



Transit Oriented Development, Gentrification and Displacement: Key Questions, Anti-Displacement Policies, and Case Studies

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Introduction

Potential displacement of individuals, businesses, and their community culture, due to an increase in investments along transit corridors, is of concern to members of various organizations within the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro region. Metro Transit acknowledges that displacement along transit corridors can occur and therefore has a desire to identify and share anti-displacement measures being used or considered in this and other transit-rich communities.

As noted in a post by Hilary Reeves, Marketing and Communications Director for Rail~Volution, on the Rail~Volution website:

“Around the nation new transit projects and transit oriented development (TOD) are proving the notion that

transit drives economic vitality and makes places more desirable to live. The bigger challenge may be finding the combination of policies and commitment to ensure that lower wealth communities don’t lose out when new projects are launched.” (Hilary, 2018)

The primary purpose of this paper is identifying the policies and the level/type of commitment considered necessary to minimize displacement along transit corridors. The first section of this paper sets the stage for the remainder of the paper by providing definition to key concepts and addressing commonly asked questions.

I - Definitions and Common Questions

The title of this paper includes three words that are defined in many ways. For purposes of this paper, definitions were chosen that are simple, accurate, and independent of one another.

How is displacement defined?

Displacement is the moving of people and businesses from their original position along a high-frequency transit corridor.

How is gentrification defined?

Gentrification is the upgrading of previously disinvested neighborhoods.

How is Transit Oriented Development (TOD) defined?

The Metropolitan Council TOD Policy includes this definition: “TOD is walkable, moderate to high density development served by frequent transit with a mix of housing, retail, and employment choices designed to allow people to live and work without need of a personal automobile.” (Metropolitan Council, 2013, pg.1)

What is Metro Transit’s role in TOD?

Metro Transit plans for, builds, and operates transit in the region. This investment comes with an expectation that transit oriented development (TOD) will occur in high-frequency transit corridors.

The TOD Policy states, “The TOD Policy provides a framework for the Metropolitan Council to play a leadership role across sectors and political subdivisions in the planning and implementation of TOD throughout the region.” (Metropolitan Council, 2013, pg.1)

This paper is meant to be a resource for practitioners and political subdivisions in the region to organize discussions about anti-displacement policies within the context of transit investments, TOD, gentrification, and concerns about displacement.

Does TOD and/or gentrification cause displacement?

TOD, or new/renovated development along transit corridors, can be considered part of gentrification and a cause of displacement, but as with most complicated questions, it depends. The following three reports attempt to answer this question.

A report published in the Journal of Planning Literature states that “Scholarship has generally conflated gentrification and displacement; however, this review argues for a clearer analytical distinction between the two.” (Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, Loukaitou-Sideris, 2018, pg. 1)

The authors developed a table delineating these distinctions.

Table 1: Categories of Displacement

Type of Cause	Forced	Responsive
Direct or Physical Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Eviction • Informal Eviction (e.g., landlord harassment) • Landlord foreclosure • Eminent domain • Natural disaster • Building condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration in housing quality • Neighborhood violence or disinvestment • Removing parking, utilities, etc.
Indirect or Economic Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreclosure • Condo Conversion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent Increase • Increased taxes • Loss of social networks or cultural significance of a place
Exclusionary Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8 discrimination • Zoning policies (restrictions on density, unit size, etc.) • NIMBY resistance to development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaffordable housing • Cultural dissonance • Lack of social networks

(Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, Loukaitou-Sideris, 2018, pg.8)

“As illustrated, the reasons for displacement may or may not result from gentrification. While displacement may be a defining characteristic and outcome of gentrification, this categorization clarifies how displacement can occur in the absence of gentrification, and that scholarship requires advanced tools to define and measure these analytically distinct phenomena.” (pg.8)

Within the three types of causes, Physical, Economic, and Exclusionary, the authors provide examples of Forced and Responsive displacement. The underlying assumption is Forced Actions are imposed upon residents and Responsive Results are outcomes caused by changes in the marketplace.

Of the three characterizations of causes in the chart, the Indirect or Economic Cause, is most closely associated with gentrification. As the table illustrates, the transit investment and/or other market factors causing an increase in rents and taxes can lead to forced displacement and/or responsive displacement.

A report by Miguel Padeiro et al. published in the journal *Transport Reviews* examined the question: “Is there evidence that TOD contributes to neighborhood ascent and the displacement of low-income groups?” (Padeiro, Louro, da Costa, 2019, pg. 2) This report reviewed 35 quantitative research-based studies published between 2000 and 2018 and concluded that gentrification is more closely associated with existing local dynamics, built environment attributes, and accompanying policies than it is with TOD.

The third report, a report by Dwayne Marshall Baker et al. published in the *Journal of Planning, Education and Research* examined 14 US urbanized areas (UAs) that built light rail systems in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Research for their detailed report used spatial regression analyses with longitudinal data across 14 urban areas and concluded, “While our analysis of socio-demographic attributes in LRT neighborhoods offers useful insights into gentrification related changes, it cannot present hard evidence of displacement.” (Baker & Lee, 2019, pg. 46)

The authors characterized their findings in one of four ways.

Table 2: Gentrification and TOD Impact Typology

Neighborhood Change Typology	All Tracts (Set 1)	Gentrifiable Tracts (Set 2)
Gentrification and TOD	San Francisco	San Francisco, Cleveland
Counter gentrification and TOD	Cleveland, Portland	Portland
Gentrification and counter- or no TOD	Denver, Sacramento, Dallas	Denver, St. Louis, Buffalo
Neighborhood Decline	San Diego, Buffalo, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Salt Lake City	San Diego, Los Angeles, Baltimore

(Baker & Lee, pg. 45)

The difference between the cities was widely attributed to different local and regional planning efforts. For example, the authors noted Portland’s TOD Strategic Plan expressly discusses TOD equity and fostering workforce housing. In the case of St. Louis, the design decision to mainly run below street grade and the planning decision to wait 20 years from opening to produce station area plans negatively impacted TOD efforts.

In summary, all three reports concluded that TOD and/or gentrification can be, but not necessarily, a cause of displacement. Zuk et al. concluded TOD and/or gentrification can indirectly cause rent increases, increased taxes, and loss of social networks which can lead to displacement. Both Padeiro et al. and Baker & Lee concluded that local policies and planning efforts will have a greater impact on the extent of any displacement than the transit investment and resulting TOD.

Can displacement be measured?

Displacement is difficult to measure because people and businesses move for a variety of reasons and these reasons are impossible to capture with readily available quantitative data. Surveying and qualitative data analysis, at the local neighborhood level, appears to be the most effective way to determine why people and businesses are moving.

In an article by H. Jacob Carlson (H. Jacob Carlson, 2020), three general ways displacement is measured are presented. The population approach looks at the changing composition of a neighborhood’s demographics between two points in time. The individual approach uses data that does identify individuals to determine if they leave their neighborhood, without ascertaining the reason for the move. The motivational approach measures individual mobility and asks the reasons why someone moved. The author concludes the motivational approach is the closest direct measure of displacement.

It is helpful to look at the data used in studying gentrification since many researchers draw conclusions about displacement from their gentrification research.

For example, rising home values and increasing rents are considered potential outcomes of gentrification which can lead to displacement.

Edward G. Goetz, author of a study published by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota (Goetz, Lewis, Damiano, Calhoun, 2019) provides a good example of the variables examined and the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This study identified 84 census tracts in Minneapolis and St. Paul that were “vulnerable to gentrification” to determine if they had been gentrified, defined as upgrading of previously disinvested neighborhoods. The variables used to determine if an area had been gentrified included racial change, bachelor’s degree rates, median household income, median home values, and rents over a period of 15 years.

From the qualitative work, the questions asked provided common responses for why people felt displacement was taking place. “There were four common themes in the interviews with neighborhood residents and businesspeople in the five neighborhood clusters of Minneapolis and St. Paul: presence of whiteness, housing affordability, business turnover, and displacement fears.” (pg. 2)

Reported in an article by Sonam Vashi for Saporta Report (Vashi, 2019) the “Gentrification Comparison Tool”, developed by Enterprise, a national non-profit organization focused on affordable housing, uses three popular approaches to measuring gentrification. The Freeman model uses change in the median household income, share of housing built in the prior 20 years, share of residents with college degrees, and an increase in housing prices, compared to the metro area, to measure gentrification. The Ellen & O’Regan and McKinnish model simply rely on changes in family income to measure gentrification.

In summary, displacement can be measured but qualitative methods, typically involving interviews and surveys, is time consuming, costly, and therefore rarely employed. Given displacement is sometimes viewed as an outcome of

gentrification, the variables used to measure gentrification are used to provide indicators of displacement. The study by Goetz used racial change, bachelor's degree rates, median household income, median home values, and rents over a period of 15 years. In the article by Vashi, the

variables used in three different models included median household income, share of housing built in the prior 20 years, share of residents with college degrees, housing prices, and family income.

II - Anti-Displacement Policies

There are many causes of displacement and thus a need for a range of programs and policies to prevent and/or mitigate displacement. As noted in the introduction, the challenge is finding the right combination. Another difficulty is there is very little research on what have been successful policies applied across multiple cities. The following source did come to some conclusions reviewing many articles and conducting interviews about anti-displacement programs and policies.

Chapter 10 of a book authored by Miriam Zuk et al. set out to identify anti-displacement policy effectiveness by reviewing more than 150 articles in the academic and gray literature, as well as conducting interviews with 14 practitioners and academics. Based on a review of 17 categories of policies, the authors concluded that neighborhood stabilization and tenant protection policies have the most direct and immediate effect on mitigating displacement. Within those two categories, the six specific policies deemed most effective were Rent Control, Community Benefits Agreements, Rental Assistance Programs, Foreclosure Assistance, Tenant Right to Counsel, and "Just Cause" Evictions. (Zuk, Loukaitou-Sideris, Chapple, 2019)

In a deeper dive at the local level, surveying the 109 counties and municipalities of the Bay Area, the author found inclusionary zoning is the most prevalent affordable housing production strategy, regulation of condo conversions is the most common affordable housing preservation strategy, and assistance with foreclosures is the most common neighborhood stabilization strategy. As evidence of the limitations of transferring successful policies to multiple cities, regulation of condo conversions won't be as effective of a policy in this region as it has been in the Bay Area due to the lack of condos in this region.

In 2020, the Family Housing Fund, a local non-profit focusing on the housing sector, created a tracker of city housing affordability and preservation policies (Family Housing Fund, 2020). This helpful tool gives an indication of what policies are most prevalent at the local level.

Besides COVID Assistance, the tracker includes four categories of city policies: 4d Affordable Preservation (property tax incentive to property owners who commit to keeping rent affordable), Inclusionary Policies (mixed

income requirement for new development), Tenant Protection Ordinances, and Accessory Dwelling Unit policies. The Fund's website provides direct links to the policies.

Most anti-displacement policies fall into one of four categories: producing affordable housing, preserving affordable housing, stabilizing the neighborhood, and preventing commercial displacement. The following policies within each category were chosen based on their prevalence in the literature and the ability to direct the reader to local examples for the production and preservation of affordable housing.

Production of Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF): Assists in the financing, typically gap financing, for the production and preservation of affordable rental housing. Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Bloomington have the largest city funds in this region.

Community Land Trusts: Transfers the rights and benefits of land ownership through an affordable land lease rate to a homeowner in exchange for restrictions on the sale of the home to keep it affordable for future buyers. This type of effort has also been defined as Shared Equity Conversion. Local examples include the Rondo Community Land Trust, City of Lakes Community Land Trust, and West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust.

Community Land Bank: Converts vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed property into productive use. The banks acquire title to the property, eliminate liabilities, and transfer the land to new owners. Land Bank Twin Cities is the largest in this region, but local city Economic Development Agencies (EDA's) and Housing Redevelopment Agencies (HRA's) often perform this same function.

Inclusionary Policy: Requires affordable housing units be provided in new residential developments. The requirement is typically 10-20% of the units at various levels of affordability. According to the Family Housing Fund tracker, and as of April 2020, eight cities in this region (Edina, Golden Valley, Brooklyn Park, St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, Bloomington, Minneapolis, and Richfield) have put in place inclusionary policies. (Family Housing Fund, 2020)

Preservation of Affordable Housing

Property Tax Limits: The property taxes of single-family homes or multi-unit rental properties are reduced as an incentive to keep homeownership or rents affordable. As noted in the Family Housing Fund tracker, 4d Affordable Preservation is a popular program for multi-unit rental properties. As of April 2020, five cities had 4d policies: Minneapolis, Edina, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, and Golden Valley. (Family Housing Fund, 2020)

Mobile Home Park Preservation: Owners of mobile home parks, which typically lease the land under the privately owned mobile homes, must give right of first refusal to buy the underlying land to the mobile park homeowners. Northcountry Cooperative Foundation (NCF) has converted 12 mobile home parks into Resident Owned Cooperatives (ROC's) since 1999.

Community/Tenant Opportunity to Purchase: Owners of multi-unit residential properties must give notice to the city of their intent to sell their property, usually within 60-90 days of their desired sale date, to allow the city or an affordable housing entity the ability to exercise a right of first refusal. As of April 2020, nine cities had enacted this type of ordinance. (Family Housing Fund, 2020)

Funds for Preservation: A fund specifically set up to acquire property for the purpose of keeping the rents affordable or the building habitable. One of the purposes of these funds is to allow a city or a non-profit entity access to capital to efficiently take advantage of a right of first refusal acquisition opportunity. The NOAH Impact Fund, Common Bond Opportunity Fund, and most recently the Community Asset Transition Fund are three such funds in this region.

Neighborhood Stabilization

Just Cause for Eviction Ordinances: Renters are given a written explanation for why the landlord is planning to evict the tenant. Some ordinances limit the allowable reasons for eviction and specify a timeframe to satisfy the eviction action.

Foreclosure Assistance: Homeowners are provided resources to prevent losing their home including counseling, loan restructuring, tax lien payment, and shared equity opportunities.

Proactive Code Enforcement: Cities make a concerted effort to document building code violations and work with property owners to correct the violations.

Home Ownership Assistance: Homeowners are assisted through funds or programs to help maintain and improve their homes.

Rent Control: In the November 2021 election, Minneapolis and St. Paul both passed citywide rent control measures, to limit annual rental unit increases.

Prevention of Commercial Displacement

"Buy Your Building" Assistance: A city can provide a financing program and a network of banks to assist businesses with the down payment to buy their own building.

Commercial Space Set-Asides: Cities can codify a certain percentage of first floor commercial space be set aside for local businesses, small businesses, or in the event of ownership goals, commercial condominiums.

Business Incubator: A city can buy a building to provide a facility, office space and supporting programs for early stage or displaced businesses. Lease rates are typically below market rate to help establish a business in those first few years of operation.

Community Owned Cooperatives: Financing is provided by member-investors (usually customers and neighbors) who buy a building and lease commercial space to businesses. Lease rates are typically a combination of a below market rental rate and a percentage of sales.

Baker Tilly created a 26-page report entitled "Innovative Financing Strategies for Blue Line Extension TOD" as part of the Corridor Station Area planning process. This report, funded by the FTA TOD Planning grant for the METRO Blue Line Extension, pointed out policies that can address the issue of commercial affordability, potential displacement, and mitigation strategies along this planned LRT route. (Baker Tilly, 2020)

III - Case Studies of Cities Implementation Efforts

This section of the paper presents information from a project led by PolicyLink, including two reports from two participating cities. The project focused on the organizational aspects of anti-displacement efforts. How have cities organized themselves, their stakeholders, and the community to combat displacement? Are there lessons learned to be passed on to others? What have been the stumbling blocks to achieving success?

PolicyLink has been a leader in working with cities that are concerned about displacement as evidenced by working with 11 cities over a year-long period (2018-2019) to develop strategies to fight displacement and build thriving communities. Sixty-five leaders from the participating cities agreed upon the goal of increase housing security and decrease displacement of housing, business, and cultural assets in their communities. The cities included Austin, Boston, Buffalo, Denver, Nashville, Philadelphia, Portland, San Jose, Santa Fe, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.

Chris Schildt, Senior Associate for PolicyLink, (Schildt, 2020) explains that the work was subdivided into six categories: tenant protections, affordable housing, preservation, equitable development, community ownership, business and cultural stabilization, and institutionalizing racial equity. These multiple, wide ranging categories of work, as noted here and in the previous section of this paper, make clear why there are challenges to implementing a multi-pronged, cohesive anti-displacement strategy.

The author noted four key strategies that helped the cities be successful; identify a dedicated team champion, integrate the anti-displacement work with existing work, tap into the expertise of the PolicyLink network and finally, center impacted communities in decision-making (pg. 7). In terms of challenges that prevented the teams from being more effective, lack of dedicated funding for community group facilitation, lack of sustained commitment from all team members, and not starting the process with the impacted community's strategic anti-displacement priorities noted.

PolicyLink staff followed up with site visits to two of the cities, Portland, and Pittsburgh, one year after the workshop ended. The articles written to capture the follow-up visits give additional insight into the critical organizational underpinning of successful endeavors.

Portland, OR

A PolicyLink article (PolicyLink, 2019) summarizes a three-day staff visit with Portland city and community leaders to help chart a path towards addressing racial inequities and displacement challenges facing the city. Eight challenges and barriers were identified, including:

- Need to recognize and address historic and current anti-Blackness.
- Intra-and inter-agency silos.
- Lack of a clear mandate from City leadership to do racial equity work.
- Need to look at neighborhood change and equitable development more holistically.
- Need to move from outreach and engagement to co-design and co-implementation.
- Lack of metrics to track success.
- Need for transparency and accountability.
- Budgets and regulatory framework should reflect priorities.

In addition, concrete next steps were identified:

- Create a community-led city task force.
- Commit to multi-year funding for ADPDX (Anti-displacement PDX coalition).
- Identify a permanent source of funding for anti-displacement work.
- Create a process to track and annually report to City Council and the broader community.

Six years prior to the work of PolicyLink, the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability commissioned a study on gentrification and displacement that called for implementing an equitable, inclusive development strategy. The study, authored by Lisa K. Bates, PhD., (Bates, 2013) includes a toolbox of policies and programs based on a review of best practices from across the country.

"Five key elements of the toolkit are:

- A broad community impacts policy that sets clear expectations about promoting positive community impacts and mitigating harms.
- Community Impact Reports for major projects, especially for projects with public funding, to define the potential impacts, costs and benefits and identify possible mitigation programs.
- Community Benefit Agreements, primarily for private projects, that create a negotiated agreement between the developer and the surrounding community to create a less adversarial review process and provide specific benefits related to the development

- Inclusionary Zoning through which developers provide affordable units or pay in lieu fees to ensure affordable housing is part of new development.
- Education and Technical Assistance through which the city could do more to promote best development practices for mixed income and affordable/workforce housing, similar to Portland’s effort to promote green building.” (pg. 6)

Pittsburgh, PA

An article by Tracey Ross for PolicyLink (Ross, 2021), recalls when PolicyLink Founder Angela Glover Blackwell spoke at Pittsburgh’s first P4 Summit in 2015 and shared that equity is not only a moral imperative, but an economic imperative for an increasingly diversifying nation. Black leaders present for her talk approached her to see how PolicyLink could work with them in ensuring a more equitable Pittsburgh. All-In Pittsburgh became an initiative that elevated Black leadership, fostered new partnerships, helped diversify future P4 summits, and secured the passage of citywide equity legislation. The 10 lessons from this transformative early work, which served as a model for PolicyLink partnerships with other cities, are noted below.

- National organizations can offer guidance but should not drive work.
- Leaders must engage the full equity ecosystem from Day One.
- People don’t want reports that do not lead to action.
- Coalitions must define their target population and outcomes.
- There are limits to gathering good data.
- Systems change requires “adaptive solutions.”
- Coalitions must be mindful of power dynamics.
- Coalitions must hold private sector leaders accountable for advancing their equity goals.
- A strong inside-outside strategy is necessary.
- This work takes time.

In the research completed for this paper, the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro region was repeatedly held up as employing effective community driven strategies which included anti-displacement efforts. The two most noted organizational efforts focused on the METRO Green Line, which began operations in 2014. These two multi-faceted efforts are known as the Central Corridors Funders Collaborative and the Big Picture Project Partners.

As noted in the final report of the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative,

“The city governments and the Metropolitan Council were not widely trusted to represent the voices of residents and business owners. The non-profit sector, with nearly 100 organizations doing work along the Central Corridor, was divided according to geography and mission. Private investment would play a role in the envisioned city-building and place-making but did not have a clear point of involvement in the planning for it. And such a comprehensive effort was beyond the scope and resources of any single sector.” (Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, 2016, pg. 6)

A collective of 14 foundations came together as The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, who committed to invest substantial resources over a 10-year period to coordinate initiatives for ensuring the benefits of the Green Line would be widely shared by all, especially disadvantaged communities.

The Big Picture Project Final Report (Twin Cities LISC, 2018) established three objectives: “invest in the production and preservation of long-term affordable housing, stabilize the neighborhood, and invest in activities that help low-income people stay in their homes and strengthen families through coordinated investments.” (pg. 1)

Like the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, one entity was trusted to lead the overall effort. Twin Cities LISC led banks, non-profit organizations, foundations, and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to achieve key goals of the Big Picture Project Partners sooner than anticipated. The Final Report noted the 10-year goal of housing production of 4,500 units had been exceeded by year seven and 968 households were served, 84.5% of the 10-year goal, also by year seven.

Taken together, the work of PolicyLink, Portland, Pittsburgh, and the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro region, is instructive for cities working to advance anti-displacement measures. Empowering the affected community and selecting one entity to organize the efforts of all the needed participants is the foundation for a successful multifaceted anti-displacement effort.

The affected community must be central to the effort and empowered by a committed funding stream to organize the community and establish targeted policies and implementation steps.

There are many entities needed to facilitate anti-displacement policies. Foundations, non-profits, community groups, banks, municipalities, and developers must be efficiently organized towards established goals. The leading entity must be agreed upon by the participants, work at transparency and hold all parties accountable.

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