



Promoting Mixed-Income Communities by Mitigating Displacement: Findings from 80 Large U.S. Cities¹

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Governments' efforts to promote investment in low-income neighborhoods are often guided by the policy goal of fostering long-term socioeconomic diversity. Amid a scarcity of public funding, local governments have increasingly pursued this objective through initiatives like inclusionary zoning and public housing revitalization that encourage private development but include units for a range of income levels. However, creating communities that remain broadly accessible to lower-income households and residents of color when these interventions occur requires measures that enhance housing and economic opportunities within the larger neighborhood and address the threats of physical, economic, and cultural displacement associated with increased investment.

Drawing on data from 80 of the most populous U.S. cities, this essay shows that municipal governments have embraced market-leveraging tools to address affordability in revitalizing neighborhoods but are less likely to have the regulatory, funding-based, and tenant protection measures that can mitigate attendant displacement pressures.² Without these mitigating policies, efforts to promote income mixing in disinvested neighborhoods risk accelerating gentrification and displacement rather than fostering long-term socioeconomically integrated communities. The examples of cities that are intervening early and combining reinvestment with comprehensive protections for current and future low-income residents demonstrate the feasibility of more equitable approaches where local political, economic, and regulatory contexts are supportive.

¹ This essay appears in Mark L. Joseph and Amy T. Khare, eds., *What Works to Promote Inclusive, Equitable Mixed-Income Communities*, please visit the [volume website](#) for access to more essays.

² Data were collected in late 2016 and early 2017 through an online survey sent to a housing, planning, or community development official in each of the 146 most populous U.S. cities. Survey responses were verified and supplemented through a systematic review of cities' ordinances, plans, program descriptions, and policy documents. The 80 cities in the dataset are comparable on average to the full sample of surveyed cities across a range of demographic, fiscal, and economic indicators as well as measures of housing affordability. Data were obtained for 79 cities on residential interventions and 53 cities on interventions concerning commercial affordability and economic opportunities. The author wishes to thank the city officials who generously contributed their time and knowledge to this study. The research was supported by a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Tools for Balancing Investment with Socioeconomic Diversity

In an urban development context that is market-led and fiscally constrained, achieving a balance between improving residential quality in lower-income neighborhoods and supporting existing residents' ability to remain in place is a continual challenge for city governments. Revitalization can trigger gentrification, which refers to the socioeconomic transformation of previously disinvested neighborhoods as an influx of residents with more purchasing power and different cultural and commercial practices displaces lower-income households, particularly households of color. Investment can increase the risk of direct displacement for existing residents due to unaffordable increases in housing costs, heightened eviction or landlord harassment activity, and building sale, conversion, or demolition; it can also lead to indirect displacement when residents who remain in a neighborhood feel alienated by the political, socio-cultural, and commercial changes associated with demographic shifts, and when the loss of low-cost units prevents households from moving into an area that was previously affordable to them.³

The policy and advocacy literatures identify an array of tools that can mitigate the multiple dimensions of displacement and promote long-term affordability when reinvestment occurs (Table 1).^{4,5}

³ John Betancur, "Gentrification and Community Fabric in Chicago," *Urban Studies* 48, no. 2 (February 2011): 383-406; Derek Hyra, "The Back-to-the-City Movement: Neighbourhood Redevelopment and Processes of Political and Cultural Displacement," *Urban Studies* 52, (2015): 1753-1773; Justine Marcus and Miriam Zuk, "Displacement in San Mateo County, California: Consequences for Housing Neighborhoods, Quality of Life, and Health," (2019); Peter Marcuse, "Abandonment, Gentrification and Displacement: The Linkages in New York City." In *Gentrification of the City*, ed. Neil Smith and Peter Williams, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986); Kathe Newman and Elvin Wyly, "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City," *Urban Studies* 43, no. 1 (January 2006): 23-57; Trushna Parekh, "They Want to Live in the Tremé, but They Want it for Their Ways of Living: Gentrification and Neighborhood Practice in Tremé, New Orleans," *Urban Geography* 36, no 2 (2015): 201-220; Filip Stabrowski, "New-Build Gentrification and the Everyday Displacement of Polish Immigrant Tenants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn." *Antipode* 46, no. 3 (2014): 794-815.

⁴ Causa Justa/Just Cause, "Development without Displacement: Resisting Gentrification in the Bay Area." (Oakland, CA: Causa Justa/Just Cause, 2014); Grounded Solutions Network. "What About Housing? A Policy Toolkit for Inclusive Growth." (Portland, OR: Grounded Solutions Network); Luke Herrine, Jessica Yager, and Nadia Mian. "Gentrification Responses: A Survey of Strategies to Maintain Neighborhood Economic Diversity." (New York, NY: NYU Furman Center, 2016); Olivia LaVecchia and Stacy Mitchell, "Affordable Space: How Rising Commercial Rents are Threatening Independent Businesses, and What Cities are Doing about It." (Institute for Local Self-Reliance, April 2016); Diane Levy, Jennifer Comey, and Sandra Padilla, "In the Face of Gentrification: Case Studies of Local Efforts to Mitigate Displacement." (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2006); Diane Levy, Jennifer Comey, and Sandra Padilla, "Keeping the Neighborhood Affordable: A Handbook of Housing Strategies for Gentrifying Areas." (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2006).

⁵ This essay focuses on the sustained displacement threats that are common in neighborhoods experiencing reinvestment or revitalization. This table therefore does not include more temporary tools such as short-term financial assistance to households at risk of eviction because of overdue rent. Such assistance is a critical part of the eviction prevention toolbox more broadly, but in neighborhoods where rents are rising, the economic pressures resulting from rent increases are likely to be more enduring in nature.

Table 1

DISPLACEMENT MITIGATION POLICY TOOLS

Housing market regulation	Residential tenant protections	Zoning for affordable housing	Dedicated revenue for affordable housing	Creating affordable housing through public investment	Extending housing affordability through public investment	Addressing commercial affordability and economic opportunities
Rent regulations No net loss policies Condo conversion regulations Short-term rental regulations	Legal aid for tenants facing eviction or harassment Right of first refusal Just cause eviction and anti-harassment laws	Voluntary inclusionary zoning (including incentive zoning/density bonus programs) Mandatory inclusionary zoning	Housing trust funds Reinvesting increased property tax revenue in affordable housing (e.g. through tax increment financing)	Converting financially/physically distressed units to affordable housing Affordable housing development on public land (or banking land for future affordable housing development) Other funding/incentives for affordable housing (such as reduced parking requirements, expedited permitting, tax exemptions, etc.)	Establishing affordability covenants on unsubsidized, low-cost housing Preserving subsidized housing Repair programs for owner-occupied/rental properties Support for decommodified housing (such as community land trusts) Property tax relief for owner-occupiers	Incentives for landlords to provide small businesses with affordable/long-term leases Assistance for historically or culturally significant businesses Restrictions on national chain retailer locations Affordable space set-asides for locally-owned small businesses Affordable space set-asides for minority-owned businesses Construction or retail job set-asides for neighborhood residents

While evaluations of these tools’ effectiveness are scarce, there is evidence that policies including rent regulation, subsidized housing, legal aid for tenants, just cause eviction ordinances, right of first refusal laws, condo conversion controls, and community land trusts have preserved affordable housing or otherwise enabled some residents to remain in place when

their housing was threatened.⁶ Interventions that address commercial affordability and efforts to boost economic opportunities by giving residents preference for jobs created through redevelopment have also shown promise in meeting their goals.⁷ Such measures can help mitigate the disproportionate costs that gentrification and revitalization often impose on residents of color. Specifically, commercial affordability measures can tackle the small business dislocations that have been shown to contribute to indirect displacement among black/African-American⁸ residents of gentrifying neighborhoods in the United States,⁹ and hiring requirements can create employment opportunities for workers of color in redevelopment projects.¹⁰

Displacement mitigation policy tools can tackle citywide challenges or specifically address displacement and economic opportunity in neighborhoods experiencing revitalization and reinvestment. This essay focuses on the latter category of interventions.

There are three main ways that tools can directly address displacement in areas at risk of gentrifying. The first involves targeting these areas geographically. Policy tools that create or preserve affordable housing or commercial space, or increase economic opportunities, were categorized in this study as mitigating displacement in revitalizing neighborhoods if they were aimed at or used in such areas. The second channel involves addressing the types of displacement that are common in neighborhoods that are attracting investment. Examples include rent regulation (which targets economic displacement due to housing cost increases) and tenant protections (which can reduce illegal evictions and other predatory landlord activity). The final

⁶ Myungshik Choi, Shannon Van Zandt, and David Matarrita-Cascante, “Can Community Land Trusts Slow Gentrification?” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 40, no. 3 (2018): 349-411; Mitchell Crispell and Nicole Montojo. “Urban Displacement Project: San Francisco’s Chinatown,” (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, 2016); Mitchell Crispell, Logan Rockefeller Harris, and Sydney Cespedes, “Urban Displacement Project: San Mateo County’s East Palo Alto,” (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, 2016); Caroline Gallaher, *The Politics of Staying Put: Condo Conversion and Tenant Right-to-Buy in Washington DC*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Cassadra Wolos Pattanayak, D. James Greiner, and Jonathan Hennessy, “The Limits of Unbundled Legal Assistance: A Randomized Study in a Massachusetts District Court and Prospects for the Future.” *Harvard Law Review* 126, no. 4 (February 2013); Newman and Wyly, “The Right to Stay Put, Revisited,” 23-57; Miriam Zuk and Karen Chapple. “Housing Production, Filtering and Displacement: Untangling the Relationships,” (2016).

⁷ Olivia LaVecchia and Stacy Mitchell, “Affordable Space,” (2016); Kathleen Mulligan-Hansel, “Making Development Work for Local Residents: Local Hire Programs and Implementation Strategies that Serve Low-Income Communities,” (Oakland, CA: The Partnership for Working Families, July 2008); Leland Saito and Jonathan Truong, “The L.A. Live Community Benefits Agreement: Evaluating the Agreement Results and Shifting Political Power in the City.” *Urban Affairs Review* 51, no. 2 (2014): 263-286.

⁸ Editor’s note: All references in this essay to black/African-American, white, or Asian populations refer to non-Hispanic/Latinx individuals unless otherwise noted.

⁹ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the ‘Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Daniel Monroe Sullivan and Samuel Shaw, “Retail Gentrification and Race: The Case of Alberta Street in Portland Oregon,” *Urban Affairs Review* 47, no. 3 (2011): 413-432.

¹⁰ The Office of Economic and Workforce Development, “San Francisco Local Hiring Policy for Construction: Annual Report to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors,” (San Francisco, CA: The Office of Economic and Workforce Development); Partnership for Working Families, “Making a Success of Local Hire,” *Shelterforce* (blog). October 21, 2016; Hannah Roditi and Naomi Zauderer, “Breaking Down the Wall: Opening Building-Trade Careers to Low-Income People of Color,” *Clearinghouse Rev.* 36, (200): 154.

set of tools includes initiatives like housing trust funds that possess the flexibility to tackle the rapid changes that can occur in appreciating areas.

Figures 1 and 2 show the percentage of survey respondent cities that had adopted each displacement mitigation tool. The most common residential interventions were voluntary inclusionary zoning and housing trust funds, both of which were in place in nearly half of cities. The vast majority of the inclusionary zoning programs in these cities offered density, height, or floor area ratio bonuses (or other land use concessions that are particularly valuable in neighborhoods where demand is increasing), in exchange for the onsite construction of below-market-rate units. Similarly, most cities' housing trust funds were financed by fees charged on private development or by property/occupancy taxes. The two most prevalent displacement mitigation tools thus leverage market demand and appreciation to address the costs of these processes for low-income households.

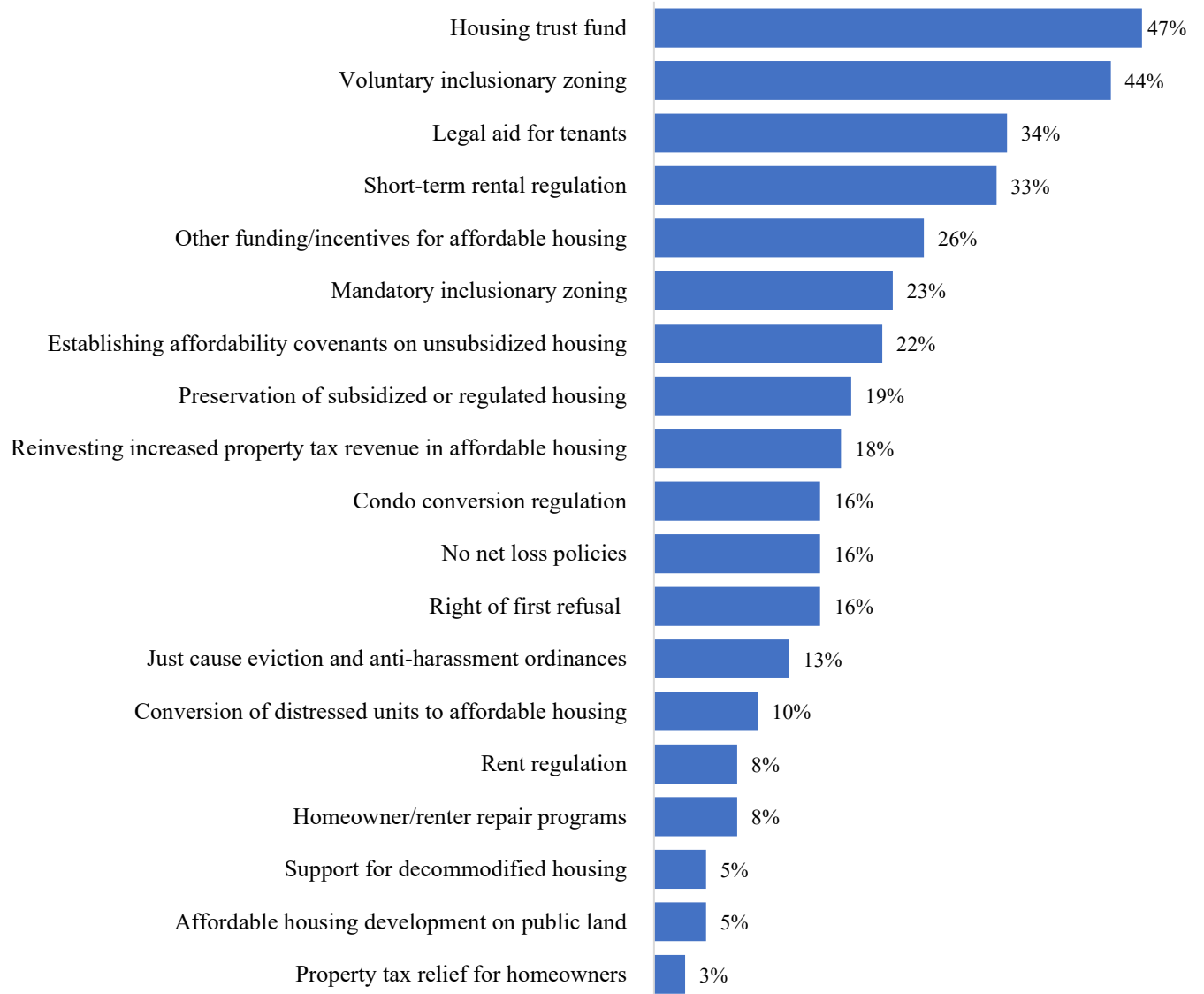
This strategy is appealing to local governments because it generates affordable housing resources at a time when public funding is inadequate. For example, inclusionary zoning can produce below-market-rate units without direct public subsidy in neighborhoods that are hosting market-rate investment, and fees charged on development have supported the acquisition and rent-limitation of low-cost housing in appreciating areas.¹¹ However, due in part to the rising costs associated with market-stimulating efforts, the below-market-rate housing units generated through these initiatives are not always affordable to long-time neighborhood residents and are not produced in sufficient quantities to meet their needs.¹² On their own, policy tools that leverage market demand to increase affordability are therefore unlikely to counterbalance the displacement pressures associated with increased high-end development and the in-migration of more affluent households with different commercial preferences and cultural practices.

¹¹ City of Boston. "Acquisition Opportunity Program." accessed June 19, 2019.

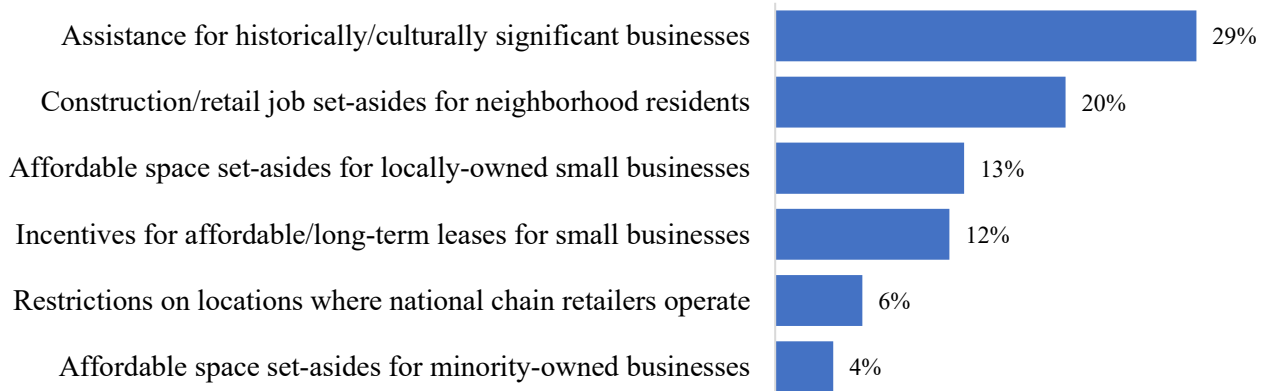
<https://www.boston.gov/departments/neighborhood-development/acquisition-opportunity-program>; San Francisco Office of the Mayor, "Mayor Lee Announces Funding for Small Site Acquisition Program to Protect Longtime San Francisco Tenants." News Release, (August 11, 2014).

¹² Tom Angotti, *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).; Leslie Bridgers, "Portland Jumps Aboard a Hot Affordable Housing Trend—Inclusionary Zoning," *Portland Press Herald*, November 15, 2015; Peter Cohen and Fernando Marti, "Searching for the 'Sweet Spot' in San Francisco," in *Whose Urban Resistance? An International Comparison of Urban Regeneration Strategies*, ed. Kate Shaw and Libby Porter. (London: Routledge, 2009); Bethany Li, "Now is the Time! Challenging Resegregation and Displacement in the Age of Hypergentrification," *Fordham Law Review* 85, no. 3 (2016): 1189-1242; Carolina Sarmiento and J. Revel Sims, "Facades of Equitable Development: Santa Ana and the Affordable Housing Complex," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 35, no. 3 (2015): 323-336.; Filip Stabrowski, "Inclusionary Zoning and Exclusionary Development: The Politics of 'Affordable Housing' in North Brooklyn," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 6 (2015): 1120-1136.; Samuel Stein, "Progress for Whom, Toward What? Progressive Politics and New York City's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 40, no. 6 (2018): 770-781.

**Fig. 1:
 PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENT CITIES WITH POLICY TOOLS TO MITIGATE RESIDENTIAL
 DISPLACEMENT FROM NEIGHBORHOODS EXPERIENCING REVITALIZATION OR REINVESTMENT
 (N=79)**



**Fig. 2:
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENT CITIES USING COMMERCIAL AFFORDABILITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TOOLS SOMEWHAT OR VERY ACTIVELY IN NEIGHBORHOODS EXPERIENCING REINVESTMENT OR REVITALIZATION (N=53)**



There are four complementary approaches that cities can take to reduce the adverse impacts of market-leveraging mixed-income efforts on lower-income households and increase incumbent residents’ opportunities to benefit from neighborhood investment. The first involves accounting for potential displacement impacts in the initial design of redevelopment plans. For example, Seattle’s [Mandatory Housing Affordability Plan](#) limits the extent of proposed rezonings for increased development capacity in neighborhoods where the risk of displacement is high for low-income households and communities of color.¹³ Portland, OR’s comprehensive plan similarly commits the city to anticipate and proactively reduce the costs of investment and development for vulnerable communities.¹⁴ These principles also guided the city’s strategy for investment in the historically black/African-American neighborhood of North/Northeast Portland. The neighborhood plan was developed through substantial engagement with existing and previously displaced residents; it also included efforts to prevent displacement by providing home repair loans and grants, creating permanently affordable homes for rent and sale, and acquiring land to be used for permanently affordable housing in the future. Recognizing that past city policies reduced housing options for the neighborhood’s black/African-American

¹³ Office of Planning and Community Development, Office of Housing, Department of Neighborhoods, and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, “Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Citywide Implementation: Director’s Report and Recommendation.” (Seattle, WA: Office of Planning and Community Development, Office of Housing, Department of Neighborhoods, and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, February 2018); Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development, “Seattle 2035 Growth and Equity: Analyzing Impacts on Displacement and Opportunity Related to Seattle’s Growth Strategy.” (Seattle, WA: Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development, May 2016);

¹⁴ City of Portland, “Portland 2035 Comprehensive Plan.” (Portland, OR: City of Portland, December 2018).

population, the plan also gave preference for housing created through these new programs to residents who were at risk of, or previously experienced, displacement from the area.¹⁵

The second approach involves investing in long-term affordable housing when land values are low, so that fewer units are threatened by market forces when demand increases. Support for decommodified housing and the construction of affordable units on public lots were among the least common tools used by respondent cities to address displacement in neighborhoods experiencing revitalization or reinvestment (Fig. 1). While this likely reflects rising land costs in areas where demand is increasing, it also highlights the importance of early intervention for preserving low-income households' ability to benefit from investments in their neighborhoods. Establishing land banks and community land trusts before appreciation occurs can stabilize communities and shield them from market volatility. For example, a community land trust in Boston's Dudley Triangle that was established with city support as part of a neighborhood revitalization initiative has preserved affordability for residents amid heightened demand and protected them from foreclosure during market downturns.¹⁶ Because it is less expensive to invest in affordability before appreciation is advanced, early intervention can also reduce cities' reliance on strong-market tools to address displacement.

The third approach involves pairing market-leveraging efforts with measures that attenuate their ripple effects for residents of targeted neighborhoods. Relevant policy tools include protections against or legal aid in the event of harassment and evictions; regulations that limit rent increases or prevent landlords from leasing units on the short-term market; and measures that mandate one-for-one replacement of affordable units in the affected area, limit the conversion of rental units to condominiums, or assist tenants to purchase their units when such conversions occur. Although these anti-displacement tools were not in place in most respondent cities (Fig.1), the case of New York illustrates how they can be combined with market-based programs. The city has rezoned numerous low-income neighborhoods that have high proportions of residents of color for increased development capacity in conjunction with its inclusionary housing programs, raising fears of displacement.¹⁷ The municipal government is using several mitigating tools in response. Some aim to ensure that the below-market-rate units produced in target neighborhoods are affordable and accessible to neighborhood residents: for example,

¹⁵ Portland Housing Authority, "North/Northeast Neighborhood Housing Strategy: Executive Summary." (Portland, OR: Portland Housing Authority.

¹⁶ John Emmeus Davis, "Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust in the United States," in *The Community Land Trust Reader*, ed. by John Emmeus Davis (Massachusetts: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010).; Lee Allen Dwyer, "Mapping Impact: An Analysis of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Land Trust" (Masters thesis, MIT, 2015); May Louie, "Community Land Trusts: A Powerful Vehicle for Development without Displacement," *Trotter Review* 23, no. 1 (2016).

¹⁷ The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, "How Have Recent Rezonings Affected the City's Ability to Grow?" (2010); Emily Goldstein, "New York City Needs to Stop Negotiating Rezonings From an Uneven Playing Field." *Shelterforce* (blog), May 1, 2018; Stein, "Progressive Politics and New York City's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing."

public subsidies help inclusionary units to reach lower-income households and half of city-assisted units are reserved for income-eligible residents of the affected neighborhood.¹⁸ The city has also stepped up efforts to combat speculative and predatory behavior through door-to-door tenant education and legal referrals in neighborhoods with heightened displacement risk; laws that protect tenants against harassment from owners seeking buy-outs; partnership with the state government to investigate and prosecute tenant harassment; and legislation that will, within five years, guarantee legal counsel for all low-income tenants facing eviction.¹⁹ The city's administration also plans to create a list of rent-regulated buildings whose sale is likely to put tenants at risk of eviction, so the city can target legal assistance and other protections accordingly.²⁰ Although it is too early to assess these interventions' effectiveness in New York, they demonstrate a multi-dimensional approach to addressing the adverse residential impacts of market-stimulating policy tools on lower-income neighborhoods.

The final strategy involves enabling residents of revitalizing neighborhoods to benefit from employment opportunities generated by investment and keeping existing neighborhood commercial and cultural institutions viable in the face of an influx of households with different lifestyles and more purchasing power. Respondent cities did not commonly use policy tools in these categories (Fig. 2), although the majority (55%) reported using at least one tool somewhat or very actively. The example of San Francisco demonstrates how three of these tools – assistance for local businesses, restrictions on locations where chain establishments can operate, and job set-asides for residents – can target different aspects of displacement. The city combats rising commercial rents by providing financial assistance to owners of historically and culturally significant establishments and to landlords who grant them long-term leases.²¹ The city has also successfully limited the presence of chain businesses and preserved independently owned establishments in commercial districts by requiring enterprises with more than 11 locations globally to acquire a special use permit before opening a store in these areas.²² Moreover, San

¹⁸ Rafael Cestero, "An Inclusionary Tool Created by Low-Income Communities for Low-Income Communities," *The Dream Revisited* (blog), *NYU Furman Center*, November 2015; "Mandatory Exclusionary Zoning," NYC Department of City Planning, accessed June 18, 2019; New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, "HPD commissioner Torres-Springer and HDC President Enderlin Announce Housing Lottery for 25 Affordable Apartments in Brooklyn." News release, (March 27, 2017).

¹⁹ "Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force," New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, accessed June 19, 2019; New York City Office of the Mayor, "Mayor de Blasio Signs Three New Laws Protecting Tenants from Harassment." News release, (September 3, 2015); New York City Office of the Mayor, "Protecting Tenants and Affordable Housing: Mayor de Blasio's Tenant Support Unit Helps 1,000 Tenants Fight Harassment, Secure Repairs." News release, (February 29, 2016); New York City Office of the Mayor, "Mayor de Blasio Signs Legislation to Provide Low-Income New Yorkers with Access to Counsel for Wrongful Evictions." News release, (August 11, 2017).

²⁰ New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, "Mayor de Blasio Announces Implementation of New Law to Combat Speculators and Tenant Displacement." News release, (January 3, 2018).

²¹ City and County of San Francisco, "About the Legacy Business Program." Accessed June 19, 2019.

²² Olivia LaVecchia and Stacy Mitchell, "Affordable Space," (2016); "San Francisco Formula Retail Economic Analysis," Strategic Economics, accessed June 18, 2019.

Francisco’s jobs ordinance for city-assisted construction projects has increased the rate of local hiring for eligible projects from 20 percent in 2011 to 45 percent in 2016; although it does not specifically apply to residents of neighborhoods affected by development, the program has focused on creating opportunities for workers from lower-income areas.²³

Local Opportunities and Barriers

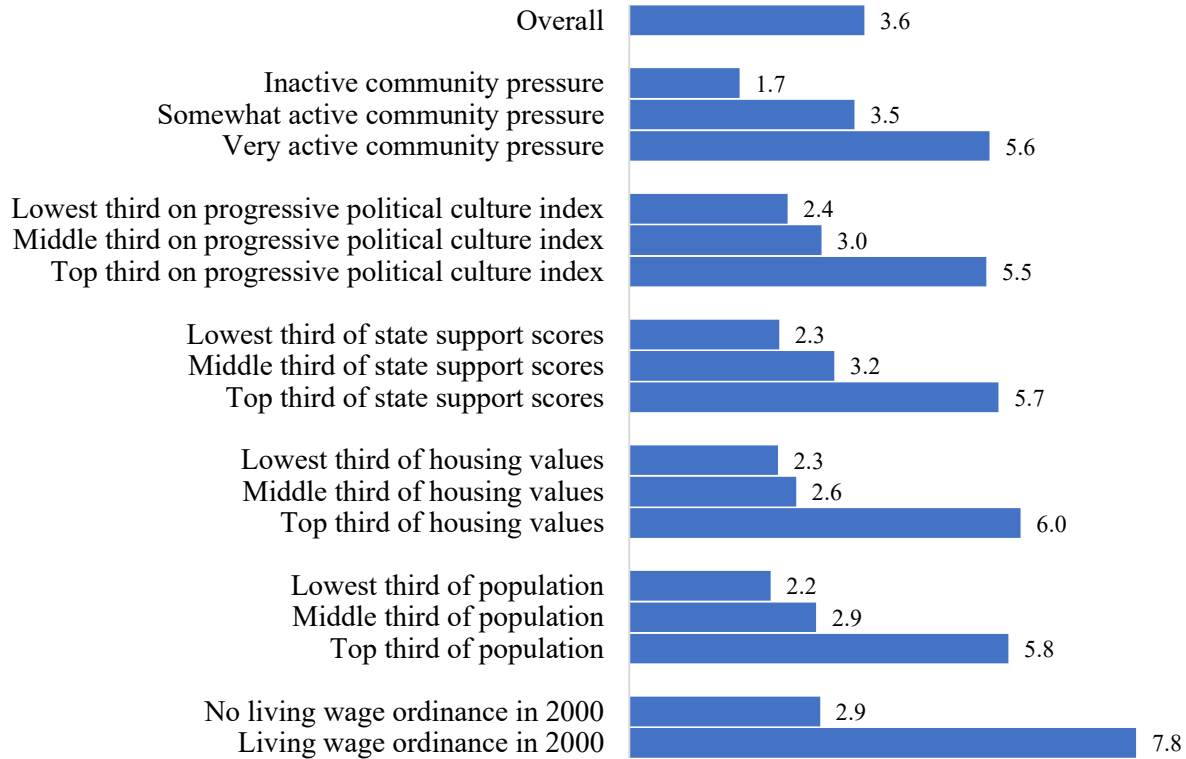
Although multiple strategies exist to mitigate displacement in areas targeted for investment and mixed income development, cities vary in their capacity to introduce the tools discussed in this essay.²⁴ Political, economic, and regulatory conditions all influence the likelihood and timing of policy adoption as well as the intensity and type of action taken. For example, local advocacy groups are crucial in putting interventions on the agenda, and a supportive electorate and progressive policy environment can increase the chances that programs are introduced. Cities where survey respondents reported very active community pressure to address affordability and displacement had more than three times the number of policy tools from Figure 1 adopted, on average, compared to those with inactive pressure (Fig. 3).²⁵ Moreover, a higher percentage of cities with very active pressure had legal protections for tenants, market regulation tools, and investments to create and preserve affordable housing in these areas, compared to those with inactive or somewhat active pressure. Similarly, places with the highest progressive political culture scores had each of these measures adopted more commonly than those in the middle and lowest third of the sample on this indicator, and cities with progressive policy histories (as measured by the early adoption of a living wage ordinance) were more likely to have market regulations, tenant protections, and investment strategies in place.

²³ The Office of Economic and Workforce Development, “San Francisco Local Hiring Policy for Construction.”; “Labor, Law and Lessons from California: The Debate Over Local Hiring and the Rezonings,” *City Limits*, accessed June 18, 2019.

²⁴ Commercial affordability and local hiring policies are not examined in this section because the number of cities using these tools actively is too low to detect trends.

²⁵ This section examines the following local conditions: the level of community pressure to address affordability and displacement (from the author’s survey of city governments); population size and median housing value (2011-15 American Community Survey); adoption of a living wage ordinance by 2000 (categorized as early adoption) (Swarts & Vasi, 2011); state support for affordable housing (an index that assigns states one point each for permitting rent regulation and mandatory inclusionary zoning (National Multifamily Housing Council, 2017) and one additional point for each capital/production program listed in the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s (2014) database of rental programs); and an index of progressive political culture that includes the percentage of: the population aged 18-44; individuals living alone or with non-relatives; same-sex partner households; women in the workforce; residents in professional, technical, educational, creative, or knowledge-based jobs; workforce members that bike or walk to work; and residents over 25 with a college degree (2011-15 American Community Survey).

Fig. 3
AVERAGE NUMBER OF ADOPTED RESIDENTIAL
DISPLACEMENT MITIGATION TOOLS
BY SELECT CITY CONDITIONS



Economic factors and locational demand also matter. Cities with the highest median housing values and largest populations, respectively, had more than two and a half times as many tools adopted as those with the lowest. Market regulations, legal protections, and inclusionary zoning policies were also in place in a higher percentage of cities in the top third of the sample on these indicators than those in the middle and lowest third. While it is possible that increased regulations and requirements lead to higher housing prices, evidence from past studies suggests that high-cost markets generate increased motivation to intervene and provide leverage to impose regulations and requirements on market actors.²⁶ However, strong markets also increase the cost

²⁶ Victoria Basolo and Corianne P. Scally, “State Innovations in Affordable Housing Policy: Lessons from California and New Jersey,” *Housing Policy Debate* 19, no. 4, (2008); Pierre Clavel, *Activists in City Hall: The Progressive Response to the Reagan era in Boston and Chicago* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Neil Kraus, *Majoritarian Cities: Policy Making and Inequality in Urban Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013); Levy, Comey, and Padilla, “In the Face of Gentrification” (2006); The Urban Institute, “Expanding Housing Opportunities Through Inclusionary Zoning: Lessons from Two Counties.” (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, December 2012); Marcia Rosen and Wendy Sullivan, “From Urban Renewal and Displacement to Economic Inclusion: San Francisco Affordable Housing Policy 1978-2014,” *Stanford Law & Policy Review* 25, no. 1 (2014): 121-162; Brian Stromberg and Lisa Stuevant, “What Makes Inclusionary Zoning Happen?” (2016).

of preserving affordable housing, and policy tools that involved investing resources to keep housing at below-market-rates in revitalizing neighborhoods were more common in cities with the lowest housing values than the highest.

External policy forces also influence cities' ability to introduce displacement mitigation measures. Survey responses and policy documents frequently referred to state governments' role in hindering, permitting, or mandating the adoption of displacement mitigation tools. Among the cities in the author's dataset, those with the highest scores on an index of state government support for affordable housing had adopted nearly two and a half times as many tools as those in the lowest third and were more likely to have tenant protections and market regulations in place.

These descriptive findings are consistent with numerous case studies and multivariate analyses, which show that affordable housing and equitable local development policies are significantly more common in places with a need for intervention, active advocacy group pressure, strong economic and fiscal bases, a history of progressive policymaking, a conducive state government environment, and a progressive local political culture.²⁷ Some of these contextual factors are malleable: community advocacy can be intensified, state governments can be lobbied, and information campaigns can increase electoral support for intervention. Other conditions are more circumscribed by structural forces but can be leveraged in different ways where they obtain. For instance, while cities with stronger demand have more latitude to regulate markets and impose requirements on developers, those where property values are lower have greater opportunities to acquire land at a reasonable cost and preserve its affordability in perpetuity.

²⁷ Victoria Basolo, "The Impacts of Intercity Competition and Intergovernmental Factors on Local Affordable Housing Expenditures," *Housing Policy Debate* 10, no. 3 (1999); Victoria Basolo, "City Spending on Economic Development Versus Affordable Housing: Does Inter-City Competition or Local Politics Drive Decisions?" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 22, no. 3 (2000); Cohen and Marti, "Sweet Spot"; Katherine Levine Einstein and David Glick, "Mayors, Partisanship, and Redistribution: Evidence Directly from U.S. Mayors," *Urban Affairs Review* 54, no. 1 (2016): 74-106; Katherine Levine Einstein, David Glick, and Katherine Lusk, "Mayoral Policy Making: Results from the 21st Century Mayors Leadership Survey." (Boston, MA: Boston University Initiative on Cities, October 2014); Levy, Comey, and Padilla, "In the Face of Gentrification," (2006); Paterson, Robert G. and Devashree Saha, "The Role of 'New' Political Culture in Predicting City Sustainability Efforts: An Exploratory Analysis," Working Paper Series 2010.01, Center for Sustainable Development, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, January 2010; Laura Reese and Raymond Rosenfield, "Reconsidering Private Sector Power: Business Input and Local Development Policy," *Urban Affairs Review* 37, no. 5 (2002): 642-674; Devashree Saha, "Factors Influencing Local Government Sustainability Efforts." *State and Local Government Review* 24, no. 1 (2009): 39-48; Stromberg and Stuevant, "What Makes Inclusionary Zoning Happen?"; Anaid Yerena, "The Impact of Advocacy Organizations on Low-Income Housing Policy in U.S. Cities." *Urban Affairs Review* 5, no. 6 (2015): 843-870.

Toward a Proactive and Comprehensive Approach to Equitable Mixed-Income Neighborhoods

For those who are working to build durable socioeconomically mixed communities that support the ability of lower-income households and residents of color to benefit from investments in their neighborhoods, these findings have numerous implications. Formulating neighborhood revitalization plans that reduce displacement risks by design and investing proactively in perpetually affordable housing are fundamental strategies that can increase stability in the face of heightened demand. When demand is strong, market-reliant efforts like inclusionary zoning should be combined with measures that increase incumbent residents' chances of accessing below-market-rate units and protect them against eviction, harassment, and speculation.

A comprehensive anti-displacement approach also requires preserving the cultural and commercial amenities that incumbent residents rely on and increasing their ability to benefit from economic opportunities generated in their neighborhoods. However, these tools were largely overlooked among respondent cities, possibly because direct residential displacement often takes priority in advocacy and policy agendas on tackling gentrification. When commercial affordability and local hiring tools were used in respondent cities, this was often on an ad hoc basis as opportunities arose during specific redevelopment projects. One way to increase policy activity in this area involves expanding on these case-by-case practices to create more formalized policy tools to guide equitable redevelopment. Another approach would adapt city-wide small business or hiring initiatives to the specific challenges experienced in neighborhoods at risk of gentrification.

The tools and strategies analyzed in this essay are relevant in rapidly appreciating neighborhoods facing immediate risks of displacement as well as in areas of concentrated poverty where communities are struggling to create better-quality living conditions. In both cases, the challenge is to enable current and future lower-income households to benefit from revitalization through opportunities to access housing, jobs, and affordable and culturally appropriate amenities. In neighborhoods at the early stages of reinvestment, introducing or strengthening land banks, community land trusts, and citywide tenant protections can provide a bulwark against future market volatility and speculation. Where gentrification is more advanced, resources can be marshalled to finance legal aid for tenants who are at heightened risk of eviction and to fund the acquisition of low-income housing that is at imminent risk of sale or conversion. Targeted tenant protection measures, such as those tackling buy-outs, providing information about building sales, and proactively informing residents of their rights can also address looming risks where appreciation is advancing rapidly. Whatever the circumstances of the targeted neighborhood, only by tackling this challenge through prompt action and a multi-dimensional approach will cities be able to curb the gentrification pressures associated with market-leveraging mixed-income efforts.

Implications for Action

Implications for Policy.

- Tools that harness market conditions to create mixed-income communities should be considered one carefully designed component of a comprehensive and proactive strategy that includes preservation and tenant protection efforts. An underutilized tool that more jurisdictions should consider involves introducing specific legal safeguards for tenants against the predatory landlord activities – such as improper evictions, buy-out pressure, and other forms of harassment – that often occur in areas where demand is expected to rise.
- Investing in land banks and community land trusts in weaker markets is a cost-effective way to create long-term stability for lower-income residents before appreciation occurs. Land banks should be considered when jurisdictions have the capacity to acquire and stabilize vacant, abandoned, or financially distressed properties. Authorities should require that properties subsequently returned to the market include long-term affordability provisions. Local governments should also consider donating land bank properties or other publicly owned lots to community land trusts and work to establish the regulatory, taxation, and funding provisions that will ensure the trusts' long-term sustainability and affordability.
- Dedicated revenue for affordable housing from taxes, fees, or general funds provides a flexible tool for mitigating displacement. Such funds can be marshalled to address rapidly changing conditions in gentrifying areas and tackle different dimensions of displacement, such as by financing legal aid for tenants or funding the acquisition and rent-limitation of low-cost housing. Race-conscious strategies to allocate these funds can assure that the benefits are shared by households of color.
- Addressing displacement pressure through measures that support incumbent small businesses and foster economic opportunities, such as assistance for historically or culturally significant establishments, affordable space for minority-owned businesses, and job set-asides for neighborhood residents, can help mitigate the disproportionate impact of gentrification on residents of color.

Implications for Research and Evaluation.

- Researchers have an important role to play in supporting policy development, particularly through accessible and timely policy briefs that convey key lessons from existing efforts. Study respondents repeatedly indicated that city agencies value the opportunity to learn from other cities' strategies but rarely have the time and resources to create comprehensive policy inventories.
- More research is urgently needed to evaluate the impact of displacement mitigation interventions, both through in-depth case studies that can provide detail about strategies and results and quantitative work that can help identify factors associated with successful outcomes.

Implications for Development and Investment.

- For-profit real estate actors should work with city officials to provide information on how to calibrate programs like inclusionary zoning in a way that achieves the government's affordability goals without deterring development and adversely affecting housing supply.
- Cities can leverage dedicated funding for capacity building, operating funds, and equity investment that can help non-profit developers compete against for-profit actors in acquiring low-income housing that is at risk of sale or conversion in gentrifying areas.

Implications for Residents and Community Members.

- Advocacy has the power to influence the political agenda, especially when it has a strong community base. Organized pressure directed at shifting political calculations on when to intervene to address displacement could lead to more proactive equitable development strategies. Attention should be given to ensure that residents of color have an equitable voice and access in advocacy efforts.
- Residents and community members should pressure local political representatives and non-profit actors to emphasize the economic logic of early intervention to mitigate displacement when fighting to put this measure on the policy agenda.

About the Volume

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Readers can view this essay, the [framing paper](#) for the volume, and all currently posted essays on NIMC's [website](#) where new pieces are being uploaded every month. Essays will be compiled and released in a final print volume, with an anticipated release in 2020.

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