



# RUSSELL CITY REPARATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT

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## Land Restoration for Russell City Property Owners

**Summary of the Reparative Justice Recommendation:** Identify City of Hayward-owned land that could be disposed of to restore land to property owners who lived in Russell City between 1960 and 1967. Go through legal and approval processes needed to dispose of surplus, City of Hayward-owned land in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. Land restoration for owners will be based on the total number of parcels that were in Russell City, not the total number of people who lived there.

Research the relative proportions of property owned by former Russell City residents to establish a formula for allocating disposed land. Create a list of former residents and descendants that can be used to verify eligibility to decide how surplus land can be divided and allocated. Give land to property owners who lived in Russell City to compensate for the forced relocation caused by the Russell City Redevelopment Project (1963-1968). If a former homeowner or business owner has passed away, their family members are eligible to receive returned land.

**Reparative Justice Description and Justification:** In the State of California, land owned by a local agency is considered "surplus" if the agency's governing board officially decides in a public meeting that the land is no longer needed for the agency's purposes.<sup>i</sup> Russell City was an unincorporated area in Alameda County, with a thriving and self-sustaining community of homeowners, business owners, and tenants. The Russell City Redevelopment Project (1963-1968) destroyed this community, and disrupted generational wealth-building for a series of Black, Latinx, Asian, and White families who lost their land.

The 1960 Census showed that about 1,549 people lived in Russell City before it was destroyed, and the City of Hayward has found more than 350 different property records. Research estimates that the average payment to property owners was \$2,133.33. Some owners got as little as \$250, while others, like the Santucci Hog Farm, received \$510,000, and Jose Mateos's farm property was bought for \$100,000.<sup>ii</sup> Given these businesses were allocated a disproportionately large payment for their property relative to other homeowners and business owners, former residents, business owners, and descendants who received more than \$5,000 will not be eligible for property restoration.

Community input from surveys, public meetings, and a town hall identified that former residents and their descendants want land restored.



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The Russell City Reporative Justice Project suggests that land owned by the City of Hayward be identified, divided into new parcels, and given to eligible former residents or their descendants based on the size of their original parcels between 1960 and 1967. Suggestions for such land include the former Skywest Golf Course, undeveloped land that the City of Hayward may be planning for future use, parking lots, parks, and recreation facilities.

To return the land, it's important to make a list of who is eligible to get surplus land and see if they are interested in receiving land. The amount of land that can be returned will depend on how much was taken and how much surplus land is available. There may be legal and approval processes needed to confirm if the land can be used for homes. For instance, developing or using the Skywest Golf Course would require approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

**Eligibility Criteria:** To be eligible for property restoration, beneficiaries must be:

1. A former property owner (residential or business) who lived in Russell City between 1960 and 1967 AND did not get compensated more than \$5,000 associated with the Russell City Redevelopment Project. You must provide documentation <sup>iii</sup> of residency, or
2. A descendant and/or next of kin family member of a deceased, former property owner who did not get compensated more than \$5,000 associated with the Russell City Redevelopment Project. You must provide proof of your ancestor's residency between 1960 and 1967 and show that you are related to them. <sup>iv</sup>

## Reparative Justice Objectives

- **Objective 1:** Make a list of living Russell City former residents using City of Hayward records, County of Alameda documents, and research with the Russell City community.
- **Objective 2:** Identify and confirm surplus, City of Hayward-owned land that could be disposed of for residential, business, or mixed use and development.
- **Objective 3:** Complete legal and approval processes required to dispose of publicly owned land for residential, commercial, and mixed use development in coordination with the Development Services, Public Works, and Finance Departments as well as City Attorney's Office.



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- **Objective 4:** Hire professional genealogists to create family trees of Russell City former residents, descendants, and the next of kin for former residents. They will also help find the public records needed to make the list of former residents and descendants.
- **Objective 5:** Initiate requests for County of Alameda partnership on property restoration for Russell City resident homeowners and resident businessowners, including support with finding missing records to verify residency.
- **Objective 6:** Research the relative proportions of property owned by residents to establish a formula for allocating disposed, surplus land.
- **Objective 7:** Initiate partnerships with academic departments at California State University, East Bay and Chabot College to get student support with researching relevant public records held by the County of Alameda, Hayward Unified School District, and City of Hayward (e.g. Deeds, tax documents, birth certificates, school records, marriage records, etc).
- **Objective 8:** Confirm if eligible beneficiaries want land restoration to inform how surplus land can be divided, developed, and allocated.
- **Objective 9:** Establish mechanism for administering surplus land to former residents, if not their descendants or next of kin.
- **Objective 10:** Develop new parcels that can be allocated to eligible former residents or descendants.
- **Objective 11:** Over four fiscal years, give out four batches of parcels using a lottery system to determine the order in which former residents (or their next of kin) can choose from the available parcels.

<sup>i</sup> California Code, Government Code § 54221(c)(1) (2023).

<sup>ii</sup> Brown, E. & Barganier, G. (2023). *Redeveloping Russell City: Alameda County, the City of Hayward, and industrialization. Hayward, California.*

<sup>iii</sup> Documentation to verify eligibility may include, but is not limited to, deeds, leases, rental agreements, tax documents, birth certificates, marriage certificates, school records, utility bills, bank statements, and/or insurance documents.

<sup>iv</sup> Documentation to verify eligibility may include, but is not limited to, deeds, leases, rental agreements, tax documents, birth certificates, marriage certificates, school records, utility bills, bank statements, and/or insurance documents. Birth certificates will be required to verify familial connections.