Inequality and Democracy Research Fellowship Program

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Title of research project: Landholders and Development in Boyle Heights

Scope of research:
Forced displacement by multiple forces is an increasing occurrence in Boyle Heights and in other neighborhoods in LA. Boyle Heights is located ½ mile from downtown LA. It is a primarily Latino neighborhood with 110,000 residents in a 6.5 mile square radius. It is a community in which 75% of the population are tenants and has a long history of organizing on multiple social justice issues. Our research project is to investigate land ownership in the 90033, parts of 90063 and parts of 90023 zip codes. The research will involve creating a list and mapping of property holders. As many property owners hide behind LLC’s (limited liability companies) it will also require finding out who are behind the LLC’s. The research will also include helping to find connections between landholders and other people in power within the city. Additionally, the research will include listing and mapping proposed and in progress development projects in Boyle Heights with their current status. This information will be used as a tool for our organizing work.

Location of research and other activities:
The research can be conducted in various locations including reviewing the planning department records, Hall of Records in Norwalk, at home, school (via database search engines, etc.). It can also be conducted in the Union de Vecinos, Eastside Local of LA Tenants Union office. We are very flexible with the research fellow’s schedule and work location. We will make ourselves available through various mechanisms, in person, zoom, phone to provide check-ins and support.

Research methods to be used:
- Database research - websites (ie prospectnow) that provides landownership info;
- Going to hall of records to get more details on landownership;
- Using the California Secretary of State website to determine more info behind LLC’s;
- Going to Department of Planning, City Council office, Housing Department for info on development projects;
- Submitting freedom of information requests to obtain info from governments on properties;
- Interviews to dig deeper in finding out who land holders are when they useshell companies or other formats to hide their identity;
- Present the research to, and work with, our leadership committees to help answer questions regarding the research.
Deliverables:
- List of all property owners in an easily understood and sortable format to conduct analysis – this will be organized by certain criteria that we will determine as information comes in (i.e. property size, number of properties owned, etc.). This list should also be in a format that we can use or adapt to going forward after the research fellow has left. (i.e excel, etc.).
- Map of landholders in Boyle Heights (it can broken down into the 4 quadrants in Boyle Heights). Again, the map should be in a format that we can easily access and amend going forward.
- Map of development projects currently in progress and projected along with a status of each of the developments.
- All raw data collected and list of sources and time period for where the data was collected
- Other possible maps (i.e relational maps) between landholders of other relations that may come up during the research process.

Qualities of the research fellow:
- Hard worker;
- Some knowledge of how to conduct research would be helpful;
- Good communicator;
- Knowing when to ask for support so as not to wait until too late to reach out for help;
- Ability to create maps;
- Ability to organize information in a way that is can be analyzed;
- Organized;
- Pays attention to detail;
- Supports social justice work.

We appreciate the time and energy that the research fellow will share with this project. This research is to help us develop strategies in our organizing work against the displacement of low income families in our neighborhood. We are an organization led by and organized by low income tenants fighting to change the power relations between low income people of color and institutional structures so that we can have control over meeting our basic human needs.