

DISPLACEMENT: A HOLISTIC AMERICAN ISSUE

For generations, communities all over have been part of an ongoing fight to protect themselves and organize against displacement. In order to be well equipped for the fight, first we must fully understand the key forms, drivers, mediating conditions, relevant actors and stakeholders, as well as the effects of displacement before putting together a plan to combat this ongoing issue. This guide provides a quick, easy to follow understanding of displacement through common drivers, challenges and effects of displacement in regards to economic, social and physical issues. By doing so, we are able to better understand the intersecting effects displacement can have on community members.

Displacement has been perpetuated by American practices and policies since the colonization and occupation of Native land. In modern history, practices of redlining (which assigned 1930s American neighborhoods grades ranging from A to D as a way to devalue predominantly Black neighborhoods, lower or raise value based on the neighborhood's prospects and block Black Americans from mortgage possibilities), contract selling (offering mortgages to Black Americans but, if a payment was missed, allowing landlords to keep all payments and the property, evicting the residents), and countless strategies have ensnared poor and minority citizens in cycles of poverty that have proved challenging to escape.

DRIVERS

CHALLENGES

EFFECTS

PHYSICAL

Demolition

Turning industrial areas into park spaces attracts high-income individuals.

- Overcrowding
- Trauma/Root Shock

Concentrated Infrastructure and Transportation

New costs arise with more intense storms, a loss of insurance funding, rising energy tolls and building spaces further inland for relocating climate refugees.

- Neighborhood Decline
- Poverty

Green Gentrification

Intentional revitalization with long-term gentrification, or changing the character of a neighborhood for a different racial/social audience with a financial goal in mind.

- Erasure of Memory

Climate Change

Incensive placing of public transportation, especially train lines, invites an appeal for those who are looking to spend time or work in a different part of the city.

- Lack of Neighborhood Services, Goods and Stores

Loss of Market Rate “Affordable” Housing

Vacant lots are left unmanaged and those removed from spaces are left without subsidized housing.

- Inequitable Transportation
- Houselessness
- Food Deserts

SOCIAL

Negligent Landlords

Community scale anxiety, trauma and root shock with disruptive neighborhood changes, leading to further psychological challenges, especially for children.

- Perpetuation of Racism and Inequality, Lack of Diversity

Damage-Centered Research Tactics

Racial succession/”churn” in neighborhoods with different groups moving in and out.

- Soft Evictions

Real Estate Segregation

Racist landlords openly choosing higher-income, white residents over multiracial neighborhood locals.

- Loss of Community and Power Through Numbers
- Stress

Landlord and Neighbor Harrassment

Individuals having to move to different neighborhoods disperses political power, making it harder to organize and advocate for community needs.

- Perpetuated Cycle of Poverty (Encouraged by Neighborhood)
- Housing Safety Issues

Erasure of Culture

Removal from jobs, schools and daily locations separates friends and family. Labeling communities as damaged decreases morale and benefits investors.

- Isolation
- Inability to Unionize (Especially in Low-Income Workplaces)

ECONOMIC

Class and Race Income Inequalities

Pressure on rental markets with declining home ownership and rising housing costs, paired with increasing material costs, pushed demand/prices up.

- Erasure of History

Closure of Educational and Civic Spaces

Suburbanization of low-income families allows for concentrated suburb poverty. Low minimum wages make many existing homes and services unaffordable.

- Rich Growing Richer, Poor Growing Poorer, Middle Class Disappearing

Increasing Rents and Costs of Living

White households have a median net worth over twenty times that of Black households in the United States.

- Environmental and Social Ecological Destruction

Site Zoning

Movement from low-income to lower-income areas restricts social and economic mobility.

- Record Eviction Levels
- Unstable K-12 Education

Disinvestment

Property tax increases and paying more for common goods/services reduces the ability to pay more in rent especially with stagnant wages and the richest 1% yet.

- Decline in Housing Quality
- Lack of Safety for Remaining Indoor and Outdoor Spaces

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT: SWEET WATER FOUNDATION

Displacement presents a threat to communities in many forms, including economic, housing and community building. Although there is no simple solution to combatting displacement, this guide provides an understanding of some of the challenges that come with displacement as well as different means to help control the issue. This section includes key anti-displacement possibilities that are actively used and discussed between designers and community members in an effort to combat the effects of displacement. Given the uniqueness of each community and its diverse needs, we can use these key possibilities as starting points to reshape our conversations and provide general solutions to each.

The Sweet Water Foundation seeks to address the disinvestment of Chicago's South Side, especially the demolition of public housing and lack of food and educational inequities, through Regenerative Neighborhood Development "to create safe and inspiring spaces and curate healthy, intergenerational communities." Acting between public and private sectors, SWF works with the South Side's "ecology of absence," studying degenerative practices of absentee-ownership and the effects of blockbusting and redlining. By treating the garden and house as the place to work and learn, the group successfully works with rural practices in an urban ecosystem that stimulates/gives power to a silenced community.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

ECONOMIC

ACTIONS

Create and expand Public Housing Programs, ensuring their dispersion throughout cities, preserving existing buildings under rental assistance contract and advocate for Housing Federal Grants in all neighborhoods and cities to restrict rents for long-term affordability. Subsidized Housing Production using multi-family zoning and smaller units could save costs for future residents and ensure their survival and success in the neighborhood, and could ensure the production of healthy housing, including Climate Adaptive Strategies to weatherize, shade, avoid flood plains and construct public cooling centers.

Advocate for Tenant Protection, assisting tenants with short-term assistance in market-specific small funds, expanding aid and social services, and permanently set aside units in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

Require Investment by Anchor Institutions such as universities through providing jobs to locals, controlling rent and respecting existing neighborhood culture.

Allow for Community Ownership and create Greenspaces to promote intergenerational work and feelings of safety and empathy, expand educational possibilities to encourage social mobility and use education and local conditions and materials to construct spaces. Promote use of vacant lands to increase public space and decrease possibilities of green gentrification.

Redistribute and Expand Social Services allowing families free childcare, early education/aging services and affordable housing preference policies.

Improve Healthcare Possibilities especially with rising pharmacy and hospital prices by deprivatizing the industry, ensuring equitable hospital access and expanding education on healthy practices.

Push to Raise the National Minimum Wage to keep up with rising housing costs and costs of living and work towards eliminating homelessness.

Ensure Equitable Transit in order for citizens to collaborate, interact and access education and work.

Invest in Regenerative Neighborhood developmental programs with educational programs on art, aquaponics, agriculture, architecture/planning and carpentry, also allowing current residents to make a direct impact and stay within their community as desired.

Push for Rent Stabilization and living wage ordinances, allowing for more general stability throughout the neighborhood while commodifying land and ensuring proper zoning to avoid gentrification processes.

POLICIES

- Inclusionary zoning policies that require a percentage of units in new developments to be reserved at prices below market rents.

- Preservation of manufactured home communities through land use regulations and policies.

- No net loss policies intended to maintain a neighborhood's current level of affordable housing through preservation or replacement.

- Redevelopment assistance programs and relocation assistance requirements.

- Community land trusts providing affordable housing and other community assets.

- Rent-to-own programs in which low-income residents gain credit towards a down payment through affordable rent payments.

- Down payment assistance programs offering low-interest loans to eligible homebuyers.

- Property tax exemption or reduction opportunities for taxpayers who meet a certain age, income, residency, employment status, or disability criteria.

- Community preference policy and right to return (giving priority to current residents and those affected by displacement).

- Community benefit agreements that legally enforce contract between community groups and developers.

- Priority hires that provide local and inclusionary employment.

- Short and long term strategies between designers and community members in order to implement community improvement over time and on multiple scales, as displacement takes place over multiple generations.

SWF PRACTICES

CONCEPT: The Commonwealth is a four-block space targeting the concept of Regenerative Neighborhood Development, looking to repurpose abandoned spaces including homes and lots in an effort to introduce urban agriculture.

Included Programming:

- Thought Barn
- Community Farm
- Think-Do House
- The Work-shop
- [Re]Construction House
- Smart Pod
- RND Park/Meeting House
- Community Gardens

CONCEPT: The Sweet Water Academy unites multiple generations and communities through hands-on urban ecology instruction using the spaces of The Commonwealth.

Included Programming:

- Urban Ecology Apprenticeships
- Integrated Programs
- Catalyst Programs

CONCEPT: Arts and Culture Workshops work to ground and heal the community, offering intergenerational events and performances to inspire further community changes.

CONCEPT: The Marketplace acts as a collaborative space for artists, youth and community members to come together and trade ecological goods and services through trainings.

View <https://www.sweetwaterfoundation.com/our-work2> for more information about Sweet Water Foundation's Anti-Displacement work.