Latinos, Cars, and Locals in the Model Colony
Perspectives on Downtown Ontario

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Introduction:

When George and William Chaffey bought land in what was known as the San Antonio lands in 1881, they possessed a vision. Their joint vision was to develop the land to create a city that, with the newly created water pipelines from the San Antonio Canyon, would become the center of the region that bordered the well-populated city of Los Angeles. The cornerstone of the
Chaffey Brothers’ development was Euclid Avenue. The avenue includes two large streets that were separated by a large grass-covered median that the Chaffey Brothers lined with pepper trees. The avenue was the “Main Street” of the downtown corridor of Ontario. The avenue, which intersected the train tracks, ran north all the way to the mountains and south until what is now Chino Hills State Park. The avenue was the center of town, the place people went to for community events such as parades, and it was the place people went to the many local businesses, restaurants, and churches that lined the avenue.

Today, the avenue still runs the same distance, still contains the iconic grass-filled median that runs in the middle of the historic downtown corridor, and still, a couple times a year, hosts community events for anyone to come and celebrate the holidays. The avenue today encompasses six total lanes, three going each direction, where each side of the lines include parking spaces for the cars that choose to frequent the downtown corridor. Unfortunately, that is the problem that faces Euclid Avenue and the rest of the downtown corridor today. The many parking spaces that outline the avenue’s six lanes are not filled like they used to be, businesses along Euclid Avenue, in most cases, are just barely getting by. As you walk along Euclid Avenue’s long blocks, it seems as if every other property is foreclosed with a sign on the door with the number of the property manager who is in charge of the lot. On top of it all, these property managers have no interest in leasing the property any time soon in fear that it will cause them to lose money.

The vision that George and William once had has become distorted. The avenue has remained in the downtown corridor, but the people the avenue was supposed to help downtown Ontario attract, have not. There are many complex reasons why this has happened but it is important to understand the history before trying to understand the causes of the present status of
downtown Ontario. Decisions that were made in Ontario’s history have profoundly affected its present. It is important to understand these decisions and figure out ways we can manage them today.

**Literature Review:**

For our literature review, we have decided to focus on two primary topics of research to create theoretical foundations for our ethnographic analysis of the present economic and cultural state of downtown Ontario, as well as what’s at stake for its revitalization, namely the Latinoization of urban spaces and the relationship between malls and urban consumer space. We are analyzing literature on the relocation of commerce from public urban space to regional malls and shopping centers, as well as literature on the social processes of consumerism as they are shaped and affected by the shopping mall as location for society-as-consumer culture. We are also analyzing data and case studies from literature on other cities that have undergone dramatic shifts in ethnic composition, particularly through Latino migration to disinvested central city neighborhoods and suburban development, as well as through redevelopment-aided gentrification.

In Edward G. Goetz and Susan E. Clarke’s book, *The New Localism*, Clarke writes that “a critical reassessment of our understanding of the local impacts of globalization is under way.”\(^1\) Even though Goetz and Clarke’s 1993 book is slightly dated, this statement is still true today. As written in the definition of globalization, things are always changing. The city of Ontario wants to invest in downtown Ontario and support its local businesses in the face of competition from private shopping malls largely supported by credit tenants, such as Montclair Plaza and Ontario Mills. However, it is also important to note the complications created in city

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\(^1\) Goetz, pg. 3
attempts to revitalize and encourage small business development, namely the adverse effects of gentrification on communities that rely on affordable housing and have established their own sense of communal place. A quote from a San Francisco city planner in a study of the displacement of low-income residents in San Francisco’s traditionally Latino Mission District illustrates these issues:

In community development, you want a kind of grassroots enrichment of the community, small businesses becoming stronger, the markets becoming more vital. But you also have the concern that if things become too successful then you have what is called gentrification, where you have a supposedly higher-income group, the yuppies, moving into a lower-income area and buying up properties because they are cheaper there and displacing some of the residents that were there to begin with.²

Ontario, which was founded as a largely white American agricultural colony, has undergone massive demographic changes of a different form in the past three decades. It, along with many other small Southern California cities, is now predominantly Latino, with much of that population being first or second generation immigrants. At almost 70% Latino, Ontario’s demographics must be taken into consideration in a full analysis of social attitudes about its downtown business core. We found that many of the most successful businesses in the downtown corridor were Latino-owned and offered goods that appealed to a predominantly Latino customer base. Therefore, we found it important to draw upon several sources regarding the demographic shifts resulting from Latino immigration to Southern California, and the economic and political effects created by immigration, especially in smaller suburban cities like Ontario.

Most directly relevant is Hayes-Bautista’s sociological history of Latino migration to California, entitled La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State. The book, which examines

² Mirabal, pg. 24
changes in Latino cultural and economic leverage as well as integration into California society from statehood to imagined possible futures, makes a convincing argument for the importance of Latinos as an emerging dominant cultural and economic force in Southern California. As Hayes-Bautista describes in his chapter on contemporary California, “Southern California is becoming a region with a Latino population majority. The way that Latinos define the activities of daily life--family, work, diet, religion, music, dreams, fears, the common good--soon may become characteristic of the entire region, not just of Latinos. The stock of knowledge that more than half the children in the state are raised with now comes from Latino experience with civil society.”³

Mike Davis’ book, Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City, has insights that build on Hayes-Bautista’s argument and ground it specifically in the context of aging city neighborhoods like downtown Ontario. Specifically, mild tensions observed in Ontario regarding Latino business development, particularly the restriction of certain forms of activity, notably street vending, contains shades of Davis’ chapter, “Tropicalizing Cold Urban Space.” Though downtown Ontario has not experienced the disinvestment or ghettoization (and associated perceptions of crime and public drug trade) of many Los Angeles and San Bernardino County immigrant barrios, parts of Davis’ commentary on the Latino struggle for the representation of public space ring true in the complexities of analyzing notions of “redevelopment” in Ontario. As Davis states, “the bitterest struggles, however, have arisen over street-vending and street-corner labor markets. Unlike Latin American or Caribbean cities, the North American metropolis preserves no traditional juridical or physical space for the survival economy of the poor. As a result, staggering law enforcement resources have been wasted in New York and Los Angeles in cruel harassment of the vendors who refresh street corners (often to the delight of gringo

³ Hayes-Bautista, pg. 202
While we did not explicitly encounter policing of street vendors in our experience doing field work in Ontario, we heard anecdotes from both Latino residents and business owners about past policing of street vendors in downtown Ontario and skeptic attitudes about providers of goods and services identified as catering to primarily Latino clientele. Additionally, conflicting, racialized notions of who downtown Ontario should serve - with some Latino residents criticizing pricing and lack of certain businesses identified with Latino expat communities, and some white non-Hispanic residents commenting on what they perceived to be an over-representation of businesses in downtown targeting primarily low-income Latino customers.

For our background research on malls, we identified three articles that serve as useful background for an understanding of the political economy and social appeal of regional malls, as well as their negative impact on local businesses. “The Magic of the Mall” by University of Hawaii geographer Jon Goss describes the appeal of regional malls such as Montclair Plaza as anti-historical pseudo-places that are deliberately designed to entice shoppers into shopping as a process, as opposed to an act. As Goss’ summary of his argument describes:

This paper argues that developers have sought to assuage this collective guilt over conspicuous consumption by designing into the retail built environment the means for a fantasized dissociation from the act of shopping. That is, in recognition of the culturally perceived emptiness of the activity for which they provide the main social space, designers manufacture the illusion that something else other than mere shopping is going on, while also mediating the materialist relations of mass consumption and disguising the identity and rootedness of the shopping center in the contemporary capitalist social order. The product is effectively a pseudoplace which works through spatial strategies of dissemblance and duplicity.5

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4 Davis, pg. 63
5 Goss, pg. 19
In “Discount Dreams: Factory Outlet Malls, Consumption, and the Performance of a Middle-Class Identity,” Marianne Conroy complicates the analysis of the Goss piece by arguing that outlet malls, like Ontario Mills, unlike regular regional malls, like Montclair Plaza, further complicate the relationship between shoppers and the built environment by being less experience-oriented and more action-oriented, using the experience of “discount” shopping to brand themselves as destination points for value-conscious “middle class” shoppers. In her analysis of another outlet mall, Virginia’s Potomac Mills, owned by the former Mills Corporation, Woodbridge, Conroy argues that the built environment of Potomac Mills, which is aesthetically very similar to and laid out almost exactly like Ontario Mills is, furthers an action-and-value-oriented attitude about shopping, one rooted in pragmatism:

The sense of shopping as a pragmatic, instrumental activity--as work--is furthered by the organization of space at Potomac Mills. What is most striking about the architecture of the complex is the way it eschews the panoptical model typical of upscale malls. The building itself has no defining central court (other than its food court, which is located off the central axis of the mall’s main traffic pathway). As a result, Potomac Mills wholly lacks the kind of perspectival vantage point that would give customers a sense of visual mastery over the place, the better to enable them to exercise their aleatory commodity desires. Instead, consumers are presented with radically foreshortened vistas, limited to a view of a few shops at a time, the overall effect resembling that of a hamster’s Habitrail rather than a pleasure arcade... Mall management intensely combats potential disorientation by designating clusters of stores in sequentially numbered “neighborhoods.” Although doubtless intended nostalgically to honor the community-based shops that have generally been superseded by national chains and retail holding companies in malls across the United States, the neighborhood designations also have the ironic effect of emphasizing the vast scale of the complex, thus effectively doubling the consumer’s sense of the effort involved in shopping there.6

The relationship between the mall and the local business owner is seen in Anuradha Kalhan’s article titled “Impacts of Malls on Small Shops and Hawkers”. Kalhan writes that in

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6 Conroy, pgs. 72-73
present day India, “the competition for urban space between the organized and the informal retailer is becoming more intense.” In India, there are very hostile relations between the mall owners and the local business owners. Some hawkers reported that they had received bribe payments from mall owners to leave their store. Since the malls began business in India, the small shops and hawkers have lost business.

**Methodology:**
*The Inland Empire Economic Development Detective Story*

Throughout the semester, the form and content of our research on downtown Ontario continually shifted, with the focus of our work going from an analysis of downtown Ontario’s business landscape to an analysis of downtown Ontario as a site of varying social and economic importance to various constituents: business owners, employees, city politicians, developers, and residents of surrounding Ontario residential neighborhoods.

Most of our work this semester consisted of interviewing various people in Ontario, beginning with a major real estate broker, who walked us through the downtown corridor. We then decided to interview businesses in downtown, primarily on Euclid Avenue and Holt Boulevard, the two main thoroughfares in the area, although we also chose to interview a select few businesses on downtown side streets. At businesses, we primarily spoke to business owners, though sometimes employees as well, about their business’s origin, their customer base, their relationship to downtown Ontario as a space, and their relationship to the City of Ontario proper. After about a month of interviewing local businesses, we then set up interviews with the Planning Department of the City of Ontario, the Economic Development Committee of the City of Ontario, with city council members, and attended a meeting for the Kiwanis Club of Ontario.

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7 Kalhan, pg. 2065
and the Wheelhouse Bike Co-Op as well as a church meeting in South Ontario regarding Latino community concerns with the Ontario-Montclair Unified School District. These conversations ultimately led us to want to examine the residential neighborhoods around Euclid and their relationship to the downtown business corridor, which took the form of interviewing residents on three individual days on E Street and H Street. In addition, we also took field notes in two additional sites, namely Omnitrans’s Upland-Chino bus through Ontario and Ontario Mills, simply by virtue of observing bus riders and shoppers in those places.

Ultimately, we engaged in a critical ethnography, using a combination of interviews, observation and literature to create an analysis of differing perceptions of downtown Ontario. While the interviews on the whole represented a diverse cross-section of people, we felt we were not particularly well-trained in quantitative research methods and were not particularly thorough about randomizing our selection of businesses and residential neighborhoods – as such, though our decisions to interview certain businesses and neighborhoods over others were random, they were not truly so because we determined the pace and scope of our research for the duration of the semester, and as such, this analysis does not cover every business and residence in Ontario but rather a small sample of businesses and households.

**History of Ontario:**

Ontario, the fourth oldest city in the Inland Empire behind San Bernardino, Colton, and Redlands, prides itself on its history. The city’s cherished history began with the Chaffey brothers. George and William Chaffey moved to California from their home in Ontario, Canada to buy land and develop it to become a city. The Chaffey brothers became well known for developing an irrigation system, which gathered water from the San Bernardino Mountains, that helped distribute water to what would become Ontario and to other cities in the Inland Empire.
According to a member of the economic development department, George and William Chaffey were “both bright guys.” Their decision to move from Canada out to California was a decision that was being made by many people from the eastern part of North America. The economic developer explained that California was becoming a place to be.

That was going on during a time when people from the Midwest, or from the East, or in their case they were from Canada, everybody was hearing about this place called California and they wanted to know what that’s about. So they took the train out here and many just picked up and threw their one suitcase in the train and came out here and that was all it took.  

Holt Boulevard became a well-known street outside of Los Angeles. Holt Boulevard was an ocean to ocean highway, meaning it could be followed from the Pacific Ocean all the way across the country. As the Ontario urban planner explained, “it was a major highway and it brought a lot of tourism and a lot of famous people would stop at Holt.” But by the time the city was incorporated in 1891, George and William Chaffey had already moved on to a project in the state of Victoria in Australia, in a city called Mildura. However, their development of the city of Ontario and what became Upland was one of the first of its kind. Their memory has been forever preserved in Chaffey College, which was established in 1883 with financial assistance from the George and William Chaffey.

One of the characteristics that the downtown corridor is most well-known for is the old businesses that are still open after many years. Businesses such as Graber’s Olive House which opened in 1894 or Logan’s Candies which has been open for the last 78 years have been the backbone of this city. The pharmacy Gemmel’s (1926) and the restaurant Vince’s Spaghetti (1945) have remained constants in Ontario as the city has changed during each generation. The preservation of these businesses and residential houses of similar age is taken very seriously by

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8 Interview, October 28, 2011, Ontario, CA
9 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
the city government, a topic covered at local city council meetings. In the “Dynamic Balance” section of the “Vision” pillar of The Ontario Plan, the city states that the future plans of the redevelopment must include “an appreciation for the ‘personality and charm’ of this community, preserving important characteristics and values even as growth and change occur, all the while retaining a distinctive local feel where people love to be.”

Even though many of the Latino owned businesses in Ontario are not as old as some of the other Euclid Avenue businesses, there has been an exclusively Latino Chamber of Commerce in existence since 1939. As researched in the book *Ontario: The Gem of the Foothills* by Michael Rounds, the Latino community began to move to Ontario after the end of World War I. By 1930, there were about 1,200 Latinos in Ontario that equaled to about 9% of the city. In 1933, Latino Ontario native Ignacio L. Lopez published the first edition of *El Espectador*, a Latino newspaper which later became the largest Chicano newspaper of its time. In the newspaper, there was a section called “Observaciones” which warned fellow Latinos of businesses of white-owned businesses that treated Latinos poorly.

Over the next forty to fifty years, many large corporate businesses came into Ontario. One of the biggest draws of moving a business to Ontario was the Ontario International Airport, established in 1923. During World War II, the Ontario International Airport, as written about in Thomas L. Ilgen’s article “Ontario: Tiger of the Inland Empire”, “became an air base for the training of military pilots”. From that time on, the airport has served as a major hub for business in the Inland Empire. If you look at the Ontario Land Use Map, you will see that the Ontario International Airport is surrounded by a large concentration of industrial parks which include warehouses, manufacturing plants, storage, repair facilities, and other offices.

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10 [http://www.ontarioplan.org/index.cfm/27045](http://www.ontarioplan.org/index.cfm/27045)
11 Rounds, *The Gem of the Foothills*
12 Ilgen, pg. 173
Over time, as Ontario became more and more industrial, the housing market began to soar. The urban planner made it clear that “in the 80s and 90s it was how fast can we build homes and how many cul-de-sacs can we get in.” This tactic ended up proving to be a poor decision because, according to the urban planner, “it created a lot of issues with traffic, isolating neighborhoods.”13 In an effort to fix some of the problems they had created in the last couple decades, the city commissioned a company named Hyatt Palma in 1997 to create a study of the design, aesthetics, and architecture of the historic downtown corridor of Ontario. As the real estate broker explained it, the study, which became known as the Hyatt Palma Study, was a “building by building, façade by façade plan for the downtown area.” The plan, which was adopted by the Ontario city council on August 18th, 1998, cost the city $1.3 million, according to the real estate broker that was interviewed. According to him, “at the time, [he] kind of thought that it was a dumb plan. Having watched time go by, it wasn’t too bad. Some things, you know, require that kind of distance.”14 The Hyatt Palma plan extensively surveyed the downtown corridor and documented what the city looked like aesthetically and included plans of what the city wanted downtown Ontario to look like in the future. Unfortunately, the real estate broker reported that since this plan was adopted, only one structure, the structure on the corner of Euclid Avenue and E Street, was redeveloped to look like it was planned in the Hyatt Palma Study.

Data Analysis:

Impact of Freeways, Airport, and Malls on Local Businesses

It is common when looking at a landscape of a city, to see that the largest concentration of businesses is found along the busiest streets, the streets that are filled with the most people,

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13 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
14 Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
either driving in their cars or walking on the sidewalks. From the day of the city’s incorporation in 1891 up until around the 1950s and 60s, one of the city of Ontario’s most populated streets was Euclid Avenue. Pictures in city hall show early photographs of Euclid Avenue being the first street that travelers would arrive to when they would travel to Ontario. There is one photograph that shows a single land selling building on Euclid Avenue that is surrounded by acres of empty land.

That all changed with the addition of the California Freeway System, which began construction in the 1950s. With the addition of the freeway systems, the culture of the Inland Empire completely changed. The Interstate 10 freeway that runs through the region, for example, is the fourth largest interstate freeway in the country. The freeway extends from Los Angeles, California to Jacksonville, Florida. There is a direct correlation between the increase of freeway traffic in Ontario and the decrease of business in the historic downtown Ontario. This is an idea that is shared by many local business owners in the downtown Ontario area. As one real estate broker explained, “When the freeways went in and when Montclair Plaza went it, it pretty much eliminated this downtown because it was newer and bigger.”

The Inland Empire became a car dominated region with the addition of the freeway system. As more and more cars continued to drive on the freeways to get from destination to destination, the more businesses started to move towards the freeways. As freeways became more and more popular, the business that began to appear along the freeways was the malls. For example, if you drive along the 10 freeway today, along most of the section of the freeway that runs through the Inland Empire, you will see large mall centers. The three large malls around Ontario, Ontario Mills, Montclair Plaza, and Victoria Gardens, are all located right next to the freeway so that motorists can see them and stop at them while they are traveling on the freeway.

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15 Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
The division between the large malls filled with credit tenants and the small local businesses such as “mom and pop” businesses has left Ontario residents and employees split on which type of commercial center they believe is right for the city. According to our research, one of the most common wishes that most small local business owners in downtown Ontario have is to see more people walk along the sidewalks outside their stores. One store owner simply explained it by saying that there needs to be people walking on the streets just to see their store. Multiple business owners explained that often when a customer enters their store, the customers say that they didn’t know that the store was located there even though some of the businesses have been around for over fifty years. Things have gotten so bad in downtown Ontario that a real estate broker explains about downtown that “businesses don’t last long out here. It’s tough to park. It’s not much of a destination. It’s just a tough spot.”

The large, credit tenant filled malls present a difficult dilemma for residents of Ontario. A large number of residents said that they tend to shop at the large malls such as Montclair Plaza or Ontario Mills. Other large commercial stores such as WalMart or Target are popular too and unfortunately they are taking potential business away from the smaller businesses. In *Planetizen Contemporary Debates in Urban Planning*, a book edited by Abhijeet Chavan, Christian Peralta, and Christopher Steins, there is a chapter written by city planner and architectural designer Jeff Speck titled “Making Better Places: Ten City Design Resolutions”. In the chapter, Speck writes to city planners asking them to “not tie the fate of your city to a single corporate juggernaut with its silver-bullet megamall when you should instead be leading the way for the local investor.” Residents also reported that they also shop in other cities such as Upland and Claremont rather than shopping in downtown Ontario because there is nothing there that they

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16 Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
17 Speck pg. 83
would want to go to. These shopping patterns can be damaging for the downtown Ontario corridor. One Ontario resident and downtown business owner explained the she believed that it was very important for Ontario residents to shop at their local downtown stores because Ontario residents need to support their local economy. One can argue that if people don’t shop at their local stores, there will be more foreclosed lots. This lack of support for the local economy could cause more people to become unemployed in a region that already has a very high unemployment rate.

As a result of this issue, the city government is left to decide how to solve the problem that is downtown Ontario. An urban planner for the city Ontario agreed with the claim that the addition of the freeways and malls has hurt the small local businesses of downtown Ontario. The planner explained that “for the last thirty years, there has been a major decline and a lot of that has to do with the fact that most of your traffic now goes on the 10 freeway.” Where there is a large concentration of people, there is business. The city’s approach is to find a balance where both small and large businesses are supported. The city is proud of their “diverse” business landscape. The urban planner told us that the city works closely with all of its businesses.

We work very closely with the business community and the thing about Ontario is that we are so diverse. We have some of the biggest warehousing companies, you know, Audi, you know we have Target, we have Kmart, Louisville Slugger, Pier 1 Imports, Toyota, and then you come down to this area in downtown and you have some of the best small businesses that have been around for over a hundred years. Graber Olives have been here for over a hundred years. Graber’s Olives, Logan’s Candies, we do cherish our businesses.  

The city knows that it has a wide range of types of commercial companies. However, to help the problem of poor business in downtown Ontario, the city must make decisions that revitalize the downtown corridor so people are attracted to the intersection of Holt Boulevard and

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18 Interview, September 19, 2011, Ontario, CA
19 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
Euclid Avenue. The plan includes building more residential buildings in the downtown area so that more people are living near the small businesses and almost forcing them to notice the stores that are nearby. The urban planner explained that these additional residents will help the local business owners, in that it “will give them reassurance.”

**Transportation – Exploring Cars, Bikes, Rail, and Walkability of the City**

The Inland Empire is a region dominated by the automobile. The region, especially the city of Ontario, has become a hub for many different businesses and warehouses. A lot of the cargo brought to the Port of Los Angeles is transported to Ontario which is home to the largest concentration of warehouses and distribution centers in the country. Because of this dependency on the automobile, the region was essentially designed for the automobile. As you walk along the major streets in Ontario, such as Euclid Avenue, you can see the wide size of the streets as well as the ample amount of parking spaces designed for many automobile drivers to park their cars. Ontario is designed to accommodate millions of cars that drive on the region’s streets each day.

In Jeff Speck’s chapter in *Planetizen Contemporary Debates in Urban Planning*, Speck writes that “people are small, and the most walkable cities acknowledge this fact with small blocks, small streets, small buildings, and small increments of investment.” Small streets create a more walkable environment because they make it easier for pedestrians to cross streets to other stores in the area.

However, what are the options for people who don’t have cars? In any given city, there are other options that are available to people. There can be a bus system, a rail system, or even specially designated bike lanes so people riding bicycles in the streets are not in danger when riding near cars. People who do not have cars use public transit systems to travel to work or to

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20 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
21 Speck pg. 83
visit friends and family. In Ontario, there is a large percentage of people who do not have a car and the lack of effectiveness of the transportation system, as reported by residents and local business owners, can cause difficulty when traveling.

The bus system provided in Ontario is Omnitrans. On most of the bus routes that run through the downtown corridor, the frequency of the buses is once every hour. Compared to the Los Angeles Metro system that, on most routes runs every twenty minutes, the Ontario bus system is much slower. When out observing the downtown corridor from the intersection of Holt Boulevard and Euclid Avenue, a man was observed sitting at a bus stop waiting for bus around 11:30am. A bus did not arrive until past noon around 12:15pm. In the middle of the week, in the middle of the day, the man may have been traveling to work. Having to wait that long of time for a bus to come and pick him up may prevent him from working longer hours at his job depending on how far away the bus stop was from where he worked.

When riding the bus to do participatory research on bus ridership, we found that the majority of people riding the bus along Euclid Avenue were Latino. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, in an article written by Sarah Bohn called Poverty in California, as of December 2011, Latinos have the highest poverty rate in the state of California.\(^{22}\) Unfortunately, this means that there is a large percentage of Latinos in Ontario who are in poverty and do not have cars to drive in the car dominated Inland Empire. To add insult to injury, another problem that was noticed after riding the bus was that the bus book information was mostly in English. Even on the Omnitrans website, only one page of information can be viewed in Spanish. The route maps page of the website cannot be seen in Spanish.\(^ {23}\) In a city where the majority of people are Latino, this can make bus travel confusing and not understandable.

\(^{22}\) Bohn, Poverty in California
\(^{23}\) http://www.omnitrans.org/spanish.shtml
When we met with an urban planner for the city of Ontario, he explained the problem that arose from the rise of the automobile. He explained that “the deal with Holt right now is how fast you can get the traffic through the city where it should be how we slow down traffic at certain spots and how do we accommodate all types of mobility.” Downtown Ontario has become so governed by the automobile that motorists are just driving through corridor and not stopping at the local businesses. The fundamental need of the local business owners is pedestrians to walk on the sidewalks and see their stores. What the rise of the automobile has done is taken those pedestrians off of the streets. The city council has two solutions to solving the issue that most of the local businesses are struggling to contend with. The first, as mentioned in the “Future Plans of the City Government” section, is to build more residential buildings in the downtown corridor. This will almost force residents to see the local businesses who are in need of customers. In the last two years, the city has completed a part of their desired residential building in the form of the apartments located off of Holt Boulevard in between Lemon Avenue and Plum Avenue. The urban planner reported that the city’s vision of bringing to downtown is starting to appear and that “I sit at my office and I see people walking their dogs and stuff and you never saw that from two or three years ago.” Over time, as the city continues to execute its goal to bring more residential to downtown, more people will populate the sidewalks along Holt and Euclid.

The second solution that the city plans to execute in order to address issues with transportation in the city is the application of the “Complete Streets Grant”. When meeting with the urban planner, he explained that the city “applied for a Cal-Trans grant last year and we got it
for $200,000.” According to the National Complete Streets Coalition website, the Complete Streets mission is to have a country in which “States, cities and towns are asking their planners and engineers to build road networks that are safer, more livable, and welcoming to everyone.” In obtaining this grant, the city of Ontario is now able to directly set aside funds to help make the streets of Ontario accessible to everyone. In the National Complete Streets Coalition’s mission statement, they write that “Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind - including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.”

Redeveloping the streets of Ontario to create easy non-automobile transportation would help organizations such as the Wheelhouse Bike Co-Op. In need of more publicity and visibility, the Wheelhouse provides services to help fix bikes of riders in Ontario. One mode of publicity and visibility that the organization wants to do, in order to bring awareness to the organization, is to have group rides through Ontario, such as bike trips to South Ontario’s Farmer’s Market. When Ontario completes the plans create by the Complete Streets Grant, this event will become much easier to host.

The City of Ontario and its Residents: Stories, Needs, Visions

For the purposes of our survey, we interviewed Ontario residents employed in various local businesses as well as residents on H and E Streets in North Ontario, near the downtown core. Additionally, we attended a variety of community events, notably a predominantly Latino community meeting at a South Ontario church regarding Ontario-Montclair Unified School

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26 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
27 http://www.completestreets.org/
28 Meeting, October 3, 2011, Ontario, CA
District, a Wheelhouse Bike Co-Op meeting, a Kiwanis Club meeting, and a few city council meetings.

Through these interactions, we came to survey a variety of residents, speaking to a diverse range of ages, male and female residents, and a fairly even representation of white and Latino residents, though some of the residents we spoke to were also from other racial backgrounds. The neighborhoods we went door-to-door in were demographically middle-class to lower-middle-class, and were identified by some residents as safer than lower-income neighborhoods to the east and south of downtown and North Ontario.

Some commonalities: almost every resident we spoke to, identified the same handful of characteristics as positives about living in Ontario – peace, safety, and affordability, but also described it as “dirty” and stated a need for cleaner streets and sidewalks. Aesthetically, there were several comments about the beauty of North Ontario’s residential architecture, (though we received a few comments from residents describing their houses as haunted) but most residents were in fair consensus about the lack of aesthetic appeal in the Holt/Euclid business corridor – one referred to it as “run-down,” and a real estate broker we spoke with called it a “non-sequiteur,” stating, “there’s no real sense of identity, it’s very very fractured, about as fractured as it can get without being torn down.”29 A number of residents, therefore, were in support of changes to downtown’s physical infrastructure, with one proposing the idea of community murals to represent Ontario’s historic past and diverse present. The history of Ontario figured slightly into some residents’ appreciation of the area’s physical infrastructure – one woman talked about how much she enjoyed living close to Euclid in part because of its relationship to the area’s history and development.

Generally, there was broad support for city-sponsored community events, particularly the

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29 Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
city’s 4th of July parade. Residents generally supported the idea of having more community events in downtown Ontario, with one resident suggesting small weekly concerts to promote the area’s cultural diversity. “It doesn’t just have to be about the cumbia,” he said. “It can be rock music one week, mariachis the next.”

A few conflicting statements were made about neighborliness. A few people talked about feeling closely tied to their street, and one woman, who talked about how she enjoyed being able to walk to her doctor, also mentioned running into him at Jax Market. However, one woman described feeling tied to her street, but felt no identification with the city of Ontario or its neighborhoods. A few people described the city’s population as increasingly transient, and a minority of the residents we spoke to reported having moved to the area in the last few years or less, usually having moved to the area from Nevada or lower-income, predominantly Latino Los Angeles County suburbs such as El Monte and La Puente.

Store owners had varied reports on the state of downtown Ontario and ideas for bringing more people to the area. Most store owners echoed an emphasis on the need for increased pedestrian activity, as was stated by developers and city officials. Local business owners’ opinions on the relationship they have with the city of Ontario vary, and are discussed in the section on city perspectives on redevelopment. However, general consensus exists among shop owners, particularly on Euclid, that downtown Ontario is a struggling business landscape and that there is an immediate and definite need for more pedestrian-oriented development and fewer area vacancies. Store owners, along with residents, listed night life, restaurants, (particularly sit down options) and clothing stores as good tenant ideas. A few residents and a supportive real estate broker mentioned a need for a community center, particularly among the Latino

30 Interview, November 21, 2011, Ontario, CA
31 Interview, November 14, 2011, Ontario, CA
32 Interview, November 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
community. Other businesses that residents would like to see include a chain pharmacy, a local coffee shop, (both Starbucks and a locally-owned alternative were mentioned as possibilities) and McDonald’s. The emphasis on credit tenants seems to echo the credit tenants that are the overwhelming choice of residents with cars, as is discussed in the earlier sections regarding the infrastructure of the Inland Empire and shopping malls. Pricing mostly followed racial lines, with most residents describing downtown goods as cheap or targeting low-income populations, with a Latino minority describing goods as expensive or unaffordable. Many residents agreed that downtown businesses offer primarily niche goods and are overly specialized.

Of final importance is the racial segregation we witnessed in community event spaces, as opposed to residentially. While on H and E Streets we interviewed a fairly even mix of Latino and white residents, (more of the latter on H, more of the former on E) the community events that we attended this semester were overwhelmingly homogenous by race. Ontario’s Latino constituency did not attend the city council meetings we attended at all. The Kiwanis Club meeting we attended was somewhat more diverse, but predominantly white and elderly, and strongly oriented towards English speakers. In marked contrast, the community-school meeting we attended in South Ontario was oriented mostly towards Spanish speakers and was attended by an overwhelmingly Latino constituency. The language divide, as well as, to a certain extent, cultural intangibles related to English speakers’ ties to Ontario and the immigrant nature of the Latino population appear to be marked divides in discourse, and while few anecdotes of direct racism were disclosed to us, the two populations appear to exist with little acknowledgement of each other. A possible unifying factor is the overwhelming cultural significance of religion in all of these spaces, although the Latino community’s visual signifiers for Christianity are heavily oriented around Mexican traditions such as the Virgin of Guadalupe, as opposed to the more
patriotic, church and state oriented Christianity of the elderly and white populations at Kiwanis and in city politics.

**Latinos, Ontario, and Local Businesses in the Holt/Euclid Corridor**

In the past decade, the Inland Empire has seen an influx of four million people arrive in newly urbanized small cities, which remained agricultural in character until as late as the early 1980’s. Of these four million new residents, approximately half were Latino. We found that though Ontario is a Latino-majority city demographically, there is demonstrable need for more formal representation and participation in the political and economic life of the city by Latinos.

When asked what their relationship to downtown Ontario was, Latino residents generally thought of it in a more positive light than non-Latino residents, though residents on several occasions expressed a need for certain kinds of goods and businesses they found lacking in the Holt/Euclid corridor. In particular, some residents expressed interest in certain kinds of Mexican street food (elote, nieves) that was not represented by downtown restaurants, and some Latino residents mentioned the expensive and overly specialized nature of businesses downtown, even though the majority of businesses on Euclid and Holt were identified by both Latino and non-Latino residents to be catering to a predominantly Latino audience, and business owners at such “Latino” businesses as the western wear store and the quinceanera shop stating a racially diverse clientele. However, comments made by a few shop owners seemed to echo a growing focus on Ontario’s Latino population. For instance, the owner of the quinceanera shop stated that she started the shop because “there was a need for it.”\(^{33}\) For the western wear store owner, there is no need for him to learn how to speak English because his business is successful and the clientele that he markets to is predominantly Latino. Also, one business employee on Euclid stated that

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\(^{33}\) Interview, September 19, 2011, Ontario, CA
the shop’s clientele was predominantly Latino “because it’s Ontario.”

The most successful business we spoke to, Cardenas Markets, began in Ontario and now has 30 stores in California and Nevada, most of them in the Inland Empire. Cardenas, which is a major donor to community non-profits, is involved in events related to building community awareness of nutrition, and has partnered with area community colleges to provide private funding for student tuition. Aside from community involvement, Cardenas’s main strategy for success is to take over and remodel vacant former non-Latino business properties in neighborhoods and cities that have experienced significant demographic changes, including old properties in Ontario formerly owned by Ralph’s and by a defunct western wear chain, Miller’s Outpost. Through an intricate remodeling process, Cardenas hopes to focus on area Latino communities and shopping patterns while also creating a destination for curious non-Latino shoppers seeking a wide variety of Latino foods and goods.

A representative from Cardenas spoke to the potential for intercultural exchange that Cardenas provides, because of its focus on Latino goods:

When you walk in the store, you’ll see familiar products, and you’ll also see not-so-familiar products. That’s neat! To me that’s a very unique opportunity to do a cultural exchange. To have a proximity, a closeness with other cultures. I mean, how many of us don’t know the guacamole. Or the menudo. Or the tortillas. When did you ever think you would find burritos at McDonald’s, or Jack In The Box? So food is like music! You might not know the name of it, you might not know how to sing the song, but you like the beat, and you get into it! It’s the same thing with food. If you taste the food at a particular location, or if you have that particular ability to increase your pallet of choices, you’ll continue with that. And so, you not only see that at Cardenas, but for example, you’ll go to Costco and see Mexican Coca-Cola! Which is quite an interesting phenomenon! Coca-Cola is different in Mexico than it is out here, but that’s what they’re selling here, and they’re selling it by the case.

34 Interview, October 2, 2011, Ontario CA
The Cardenas rep also asserted that, indeed, the customer base for the stores is continually diversifying:

You will see as you go through the store that it’s not just the Latino community that is coming to purchase, and it’s not just a first-generation that’s coming to purchase. It’s a second-generation, it’s a third-generation, it’s a non-Latino that’s coming through the store. And while there is a bit of apprehension, let’s not say that there isn’t. I’ve gotten comments like, why a Latino market, why do you guys want to open up here, there’s still that apprehension in some community members. Because they’re used to a specific store, and they don’t know what to expect when it’s a Latino store. The concerns are often, oh, does it smell in there, are you guys butchering in there? You see these stereotypes that give a negative connotation, and as they walk through the store, they’re impressed! They almost want to say, ooh, wow, amazing.

The growth of Cardenas into three California counties (San Bernardino, Riverside and Los Angeles) and the Las Vegas metro area speaks to the success of the stores, as does the intricate remodeling scheme being adopted by new stores. Of one recently opened store in Ontario, the rep states:

It’s designed for a family atmosphere, interesting shopping patterns in the Latino community versus your general population, it’s very important to highlight that shopping patterns are significantly different in this community, and that is very important as you look at the store, as you tour the store you will see that it’s typically a family that visits the store, very seldomly do you see the one single shopper. So consequently the design is very interactive, you walk through the store and the blue sky is above, very well-lit, the aisles are very large, the carts are very large, designed for more than one child seat, so it’s a very unique atmosphere and a very unique design. Products are quite awesome. The general population is getting to know more than chips and salsa. It is becoming a larger pallet of products throughout the store, and you will see that it is quite unique. And again, most people say there’s only corn and flour tortillas, yeah, but between the corn and flour, there are approximately 20 different types of products that one will find in the tortilla section. We also have a restaurant inside the store, and underneath the restaurant, there’s a tree as well, where most people are sitting under the tree, having a meal, so again, it’s very unique, a very unique design.
The Cardenas rep also mentioned Mexican electronics giant FAMSA, which now has U.S. stores in predominantly Mexican-American communities in California, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, and the greater Chicago area. In the Inland Empire, FAMSA has locations in Corona, Moreno Valley, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Victorville, as well as Ontario proper.

Of particular note for downtown Ontario, with its struggling downtown and increasingly Latino demographics, is the rep’s comment on a discussion he had with a representative from another California city:

We also serve as a business incubator, because we have certain other needs, car insurance, loans, that kind of stuff. In Indio, we have FAMSA, which is another business that you will probably see grow tremendously in Ontario, it’s your facsimile of Circuit City, and so when we went to the city of Indio, they said, oh, is this going to become a swap meet? What a negative comment! No, it’s not going to become a swap meet? It’s an opportunity for other businesses to incubate and to take potential opportunities of developing businesses within the same customer base that walks through the door.\(^{35}\)

Still, in spite of the growth of the informal Latino business community, the lack of Latino representation in local government, at city council events, and in economic development, is felt. Only one Latino – Paul Leon, the mayor, sits on the city council, and he is not bilingual. At the city council meetings I attended, there were no Latinos in the audience, and no bilingual materials existed. While we were able to find a website for an Ontario Latino Chamber of Commerce, it was not affiliated with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We were also unable to reach them for contact, and we did not speak with anyone who addressed it – in fact, one Latino businessman stated no such organization existed yet in Ontario. Some Latino residents expressed criticism of city policies, particularly the city ban on street vending, which some expressed kept

\(^{35}\) Interview, September 21, 2011, Ontario, CA
prospective Latino entrepreneurs from using downtown space to sell Latino foods and goods. Various Latino shop owners have also made arguments for a lack of support for Latino businesses by city politicians – in one situation, a city official apparently threw a pencil, stating, “and that is where the check cashers, the check cashing stand goes.”

As Mike Davis describes in “Magical Urbanism,” his study of the effects of Latino demographic transitions in U.S. cities, such as apprehension to Latino business ventures, especially in informal, not commercially zoned city spaces, is an unfortunate constant in city politics and urban planning strategies:

Latino ‘micro-entrepreneurship’ is applauded in theory but everywhere persecuted in practice. If the primordial zoning division between home and work is annoying for cybercommuters and self-employed professionals, it is truly punitive for Latino households whose incomes are supplemented by home-based car repair, food catering or bridal sewing. Many cities and suburbs have similarly restricted or even outlawed the weekend garage sales and informal street-curb ‘swap meets’ that are such important institutions in barrio economies.

Due to changing demographics, if downtown Ontario is to revitalize and allow for new local business growth, it must address distinctly “Latino” goods, services, and land uses.

**Plans, Visions, and Ideas of the City Government: Examining the relationship Between the City and Local Businesses**

As part of our research, we interviewed some individuals who work for the city of Ontario. Interviewees include an elected city councilmember, an urban planner for the city, as well as a member of the economic development department. All the interviewees provided valuable information to help show what the city government’s plans, visions, and ideas are for Ontario, specifically in the historic downtown Ontario corridor. Over the last thirty or forty years, Ontario has become a highly industrial city. This is an idea that the city understands and

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36 Interview, September 21, 2011, Ontario, CA
37 Davis, pg. 63
embraces as part of the identity of Ontario. From the urban planner, we learned that business is a fundamental part of Ontario. The urban planner explained that “Our motto is ‘We Think Business’. We run this city as a business.” He furthered his point by saying “we know that our stakeholders are the business people and the residents, they are the stakeholders. In order for the city to be successful, you need to accommodate businesses.”

One of the most important things when running a business is to make sure that there is not just a plan in place for the present, but also a plan in place for the future of the business. In Ontario, there are plans completed for the present, the near future, and for twenty years from now.

On January 27, 2010, the city council on Ontario unanimously voted to approve The Ontario Plan. This plan is described by the city of Ontario as:

A dynamic framework for sustained, comprehensive leadership in building our community. It integrates components of city governance that are typically disconnected. The Plan states community direction at a point in time (2009) and integrates it into a single guidance system that will shape the Ontario community 20 years or more into the future. The Ontario Plan provides for lasting policies to accommodate change. It consists of a six part Component Framework: 1) Vision, 2) Governance Manual, 3) Policy Plan, 4) City Council Priorities, 5) Implementation, and 6) Tracking and Feedback.

This plan was created in order to address the needs, ideas, and visions of the city government of Ontario. The vision of the city council as expressed in The Ontario Plan is broken down into four parts. The city council states that during the lifetime of the plan, the four pillars of the vision of the city are: a dynamic balance, a prosperous economy, distinctive development, and recognized leadership. Out of those four pillars, the pillar that is most prevalent in the redevelopment on the Holt and Euclid historic downtown corridor is the vision to have a prosperous economy. In this section of the plan, there are six stated visions that the city council has to insure that their vision

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38 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
of the city of Ontario will become a reality. The vision that most resonates with the plan for the historic Holt and Euclid downtown corridor is the vision that Ontario will have “extensively revitalized sectors of the Original Model Colony and mature mixed use centers in key opportunity areas.”

This vision to revitalize the historic downtown corridor is a plan that is consistent with the ideas reported by the member of the economic development department member. The most common need reported when interviewing local business owners along Euclid Avenue in downtown Ontario was that there were no residents walking on the streets to even see their store and know of its existence. These businesses are struggling to advertise their stores and when there are no people walking along Euclid Avenue to stumble upon their store, there is not much hope for success. When talking to the economic development department member, this was a concept that he understood. He explained that “that’s something, we absolutely on the city side of things, we concur with that.” As a plan for the solution of this problem, he continued to elucidate that city council decided that “the best investment that the city could make to help the retail succeed was to get more people living in downtown.”

This is where the vision to “extensively revitalized sectors of the Original Model Colony and mature mixed use centers in key opportunity areas” is applied. The plan, according to the urban planner, is that, “in the next ten, twenty years, you are going to see four or five story buildings with either residential above, commercial at the bottom, office above, commercial at the bottom.” The mix-use land use is essential to making sure that people are walking around downtown. This view is supported by the economic development department in their plans to build walkable communities in mixed use land development.

40 http://www.ontarioplan.org/index.cfm/27045
41 Interview, October 28, 2011, Ontario, CA
42 Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
Housing is what is going to put people in our downtown and want to shop at the drugstore or the supermarket and go to a restaurant, and drycleaners, and whatever it might be, that’s the population that is going to be living here, your guy’s generation, coming out of college, are going to want to have a place to live, and you may not be able to afford a single family house, so you may want to live in a small apartment or condominium in downtown.\(^{43}\) –Economic Development Department Member

In the Policy Plan section of The Ontario Plan, in a section called “Land Use”, the city explains that it “requires a delicate balancing act”\(^{44}\) in order to properly execute the vision of The Ontario Plan. One part of the execution of the vision that requires balance is the land designation. In order to have the mix-use land that the city wants to see in downtown Ontario, they must have impactful dialogue with the property owners of the plots of land along Euclid Avenue and Holt Boulevard. As a councilmember explained, this has been very difficult. The economic development department member continued this point by saying that “it’s our single biggest challenge. We are basically trying to convince them that it is a good thing to do. And, you know, ultimately, they make the call… They’re just not willing to spend the money yet.”\(^{45}\) The other course of action that the city must take to help develop the downtown corridor is to engage in conversations with the local small business owners and tenants. Local small business owners along Euclid Avenue have reported that they have been in contact with the city government. The urban planner explained that whenever there is a plan presented to the urban planning department, there is a process of meeting with the residents of the neighborhoods to discuss with them whether the residents believe the proposed project is right for the city. If there are criticisms, the planning department does the best it can to fix them. However, the residents aren’t always able to have all their criticisms fixed.\(^{46}\)

\(^{43}\) Interview, October 28, 2011, Ontario, CA
\(^{44}\) [http://www.ontarioplan.org/index.cfm/28335](http://www.ontarioplan.org/index.cfm/28335)
\(^{45}\) Interview, October 28, 2011, Ontario, CA
\(^{46}\) Interview, October, 17, 2011, Ontario, CA
Some of the local business owners reported that they have difficulty advertising their businesses because of some of the restrictions or fees that the city places upon them. One restaurant owner reported that the city charges a lot of extra money if she wants to cross-advertise her restaurant with a flower store, for example, that could set up right outside her restaurant. The real estate broker we interviewed, who does not work for the city, voiced his opinion about the city’s relationship with its local small business community saying that “it is really a great sort of example of...government not paying attention to the obvious.”\textsuperscript{47} According to him, the right steps towards helping the local business community in downtown Ontario are not being made. Another resident reported that they believe that “Ontario planning is not creating their own cultural or historical style but that they are picking and choosing from other cities.”\textsuperscript{48}

The city has other plans, as well, to improve the city. The urban planner told us that there are plans to build a high-speed rail to help transportation in the city.

There are two railroad tracks that go behind, and this is going to be our high-speed rail, the future for it, it’s probably going to go down right there. So, high-speed rail is kind of cool because the idea is that high-speed rail will come up from Anaheim, to the Ontario center, and then to Vegas so that you will be able to get to Vegas in an hour and a half.\textsuperscript{49}

This plan will help cut some of the dependence that the region has on the automobile. Also, it will create a transit station stop at the train station that is currently close to the intersection of Holt Boulevard and Euclid Avenue. However, the high speed rail may not help the issue in a completely positive way. It may enable more people to leave Ontario easier and allow them to reach as far as Las Vegas in a short amount of time. Residents of Ontario may still use their cars

\textsuperscript{47} Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
\textsuperscript{48} Interview, September 6, 2011, Ontario, CA
\textsuperscript{49} Interview, September 15, 2011, Ontario, CA
to get to and from the transit center rather than walking through the downtown and noticing the businesses that are located along the avenue.

**Recommendations:**

Due to the large amount of data that we have collected, as well as the large and broad scope of our research, many possibilities remain for further study and action in the city of Ontario, specifically the Holt/Euclid downtown corridor and adjacent residential neighborhoods. If someone wanted to thoroughly study all the aspects of the downtown corridor that we researched in this project, it would take a lot more time than one semester in which we were still learning the skills of how to be effective ethnographic researchers. As described in the methodology section, our relative inexperience with qualitative research work, as well as our need for further background in quantitative research methods and political economy leads to the possibility of a still, more thorough study - we by no means were able to talk to every business, go door-to-door on every street, and therefore our representation of Ontario as a community is necessarily limited.

However, based on the work that we have completed this semester, and the data and subsequent analysis that we have put together in this report, a few possibilities exist for further action research, economic development, and community organizing work at both grassroots and policy levels.

Of primary significance to future action is the steady growth of Ontario’s Latino majority population. One real estate broker told us that just by looking at the census numbers, you can see that the Southwestern United States is “experiencing a kind of Reconquista of the old Spanish days, in that, without a shot being fired, it’s just kind of becoming a majority.”

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50 Interview, September 12, 2011, Ontario, CA
interviews with several Latino business owners and residents, the recommendations of a key
development firm, and literature on Latinos and U.S. urban space, we conclude that there is an
urgent need to embrace Latino small business development through a coalition of property
management, city government, private and not-for-profit institutional support, and investment in
prospective Latino business ventures in foreclosed or vacant properties, especially the highly
visible properties along Euclid, close to the city library. Forms that this work could take would
involve bilingual trainings in business development and real estate, coupled with start-up money
provided through grants and the support of area private institutions, such as the area’s higher
education infrastructure, particularly in Claremont and La Verne. While further research should
be done regarding city political opinions about Ontario’s anti-street vending ordinance as well as
Ontario’s general litany of business development policies, it is important to note that the anti-
street vending policy has been criticized by several Latino community members as being
detrimental to local economic growth and provision of Latino niche goods and services.
Critiques that city policy, such as the anti-street vending ordinance, is detrimental to Latino
business development hasten the need for a Latino business incubation center or an economic
policy agenda that actively encourages local business growth through the incubation of Latino
entrepreneurship. As of this writing, there is some development interest in creating such a space,
as a kind of Latino community center, on historic property on Euclid. Cardenas Markets, too, due
to their size, social mission, and regional market power, seem primed as a private entity to
support local Latino business growth through mentorship and potential financing. Though there
is some concern that the business environment of downtown Ontario may become overly
homogenized (or already is so) in favor of Latino shopping needs, the crossover appeal described
by representatives from Cardenas and the western wear shop on Euclid argues that a
predominantly Latino business environment, if aesthetically well-kept and not “run-down,” has the potential to attract non-Latino business, especially in cases where Latino entrepreneurship is able to recognize the diversity of Ontario and appeal to its still-present non-Latino population in order to lure it from other large centers of commercial activity, such as Upland, Claremont, Montclair Plaza, Victoria Gardens, and Ontario Mills.

The potential for action research and policy work directly related to city and regional planning also exists within the realm of transportation, both through the Wheelhouse, a Pitzer in Ontario bike cooperative, and through creating synergy between city economic development and transportation initiatives. Much research is still needed to be able to accurately assess the transportation needs of non-car-owning households and employees in Ontario as well as strategies for reducing car dependency and use within the downtown core. Nevertheless, the correlation between car culture and high levels of car dependency in the Inland Empire, an infrequent, underutilized public transportation infrastructure, and suburban sprawl seems to be both apparent and a significant challenge to creating a vibrant, diverse, and walkable mixed-use downtown core in a region that is so wholly decentralized and unfriendly to pedestrians.

To put it simply, communities become stronger when they come together. The definition for the word community states that it is a group of people viewed as a collective. One example of a way to promote the collective spirit is by bringing the community together to celebrate the holidays. Many residents reported that one of their favorite things about living in Ontario is the Fourth of July Parade held every year on Euclid Avenue as well the Christmas decorations that are set up in the large grass median in the middle of Euclid Avenue. This collective appreciation of the holiday spirit is what creates a city’s identity. To build off the success of community events, there should be more community events or decorations that utilize the enormity of the
median of Euclid Avenue. The first example of Ontario taking advantage of the large avenue designed by the Chaffey Brothers can be seen in history with the use of the “gravity mule car” at the end of the nineteenth century. Though short lived, this “gravity mule car” was a community centerpiece and something that till today, the city of Ontario cherishes. This is not a recommendation for a new “gravity mule car” system, but it is a recommendation that a community centerpiece needs to be added to foster a city identity.

Finally, this initial report can be followed up simply by addressing these questions and assumptions with community members by engaging them directly in the process of envisioning a new downtown. One practical way to develop student leadership through community participation is the creation of a bilingual listening project, to be held in a community space that attracts a diverse audience, whether it be a church, the local YMCA, or the Pitzer in Ontario house on H Street, in order to further assess community needs and wants for downtown Ontario and to bring residents, development and city politicians into direct contact with each other to engage in a conversation about development rooted in community. Regarding official city economic redevelopment and mobility plans for downtown Ontario, further work can be done in a setting of direct observation, provided the planning and economic development departments are interested in hosting interns, developing research skills by working directly for the city of Ontario as community liaisons between residents and development.

**Conclusion:**

Four months is a remarkably short time to become introduced to a place. Yet, in our ethnographic study of the Holt/Euclid historic downtown business corridor, we have conducted interviews with a diverse cross-section of Ontario, analyzed the Inland Empire’s relationship to the automobile, and explored the local business landscape of Ontario as it relates to the history
and potential future redevelopment of its historic downtown core. Ultimately, Ontario, the original “model colony,” must continue to transform and adapt itself as it has with the rise of the automobile and transnational trade in order to find within itself a local identity rooted in the present. Developing local entrepreneurship, particularly within Ontario’s burgeoning Latino community, revisiting transportation and land use, and creating community identity and dialogue through events on Euclid Avenue can ensure that the old “model colony” continues to have a vibrant economy, one that, crucially, is driven by the citizens of Ontario, for the citizens of Ontario.
Appendix:

Positionality/Personal Statements:

I’ve always loved maps, and I’ve always loved cities. My parents tell me that first learned how to read through billboards and street signs in my hometown of Santiago, Chile. My interest in this project comes from a belief that geography and history shape culture, and in turn, destiny. Over the course of travel, and subsequently situating myself in a variety of places of different racial and socioeconomic makeup, I have come to experience the modern American racial and socioeconomic landscape in a unique way, one which I have continually found myself reflecting on over the course of the semester and in my work in Ontario.

Inevitably, my thoughts and conclusions on cities, their people, their cultures, and their economies have been shaped by the various places I have lived in prior to the Inland Empire: Santiago, Baltimore, the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC, Corvallis, Oregon, Brooklyn, Hartford, Connecticut.

I moved to Baltimore from Chile at age three, moving from an affluent neighborhood in Santiago that my parents had moved into after college. My mother grew up in a similarly affluent part of the city, while my father grew up working-class. In the aftermath of Agusto Pinochet’s departure from office, my father, who had led student protests and campaigns against Pinochet at the Universidad de Chile, rose through the ranks to work for the Chilean ministry of health, working to restructure Chile’s healthcare and hospital infrastructure. This work ultimately brought him towards the United States, and Baltimore, to pursue a Doctorate in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University.

In Baltimore, I spent two years living in an affluent village in the northernmost part of the city – the least dense and most affluent part of a place primarily known for its provincial
grittiness. When, as a teenager, I would return on trains and car rides to the rest of the city, I
would come to understand the enormous significance of having been raised an immigrant in a
wealthy neighborhood of a poor city. Later, I would spend my childhood back in Santiago and in
the affluent suburbs of DC. While the two environments would appear to be (and in many ways
were) very different places, in both areas, as in northern Baltimore, the reality of my
socioeconomic status, and thus my sheltering from the poverty and crime in all three cities as a
result, partly, of sprawl and urban disinvestment, was acutely felt throughout my childhood, until
leaving high school began to slowly unravel that reality.

Shortly after leaving high school, two events marked the true beginning of a complicated
race and class reality – my introduction to Los Angeles and subsequent move to New York City,
for art school. The summer before college, I was a trainer at an environmental training program
in Pasadena, with a participant base composed of a mixture of low-income, largely Latino kids
from South Central and Crenshaw and affluent college students from around California. South
Central, where the house of one of the program’s heads was located, was the site of prep work. It
was also the first majority-Latino community I had ever set foot in outside of Chile, and my
introduction, too, to California. “Wow, this reminds me of Santiago,” I couldn’t help but think,
even as the socioeconomic reality of Compton Avenue could not have differed more clearly from
my sheltered background in Comuna de Vitacura.

None of this could have prepared me for the intensity of New York City. My freshman
year of college, in a mixed-income, gentrifying neighborhood in Brooklyn, was one of the most
challenging personal experiences I have lived through, but it was also a beginning of a true love
affair with both the city and social critique. The first few months were tough. The disconnect
between my art school’s apathetic, often morose bubble and the dynamics of gentrification in a
place where boutique coffee and housing projects exist five-minute walks from each other was jarring to a kid from the suburbs. On weekends I would work on assignments by journaling in different parts of the city. My favorite neighborhoods quickly became the ethnic enclaves that kept a certain cultural unity through ethnicity – Flushing as China, Brighton Beach as Eastern Europe, East Harlem and Puerto Rico. Though I left New York after a year there, it was the beginning of my love affair with cities, as well as my recognition of the social disconnect and apathy that results from their social organization.

The following two summers would continue to shape my ideas of cities as race-and-class dialogues and often conflicts. The summer before my sophomore year of college, I went on a 34-state, five-week–long road trip around the United States, my first time seeing most of the country. For the duration of the trip, we used a combination of personal contacts and camping to conserve money and have reference points for our stay in each place. Our experiences took us to a huge variety of environments, from rural Maine, to suburban Tucson, to Chicago, from a mansion in Long Island, to small-town Wisconsin, to a South Central bachelor pad. Our mode of transport, the car, was never questioned – the “road trip,” after all, is a quintessentially American rite of passage. I would later go on other long car trips across the United States, beginning an engagement with the U.S. and its infrastructure, the open road, as a driver that has taken up most of my time outside of school, taking me, thus far, to 42 states.

Much of what the trip also taught me about was the paradox of regional differences and overarching patterns in socioeconomic inequity. I got an introduction to the fractious nature of what it means to be an “American,” and how culture allows for landscapes as different as Alabama, rural North Dakota, Portland, and New York City to all be identified as “American.” Yet I continually saw the same patterns of residential segregation and the siting of polluters in
low-income communities in all regions – the oil refineries of western Louisiana, Chevron’s influence in predominantly Latino Richmond, California, and trucking in the South Bronx. Ghettoes, too, I learned, were a distinct part of the American landscape: South Central, East LA, West Oakland, the South Side of Chicago, the East Side of Buffalo, the aforementioned Bed-Stuy. Urban space, throughout the United States, is still thoroughly segregated.

Last summer, I lived and worked in a low-income neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut, one of the nation’s poorest cities. A friend from the Hartford area and I worked on a community garden in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood on the south side of the city. Living in a predominantly Latino low-income neighborhood coming from an upper middle class background as a Latino was incredibly formative in my understanding of race and class in U.S. neighborhood politics. Learning about the histories of residents from Puerto Rico and the South, and witnessing the stark contrasts between Hartford, which suffers from high unemployment, nearly one-third of its population living below the poverty line, and the drug trade and related violence, and the nearby affluent suburb of West Hartford, led to a powerful immersion into the structural racism and cultural systems created by a highly racialized environment of deep poverty. My interactions with the community as a Spanish-speaker, too, were revealing, in that my relatively light skin color and perceived socioeconomic status difference led many people in the neighborhood to misidentify me as “white” until communicating with them in Spanish, at which point I would most commonly be identified as specifically Puerto Rican as opposed to Latino.

Ultimately, my travels by car and experiences in a variety of urban and suburban environments in Chile and the United States, along with my unique positionality as a first-generation immigrant who has an upper-middle-class family background and is of mixed-race
heritage, (my mother’s side of the family emigrated to Chile from Germany) has informed my understanding of the U.S. urban landscape as sharing common patterns of racial and socioeconomic segregation and an infrastructure dominated primarily by the automobile.

-Pablo Baeza

I have always been interested in the ways that cities work. Growing up in Los Angeles and being surrounded by a city that is so fascinating in the way it is set up, I developed a curiosity for what certain things were the way they were. It is well known that Southern California is a car dominated region. Having spent so much of my life either driving or riding in a car, I often look out the window and find things that spark my curiosity. One of the first moments that I really thought about what it would be like to pursue a career field in something to do with city planning was after I completed a program called Boulevard Without Borders in the spring of 2008. In this program, we were given the freedom to take pictures of whatever we chose along Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles. Once of month on a Sunday morning, we drove out to different sections of Pico Boulevard and photographed whatever we found interesting. This was one of the first times I was exposed to a culture that was not similar to my own. One Sunday, we photographed in the Latino-Byzantine Quarter of Downtown Los Angeles. It was here that I experienced for the first time the feelings that I had when I was in a community that was not similar to my own. Today, the photographs that I took can be viewed on the organizations website, www.boulevardwithoutborders.com.

In the same way that I have a lot of interest in the way Los Angeles is set up as a city, I approached this project having the same interest in learning about the city of Ontario. One of the specific details of my curiosity that I have in both Los Angeles and Ontario is the way freeways are laid out. In this project, we were able to conduct research and hear testimonies from people...
who live and work in Ontario about the effects of the freeway systems. As our world becomes
more and more transportation driven, and as we continue to try and find the fastest ways to get
from point A to point B, the placement of transportation systems in our cities such as freeways is
becoming increasingly important.

When entering any community, I believe that every researcher needs to have done prior
research about the community he or she wants to learn about. This is the most important
consideration any researcher must have because it helps the most in preventing problems such as
ethical issues or asking non-intentionally inappropriate questions, as well as proving to the
interviewee that you have some knowledge about the community in which they live. It is the
responsibility of the researcher to learn about the type of people he or she will be talking to. This
includes the socioeconomic status, the religion, and the race of the residents of the community. A
researcher can also learn about the present power dynamics that make up the community.
Understanding the power dynamics of a community will help to understand the backgrounds of
the different people that are being interviewed.

Another important consideration that is a part of learning about a researcher’s
surroundings of the community he or she wishes to study. The history of a community teaches a
researcher the reasoning behind why certain things in a community are the way they are.
Knowing this knowledge helps the researcher not make mistakes and helps in the other key
considerations that a researcher must remember. In our research, we learned about the history of
Ontario through the readings we were required to do in our Critical Community Studies class as
well as the research we did at the Ontario Public Library in the Model Colony Room. This
knowledge of what Ontario used to be and how it came to be where it is today helped us frame
our research. -Sam Feldman Greene
Bibliography:


