



ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES FOR EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

WHITE PAPER
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What is the Challenge?

Transportation plans typically recommend projects that are intended to improve safety, reduce congestion, provide mobility options, improve conditions for the traveling public, and increase overall quality of life. While such projects tend to have many positive effects, some projects can lead to gentrification and displacement of low-income residents. This has been a long-standing issue within the planning profession, with few proactive strategies to mitigate these consequences. More recently, this pattern has been especially pronounced with urban trail projects. A few well-known examples are the 606 Trail in Chicago, the Highline in New York, and the BeltLine East Side Trail in Atlanta. In these cases, the success of the new trails brought a renewed interest in urban residential areas, commercial and retail, and large numbers of visitors, thereby increasing property values and making rent and property taxes unaffordable to some existing residents and businesses, causing them to have to relocate, or even close.



What are Some Potential Solutions?

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, there are strategies that can help mitigate the potential negative consequences that transportation projects may have on surrounding communities. It is important to note that the approach to preventing displacement must be tailored to the specific needs and conditions in the community. At the forefront, meaningful community engagement is essential to fully understand the communities' needs and vision for the future. Therefore, it should be an overarching aspect of any transportation planning project. Specific anti-displacement strategies typically relate to **economic**, **social**, and **housing** factors. A few specific tools are described below, and additional tools are illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 1: Types of Anti-Displacement Strategies

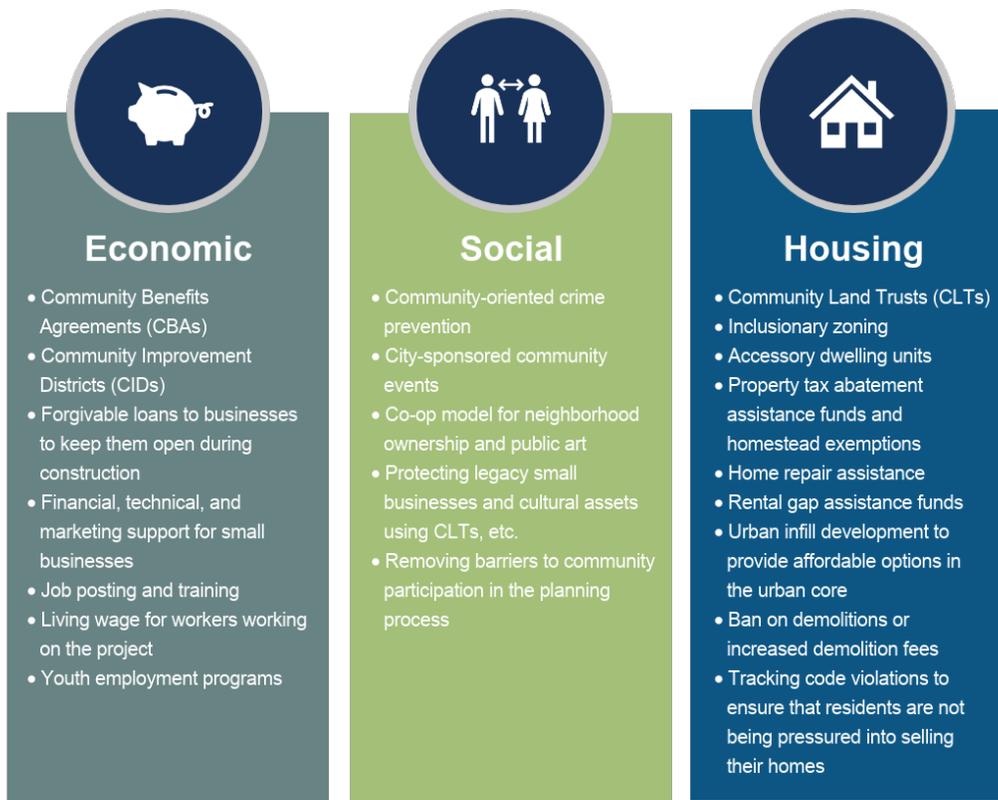
Robust, sincere **community engagement** is essential to begin building trust and fostering relationships with the community, as residents and community leaders are experts in their communities. Community engagement efforts should be interactive and continuous throughout the planning process. Engagement should go beyond the traditional public meeting or design charette, and planners should meet people where they are, for example by tying outreach into existing community events and gathering places rather than relying solely on attendance at public meetings.

Community land trusts (CLTs) are used to preserve affordability for housing, commercial, and retail through nonprofit community organizations. Once the land is acquired, through an initial public or private investment, the CLT maintains ownership of the land but sells the homes (for example) at affordable prices to low-income residents. The home buyers own their homes but the CLT owns the land and imposes measures to ensure that the homes are subsequently sold at affordable prices to low-income residents, thereby maintaining long-term affordable housing, while also allowing homeowners to earn some profits when they sell. Separating the cost of land from the cost of the house decreases the barrier of entry for homebuyers.

In the transportation planning process, planners can discuss CLTs as a potential solution to address housing affordability in areas where a high-profile project could be anticipated to decrease affordability for low-income residents. Planners should also engage with non-profits with experience in CLTs and with the community to not only inform residents and businesses, but to also facilitate discussions on implementation strategies, necessary policies, and next steps if the community is interested in pursuing a CLT.

A **Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)** is a tool that can be used to prevent displacement due to new developments in a community. CBAs are contracts between developers and community groups in which developers agree to provide certain amenities or mitigate potential harm caused by the new development. Example CBAs could include affordable housing requirements, local hiring for construction, or job training for residents. As with CLTs, planners can offer CBAs as a potential solution in discussions with communities and as recommendations in the implementation section of plan documents. Planners can also contact developers active in the area to foster conversations about these options and whether local developers and communities can develop a mutually beneficial agreement. Additional examples of strategies to prevent negative impacts on communities are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Economic, Social and Housing-Focused Anti-Displacement Strategies



Where Has This Been Done?

Southern Fulton County (GA)

Modern Mobility Partners weaves creative, inclusive community engagement strategies throughout the planning process. For example, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Southern Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan \(SFCTP\)](#) project team collaborated with the City of South Fulton’s elected officials and Parks and Recreation Department to distribute flyers for the SFCTP within food boxes provided to individuals and households affected by the pandemic at two events in May 2020. This was an example of how working with community leaders can help keep community members informed and involved through community events, regardless of access to the internet.

Chattanooga (TN/GA)

When hosting virtual events, it is important to note that everyone may not have access to reliable internet, computers, or smartphones. Therefore, for the [Chattanooga 2050 Regional Transportation Plan](#), library rooms and computer labs will be utilized to ensure that residents without internet can access virtual meetings and online resources.

Minneapolis/St. Paul (MN)

Planners and communities have recommended and implemented a variety of anti-displacement strate-

gies nationwide. For example, in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, the [Ready for Rail Business Support Fund](#) provided forgivable loans to businesses along the Green Line light rail corridor that lost sales from construction during and following the project’s construction, thereby preventing commercial displacement. Businesses along the Green Line corridor could participate in cross-sector partnerships to support business retention and adaptation to transit oriented development (TOD) environments. To prevent residential displacement along the Green Line, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) launched [The Big Picture Project](#) in 2011 to build and preserve affordable housing. The project also helps residents with mortgage foreclosure assistance, home improvement loans, first-lien mortgage loans, impact fund mortgage loans, and redeveloped vacant and foreclosed properties, which help low and moderate-income residents stay in their homes.

Atlanta (GA)

Here in Atlanta, GA, the City of Atlanta and Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. have taken important steps to prevent displacement citywide and associated with the BeltLine project specifically. For example, the Atlanta BeltLine and City of Atlanta worked together to implement an inclusionary zoning ordinance that was adopted in 2018 and requires new residential rental developments near the Atlanta Beltline trail to include

some affordable units (or pay an in-lieu fee). The Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. and Atlanta BeltLine Partnership also launched a [Legacy Resident Retention Program](#) to help eligible current homeowners in certain neighborhoods pay for property tax increases. Additionally, several non-profit organizations offer home repairs as part of the city-funded [Limited Home Repair](#) program. The program offers free and low-cost minor home repairs for senior citizens and people with disabilities who meet certain eligibility criteria. The City also has a homestead tax exemption for low-income homeowners, and on November 3, 2020, voters approved a referendum to extend the exemption to homeowners in community land trusts. These and other measures help residents stay in their homes and avoid displacement. In transportation planning, planners can recommend these types of strategies and inform residents of existing programs and resources as part of the community engagement process and plan documentation. Planners can also bring the necessary people and organizations to the table to foster conversations and help build relationships with the community to empower them to take action against displacement.



What Can Planners Do?

In summary, while a variety of tools and strategies can be implemented to prevent displacement, none of them serve as a single solution. To best promote mobility without displacement, planners must first actively engage to begin to establish trust and relationships with the community. Some specific community engagement actions that planners can take are:

- Work with schools and universities in communities to engage younger people.
- Reach out to community organizations, churches, and similar groups to identify and build relationships with community leaders.
- Meet with jurisdiction officials to understand current policies for affordable housing.
- Meet with nonprofits about initiatives to reduce displacement and interest in programs such as land trusts.
- As a part of plan recommendations, discuss potential negative impacts and mitigation strategies within the project documentation.
- Talk with communities to understand how they receive information and set up project information repositories where the people can and will access them.

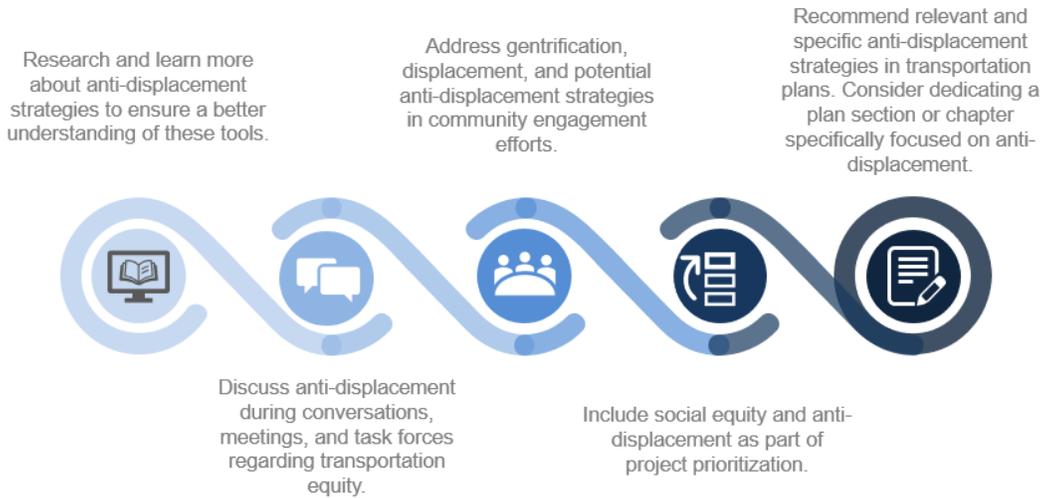
- Build relationships with non-profits and developers who can take action in communities.
- Foster communication between communities and non-profits and developers to empower residents and business to take charge of anti-displacement in their community.



Key Takeaways

1. Research and learn more about anti-displacement strategies to ensure better understanding of these tools.
2. Discuss anti-displacement during conversations, meetings, and task forces regarding equity in transportation.
3. Address gentrification, displacement, and potential anti-displacement strategies in community engagement efforts.
4. Include social equity and anti-displacement as part of project prioritization.
5. Recommend relevant and specific anti-displacement strategies in transportation plans. Consider dedicating a plan section or chapter specifically focused on anti-displacement.

Figure 3: Five Key Takeaways



Where Can I Find More Information?

This resource is intended to help transportation planners understand strategies for preventing and mitigating displacement that can result from transportation improvements. There is a wealth of other resources available on this topic, and a few useful links are listed below.

- Southern Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan: <https://southernfultonctp.org/>
- The Big Picture Project: Aligning Housing Plans Along The Central Corridor, Final Report, 2018, Twin Cities LISC: https://www.lisc.org/media/file/public/8c/6e/8c6eca6b-691b-4512-bcf5-a62bb-cb81242/big_picture_progress_report_2017_singles.pdf
- “Safeguarding Against Displacement: Stabilizing Transit Neighborhoods” chapter by Zuk, Loukaitou-Sideris, and Chapple in *Transit-Oriented Displacement or Community Dividends? Understanding the Effects of Smarter Growth on Communities* (2019): https://www.urbandisplacement.org/sites/default/files/images/zuk_safeguarding_chapter_full.pdf
- Policy Link, Business Impact Mitigations for Transit Projects: https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20PolicyLink%20Business%20Impact%20Mitigation%20Strategies_0.pdf
- The Highline Network: <https://network.thehighline.org/resources/>
- Atlanta BeltLine: <https://beltline.org/the-project/affordable-housing-on-the-beltline/current-residents/>

- Atlanta Beltline Legacy Resident Retention Program: <https://beltline.org/the-project/affordable-housing-on-the-beltline/legacy-resident-retention-program/>
- City of Atlanta, Limited Home Repair: <https://www.atlantaga.gov/home/showdocument?id=2190>

About the Authors



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