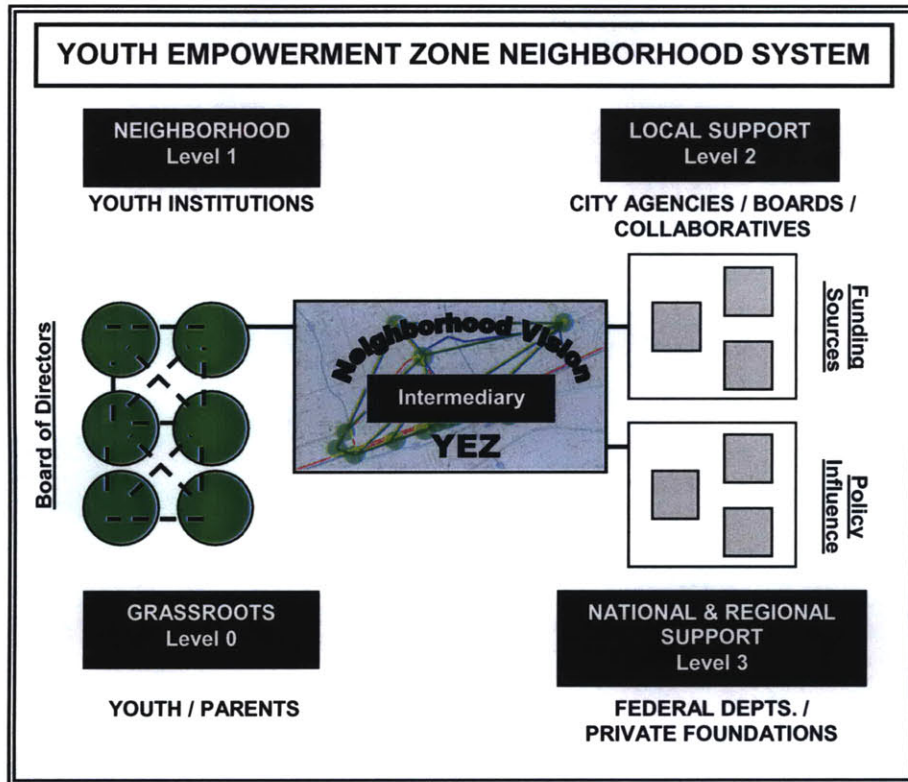


Figure 5-6

Source: Youth Development Framework adapted from Dorgan K.A. and Ferguson R.F. 2003

A neighborhood empowerment zone intermediary can function similar to the Main Street Program in the Fruitvale which coordinates businesses, provides technical assistance and creates programs to strengthen the economic corridors. In this same way an intermediary agent can serve to create a youth empowerment zone that connects the various youth service providers and assesses neighborhood-wide youth needs to strengthen youth investment. For example the intermediary would provide a neighborhood analysis by taking inventory of services available to youth, times when services are available, how many youth are served versus the need, and identify the different youth audiences that need to be served. The intermediary would serve institutions by acting as an agent that fosters neighborhood communication, connectivity and provides technical assistance. Some elements that it would need to create a successful youth empowering zone collaborative would include:

- Possessing knowledge of youth development needs and implementing them in neighborhood wide initiatives.
- Facilitating a shared vision between organizations & focusing on a collaboration goal.
- Making sure that a clear communication structure exists.
- Facilitating the creation of a contract where agencies define clear roles and responsibilities of the collaborative & intermediary.
- Create a common language between agencies.
- Providing technical support on relative issues (ex. program evaluation measurement tools).
- Deciding on neighborhood level indicators of improvement.
- Understanding of the neighborhood politics & advocating for the neighborhood.

(National Collaborative for Youth *et al.*, 2002: 12, 13)

Focusing on the neighborhood system concept, the intermediary agent that connects programs could do an assessment of how to maximize the impact of institutions at the neighborhood level, the amount of youth program time they would have access to might be more than two hours if they were knowledgeable of other programs and felt comfortable attending them. Secondly, the intermediary could also look for needs based on hours of operation during different seasons where institutions could complement each other and the hours during the day that youth could attend programs could be expanded. In addition as I am now focusing on engagement of residents youth programs can expand beyond their hours of operation by engaging neighborhood actors that continue to impact youth beyond the youth program hours.

New York Beacons Program Intermediary Lessons

A successful model to draw intermediary lessons from is New York City's (NYC) Beacons after school program. The Beacons program began in 1991 with a mayor's budget proposal to establish 10 school-based community centers in the city's poorest neighborhoods. These programs were meant to provide safe havens for youth with structured supervised activities 16 hours per day and 365 days per year. Each site was run by experienced community based organizations, where over three quarters had 20 years of experience. Management of the

sites was administered under the city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) which also created the Youth Development Institute (YDI), a sophisticated intermediary organization. The city money used to fund this organization was set aside separately from all other youth program funds, so as not to create a conflict of interest. (Dorgan K.A. and Ferguson, R.F. , 2003: 280, 288)

YDI provided technical assistance and support to the agencies that ran the Beacons programs at different schools by facilitating monthly directors' meetings, professional development activities and managed a small grant program for developing activities. Its focus was to advance the Beacons programs by building collaboration through communication and capacity through technical assistance and training in grant writing, board development, hiring, data collection and evaluation. It also identified additional sources of funding, vouching on behalf of agencies and facilitating information flow. (Dorgan K.A. and Ferguson, R.F. , 2003: 288,289)

Its success is in great part to the sophisticated knowledge of youth development and familiarity with the organizations, politics, and communities of NYC. An important component was that they remained their neutral ground by avoiding placement in a position in which they were allocating resources among competing Beacons centers. In addition they fostered an ongoing culture of inquiry, assessment and reflection in the organizations and communities they served. In the end they developed a reputable record of providing expertise, attracting resources, solving problems and building support. (Dorgan K.A. and Ferguson, R.F. , 2003: 289)

One of the key challenges of an intermediary agent is to make sure that neutral support is provided to all agencies in order to convene all services in the neighborhood to better serve the youth in the Fruitvale. In this way the neighborhood can function as one system of services, rather than singular isolated organizations. This would improve communication, maximize the use of resources and make agencies more accessible to all youth.

Increasing YEZ Impact by Integrating Youth and Influential Actors

Integrating youth is also a large part of this strategy, after all these concerns were raised by them. They should be called in not only as participants, but also as implementers of these ideas so that they could take ownership of them. This presents to me a great opportunity for the expansion of safety zones in the neighborhood where if an increase in ownership is acquired by them through formal programs the YEZ has a greater chance of succeeding and being protected. For example they can be involved in the physical design of street linkages and help in the creation of a sense of place. In a report conducted by Oakland Fund For Children and Youth in 2001 they found that, youth want challenging jobs that have better career potential it is also interesting to note that of all of the issues covered in this community assessment report, the largest differences between youth and adult perceptions were found here. Youth rated employment and career development as a much higher priority than adults. Looking at the relationship between increases in crime and unemployment in low income areas it is important to find ways to reward youth for their work and make them feel like contributing members that can contribute to their families in addition to being able to take care of their own needs. (International Child Resource Institute et. al., 2001: 47, 48)

Beyond youth programs it is important to integrate youth as components of the neighborhood through mentoring of agencies or staff members who are working on neighborhood projects whether it is when constructing new buildings, adding new businesses to the commercial corridor or expanding public spaces. Part of integrating youth and influential local actors into neighborhood programs, is recognizing that youth service providers are only one component of the youth's environment. The environment that youth exist in is constantly being impacted by personal relationships, policies, and even physical neighborhood change. For this reason it is important to recognize that impact by individually isolated institutions is limiting and that if organizations work as a network of services rather than isolated players, they can potentially increase the impact they have on youth and the rest of the community.

Conclusion

Through this research I found that trends of crime and violence in the late eighties and early nineties in poor communities have led to the negative perception of and disinvestment in youth by the “adult community.” These attitudes and policies have added to the problems of racial segregation and poverty concentration. The outcome of this period of violence, mainly in large urban cores and the image presented in the media during this time, has had large implications on how youth are perceived today, specifically youth of color. These images appealing to fear have caused policies and adult sentiment to focus on harsh-on-crime policies and youth incarceration, while overlooking the economic factors and disinvestment in public resources leading to such conditions.

In the case of the Fruitvale these historical economic and population shifts leading to the concentration of poverty, have caused the creation of informal aggressive subcultures involving drugs, gangs and prostitution. These have grown to dominate youth space on the street and are decreasing spatial safety. However, I also found that these constraints affect different youth in different ways. Through workshops, interviews and discussions I was able to divide the youth into three different groups based on their spatial constraints: insiders, outsiders and young women.

The insiders were the least vulnerable to being threatened by constraints within the neighborhood, while the outsiders were the most threatened. The young women were affected by space in a very different way than the guys, where their consciousness over safety was largely affected by the existence of sexual harassment by older men and the existence of prostitution. Due to the limitations of my research, this is a topic I was not able to explore fully on its own and I recommend further research be done on how negative spaces specifically threaten young women. Another topic for further research would be to include the viewpoint of gang members from the rival neighborhood gang since they are perceived as a major threat to insiders and a large source of conflict.

After concluding my field research I found that gangs, drugs, prostitution and the fear of getting “jumped”³ or mugged have had large implications on youth safety and the safety of the neighborhood. They have led to the creation of spatial constraints in the way youth use space, further limiting their access to greater neighborhood services which can potentially provide them with the support that they need to develop in positive ways and in their transition to adulthood.

Accepting that large economic and social factors needing long term solutions affect the youth’s spatial environment and safety, I looked to local level to explore more short term strategies to increasing youth safety and opportunities. I used youth’s perception of space as a way to focus on how to increase and strengthen positive youth development opportunities in the inner city, through space. In this particular setting safety spatial constraints as well as the lack of communication amongst community based organizations, affected the positive opportunities youth had access to. This led me to conclude that before a positive youth development environment is successful a sense of safety and greater neighborhood strategizing must exist.

Currently, an impressive concentration of community resources exists in the Fruitvale to create this type of setting. These efforts have led to a history of community involvement and investment in the community. Knowing of their existence and after learning about the spatial constraints affecting the youth’s environment my immediate reaction was to investigate how community based organizations (CBOs) were addressing some of these concerns. In doing this, I found that the spatial location of these organizations in working towards neighborhood safety was an underutilized resource. This finding led me to propose using space as a way to extend access to existing resources through the creation of a youth safety zone.

In my recommendations I propose that expansion of spatial safety can happen by building on neighborhood strengths and lessons through collaboration. Using a similar concept to the Main Street program currently existing on the eastern side of the neighborhood, I recommended the creation of a Youth Empowerment Zone (YEZ) through a three part approach:

1. Using physical space and collaboration, to form linkages between CBOs and begin to form a perceived “safety” zone.

³ Jumped- Beaten up

2. Creating an intermediary agent to help foster and strengthen a neighborhood vision for the YEZ, assess youth neighborhood needs and provide technical support.
3. Integrating youth and influential neighborhood residents into the process and into neighborhood projects.

In the end my vision is for the Fruitvale to provide a safe, fun and empowering spatial zone for youth that offers all the essential needs for positive youth development: a sense of personal safety, structure, a sense of belonging, a sense of self-worth, the opportunity to master skills, access to learning opportunities beyond the classroom and one that renders support and guidance from caring adults. In recommending this three part strategy I recognize that many challenges lie ahead, one being that community institutions prioritize youth needs and recognize it as an important form of improving the well-being of the community as a whole by providing a YEZ. I also recognize that this strategy is just that-a strategy for dealing with a massive set of issues related to the economy, society and the political environment and while the approach will not “solve” these structural issues, it will provide a “safe haven” where youth can have opportunities to develop in positive ways within their neighborhood, rather than be limited by the negative constraints of their environment. In addition the collaboration between organizations can lead to a more powerful spatial force over the neighborhood through a coordinated vision, which can also lead to new ways of tackling many of these challenges.

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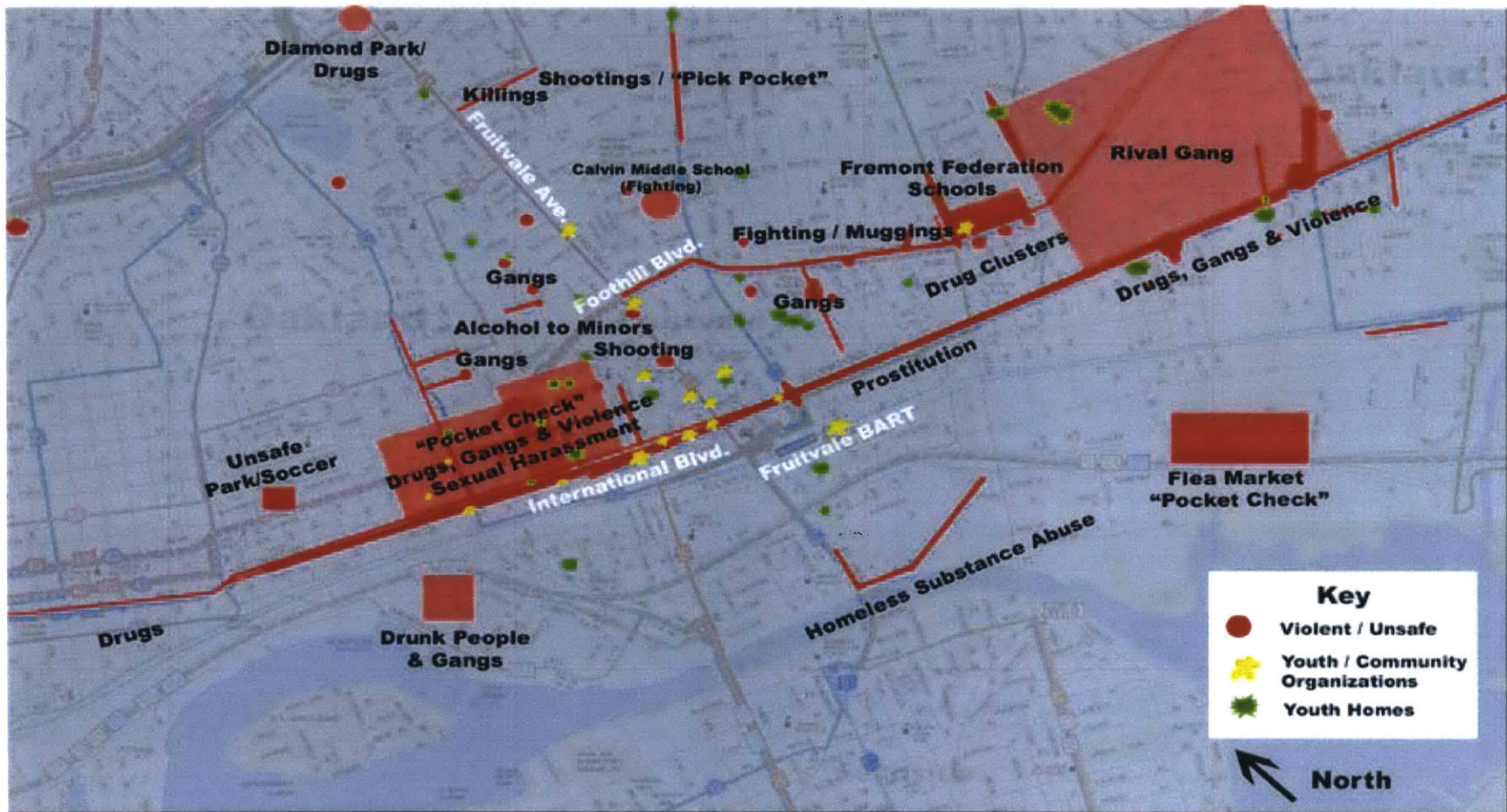
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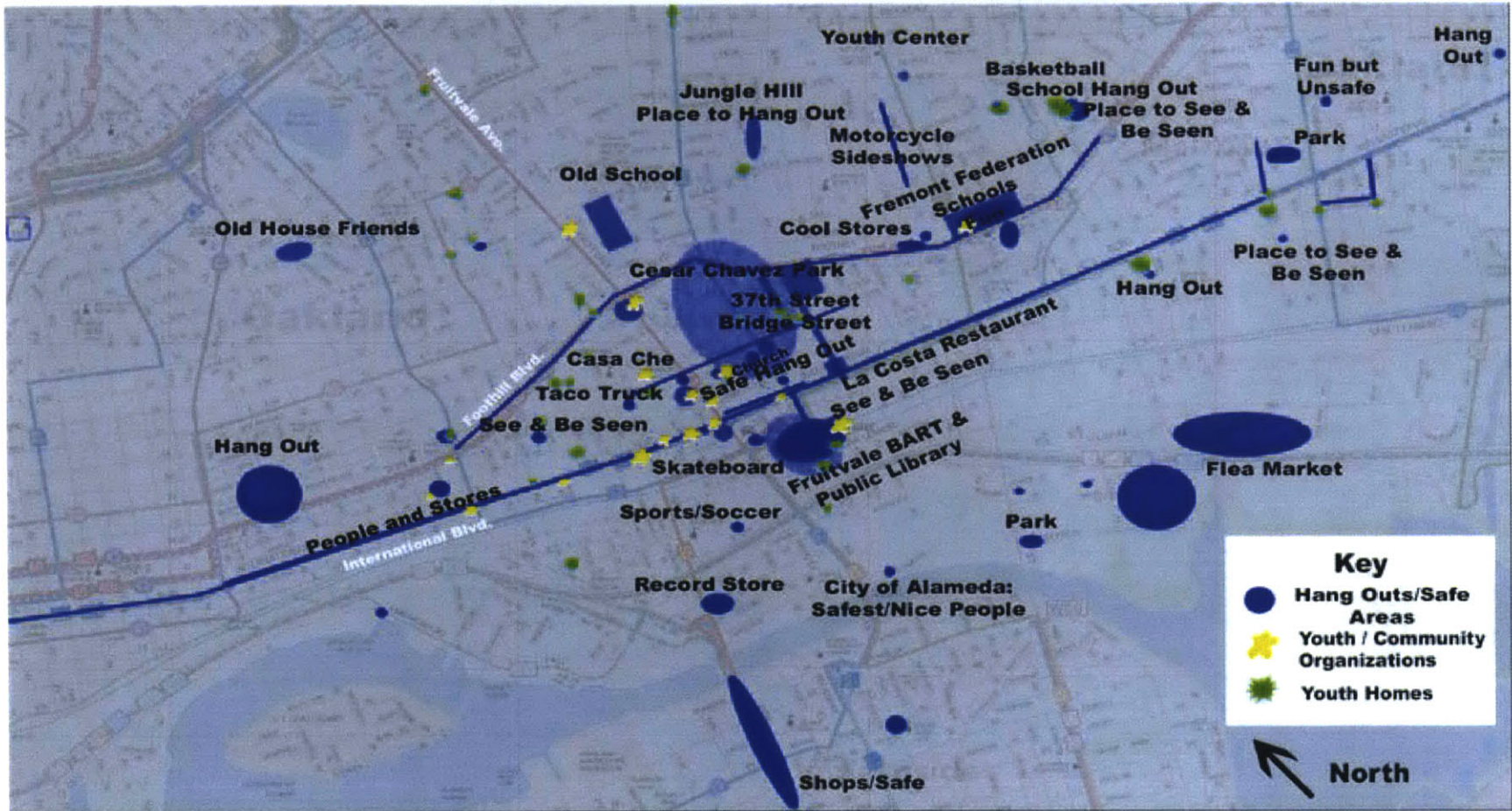
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Appendix A:



Negative Constraints on Space (All Workshops)

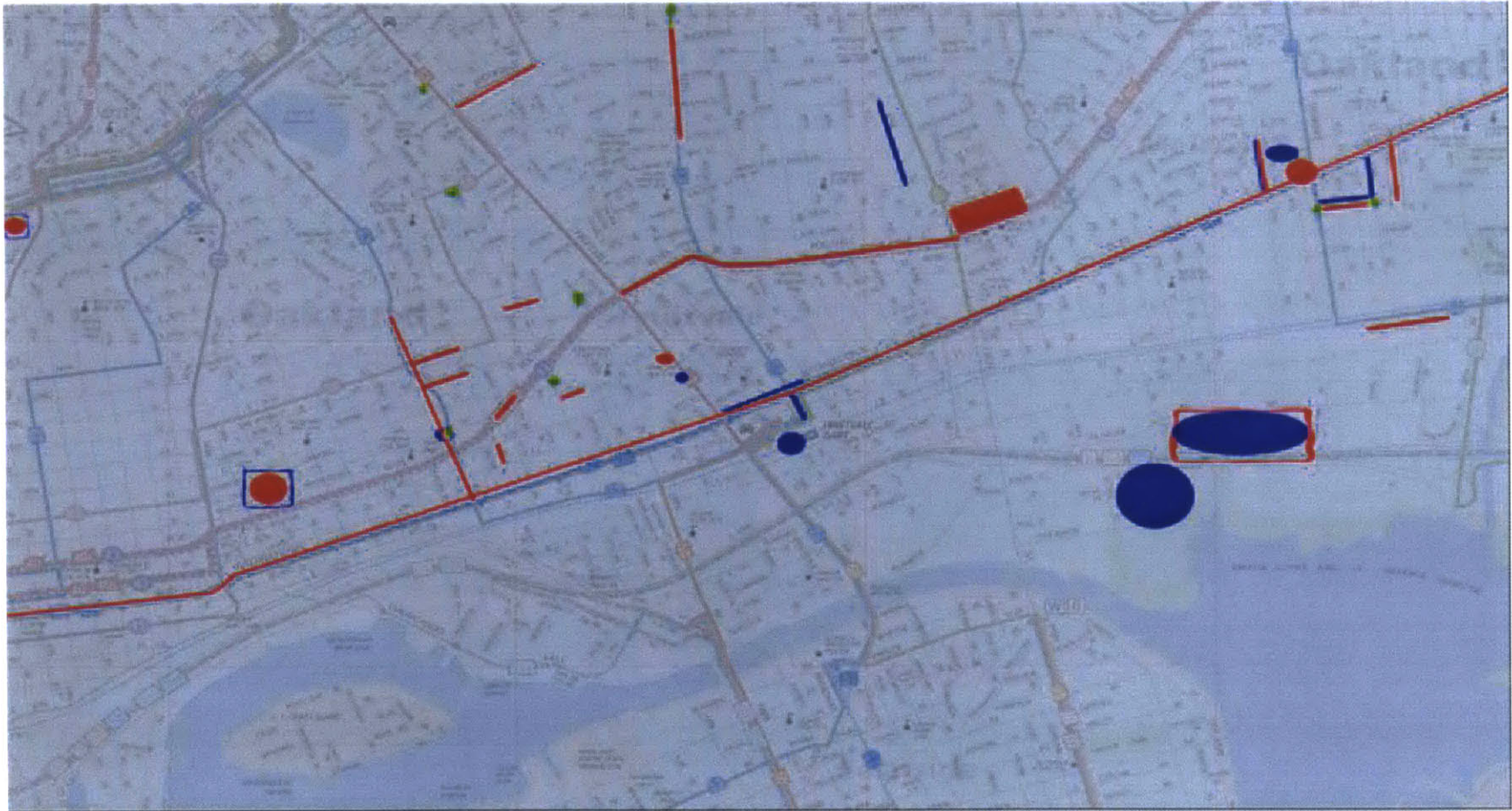


Positive Space Patterns (All Workshops)

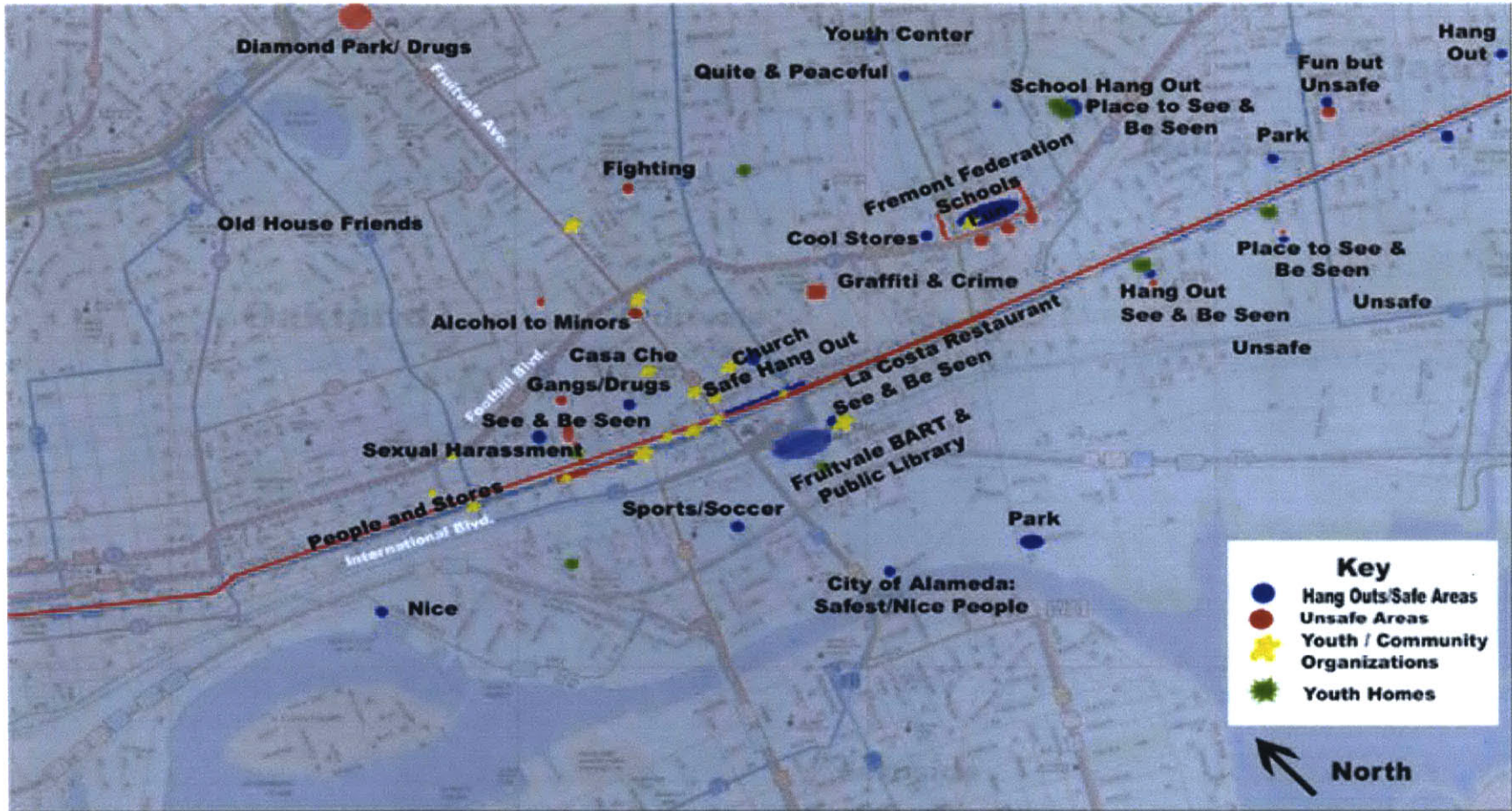


Workshop #1 “Insiders, Outsider and Young Women”

 Sideshow



Workshop #2 “Outsiders”



Young Women Patterns (All Workshops)

Appendix B: Youth Pictures of the Neighborhood



Fruitvale Village “This is a good place to hang out with your friends while you visit the small stores.”



Record Store



Fruitvale Large Commercial Stores



St. Elizabeth's Church



Walgreen's on Foothill Blvd.



Corner Store: "Seems like a nice place for people in the neighborhood to go to."



Cesar Chavez Park: "We go there."



Calvin Simmons Middle School: "Because a lot of fights go down."



Hot Boys Car Wash: "They always have cool cars and that's the spot."



Liquor Store: "This is a bad place because this store gives alcohol to teenagers who are under 21."



Unity Council: "Because this is where I get paid and learn lots of stuff."



Unity Council Building



Jungle Hill: "It's Dirty." It use[d] to be a place to sit and relax in our neighborhood."



View of my Neighborhood: "I took the picture because I like looking at it everyday."

