

Gentrification: The Final Nail in Silver Lake's Gentrifying Coffin or Positive Change?

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Neighborhoods change over time. And Silver Lake is no exception. People and businesses move in and out through the years, for a myriad of reasons and motivations.

In Silver Lake, people have recently expressed concerns about gentrification—from the loss of affordable housing, to the loss of venerable businesses, to the opening of an Erewhon Market, with its higher end sensibilities and pricing. (See *Los Angeles Magazine*, "[Is Erewhon's Arrival in Silver Lake the Final Nail in the Gentrifying Neighborhood's Coffin?](#)")

Whether we welcome or decry gentrification, it's an undisputed cause of both the lack of affordable housing and higher property values in Silver Lake. In addition, the revitalization of Hollywood (think Netflix's expansion) attracts new residents eager to snatch up once-affordable housing in a convenient location.

The History of Gentrification

Gentrification is a term that was developed in London in the 1960s to describe the displacement of the poor with the gentry—upper-class people moving into neighborhoods to refurbish homes in previously working class areas. The phenomenon of poorer, older areas being rehabilitated for more wealthy residents is nothing new and part of the continual urban cycle of development and redevelopment.

The Cons

Recently, the term gentrification has generally come to have a negative connotation: it means the displacement of lower-income residents, mainly of color, with whiter and more wealthy homeowners. Rental housing, if available, becomes increasingly expensive. And, it can lead to a loss of cultural diversity and richness.

The Pros

Positives do exist for gentrification. An area of lower-priced homes, often with convenient access to jobs and services, can become rehabilitated—increasing property values, reducing crime, and leading to the development of businesses to support these wealthier residents. This describes the recent history of Silver Lake to a tee, and this supply-side approach to gentrification can be a double-edge sword.

Silver Lake: From Film Production to Crime and Gangs and Back

Silver Lake formed around the movie studios. Movie stars and directors built large homes on the hillsides. In the 1920s, premium housing developments started to appear which attracted upper-middle-class families. Streetcars arrived, filling in the flatter areas of Silver Lake with more modest housing. And the wealthier moved west, with middle-class Latinos moving in mainly south of Sunset and wealthier people living in the areas north of Sunset. However, by the 1980s, people fled to the suburbs and parts of Silver Lake were overtaken by crime and gangs. But the current path shows our neighborhood cycle returning to its early-twentieth century roots of middle to upper middle class.

There is one constant in the life of an urban neighborhood: change. Some people like change and some do not. No matter, you can bet the Silver Lake of 2041 will be a very different place from the Silver Lake of 2021.