

Nightmare in Hayti: The Gentrification of Historically Black Land

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Introduction

How do the historic effects of gentrification in the Hayti Community of Durham, N.C. impact the social-economic status of African American families?

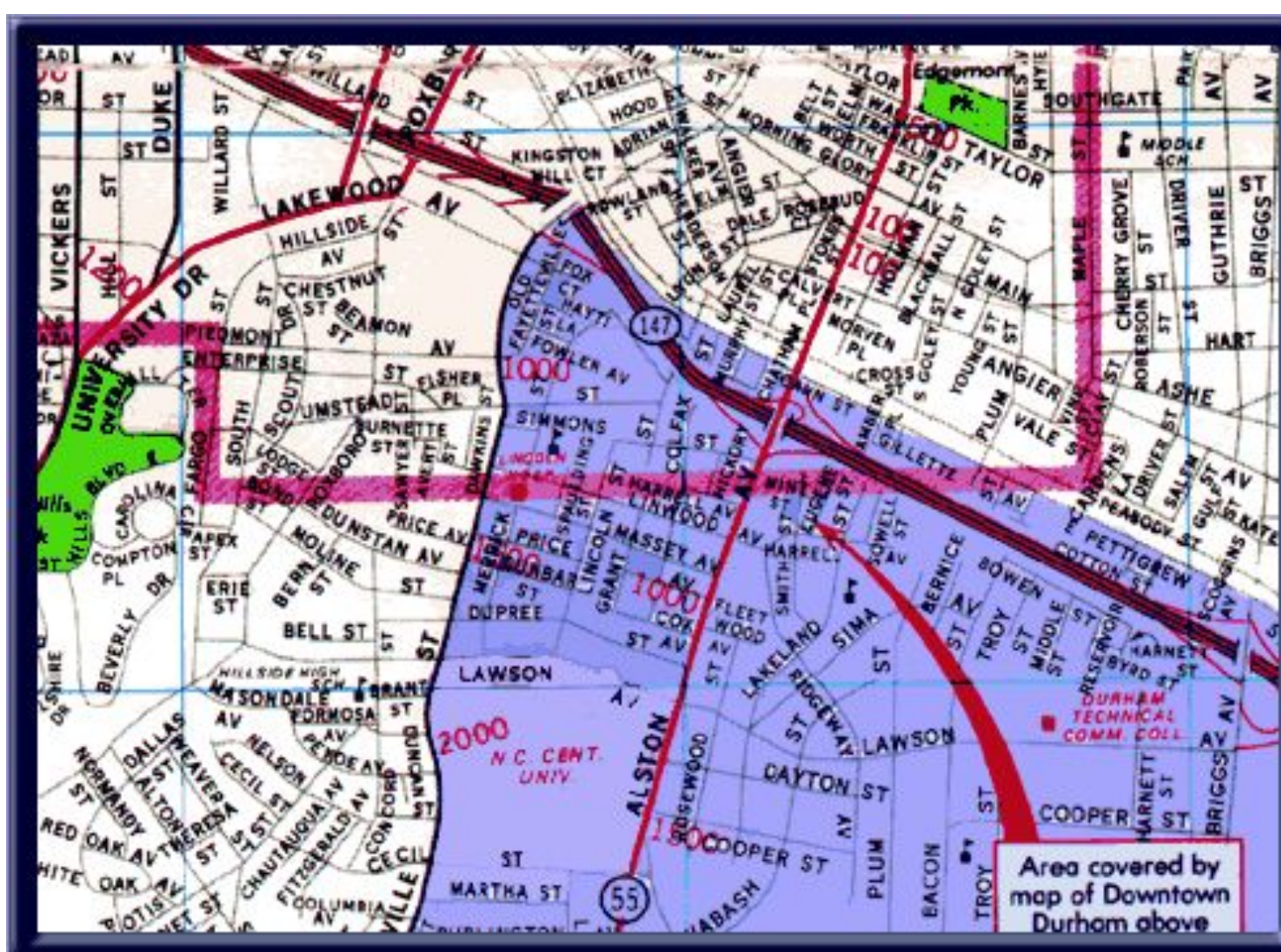
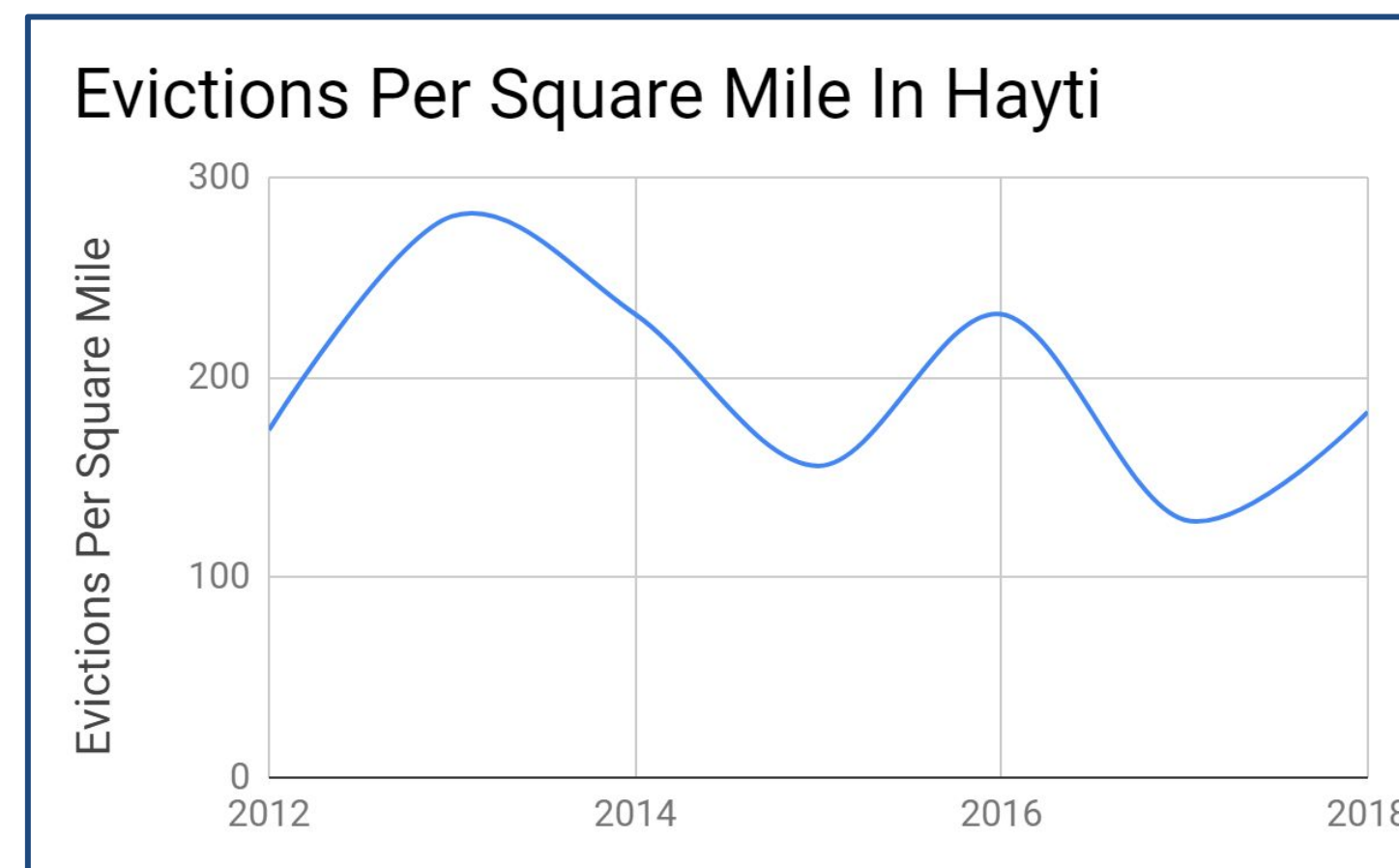
Gentrification is the process of increasing the economic value of a neighborhood which causes the residents to be forced out. Additionally, urban renewal is construction to replace or restore substandard buildings in an urban area. Gentrification is caused by the rapid urban renewal of nearby areas. The renewal of a town attracts new residents and then the surrounding house values go up because they're closer to urban areas that people want to live in. The urban renewal of Hayti in 1960 forced out the black community and destroyed their economy.

Background

The Durham Hayti District was the once-thriving black community with abundant business and wealth. Historically the Hayti District stretched from Fayetteville Street, Pettigrew and Pine Street, where there were 5,000 residents. Hayti was 100% black, and more than half black residents in all of Durham lived in Hayti. People in the Hayti District had the highest rates of homeownership and per capita income in the nation. Hayti had a black-owned theatre, hotel, insurance company, a bank, grocery stores, schools and students attended NCCU. However, Durham officials claimed that the community was outdated, overcrowded, unsanitary, unsafe, and had unimproved streets, so they decided to remodel the community. Black people knew little about Urban Renewal or how it would impact their lives, so when the Urban Renewal project went to a public vote, 90% of Black people voted in support. Highway 147 construction crossed right through Hayti and it isolated black businesses because roads were shut down. They forced out 4,057 households and 502 businesses. It took 14 years to finally finish the highway and by then black businesses had been forced out. The budget of \$845,000 was meant to fund housing for the Hayti residents, so they replaced historic neighborhoods with low-income apartments. Business buildings were not replaced nor reimbursed for destruction. The Construction of Fayette Place was where many forced out Hayti residents resided. Fayette Place was demolished forty years later and remains vacant today.

Data

Data shows that the destruction of the historic Hayti community still has impacts on us today, including the overall cost of the urban renewal, the forced out businesses and homes. The map below shows that the placement of the highway divided black neighborhoods and intended to tear the Hayti community apart.



Conclusion

In order to help those who were misplaced and to stop gentrification we must help those who were divided. An organization has been made to help those who were kicked out of their homes by giving them financial literacy lessons. They also buy housing and sell it at an affordable price for those affected by gentrification. It is suggested to use the empty lot of land at Fayette Place for subsidized housing for those that were forced out. They must be affordable and sustainable to meet the needs of low income families. There should be compensation for those people whose businesses were torn down without replacement and for hiding the true intent behind the urban renewal. The current Mayor Steve Schewel requested a 95 million dollar grant for housing in Durham.

Methodology

The source I used to find information on Hayti's background was a document made by Frederick E. Ehrsam and Duke professor Charles Becker. It explained the creation and downfall of the Hayti district. I used Google Scholar to find news about current gentrification in Durham and how that related to Hayti. I also used an NCCU news article made by Autavius Smith, a current NCCU student. BullCity150 is an organization that informs and helps the people of Durham with gentrification. They help those who have been forced out and have information online on how history has led to gentrification. To refine my search, I used words like Hayti, urban renewal, Gentrification and Highway 147. Some issues I had were finding statistics on the current and the past Hayti.

