



CITY HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

development without displacement

2024



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An aerial, high-angle photograph of a fairground or amusement park, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The scene includes a large Ferris wheel in the upper right, a roller coaster track in the lower right, and various other rides and structures. The word "BACKGROUND" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

CONTEXTUALIZING SAN DIEGO

Located along California's beautiful Pacific coastline, the City of San Diego is renowned for its warm, year-round climate, access to pristine beautiful beaches, sprawling parks, native wildlife and so much more. These unique traits have rightfully earned San Diego the title of "America's Finest City".

In addition to its weather and beautiful scenery- the City of San Diego possesses additional traits that make it a jewel. One of these is the San Diego region is home to 18 tribal nations- the most in any county in the United States. Such tribal nations include those from the four cultural groups: the Kumeyaay/Diegueño, the Luiseño, the Cupeño, and the Cahuilla. Another characteristic that makes San Diego stand out is its strategic location. This is reflected in San Diego being an essential military town- home bases for the Navy, Marines and United States Coast Guard. These bases have over 111,000 active duty members and employ over 230,000 civilians- making the defense industry account for nearly 25% of San Diego's economy.

San Diego is also home to the world's busiest border. The San Diego-Tijuana Border has close to 100 million pedestrians and vehicles crossing each year. The significance of this becomes more apparent when these border crossings translate in over \$2.1 million of daily commercial activity. Such impact will only grow as SANDAG completes an additional port of entry- Otay Mesa East. This new port will address delayed border crossing times that have cost the San Diego Region between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion dollars per year.

Taking a step back and looking at the San Diego region, it's clear why it stands out. With its stunning scenery, significant military presence, and strategic location near the border, San Diego isn't just beautiful—it's a region with a significant economic presence, drawing people from all over the world.

BACKGROUND

CULTURE AT A GLANCE

When zooming in and looking beyond the big picture, there are additional traits that make San Diego unique. Out of all these traits - one that stands out is culture. Having close proximity to the border and being home to refugees from all over the world has led San Diego to have a wealth of diversity and develop very distinct cultures. This is reflected in the traditions and customs portrayed by local San Diegans.

For many locals, family serves as another reason to cross the border, as Mexican immigrants have established roots in both the United States and Mexico. Additionally, individuals born here but with ties abroad have contributed to the creation of a new Chicano culture. This culture captures the unique struggles of a community that has fought for recognition and space, both in San Diego and across the nation. This influence is evident in the built environment in places like Chicano Park, where well-crafted murals reflect the history and culture of the people who call the surrounding neighborhood home.





In addition, Placemaking has occurred in other parts of San Diego, including the vibrant community of City Heights, located in east San Diego. The City Heights neighborhood exudes life through its residents, many of whom escaped conflicts in countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Iran. While many arrived in City Heights as migrants and refugees, they have they have boldly established their presence and cultivated a unique space of their own. City Heights is a living tapestry of culture, a community like no other situated in a city like no other.

Unfortunately, there are many factors such as rising living costs and gentrification that threaten the city's rich spirit and aim to displace community. Though there is no clear answer to this impending crisis, the Development Without Displacement Values Statement aims to start the work and create a framework of change that will assure residents that they can continue to call America's Finest City home for years to come.

BACKGROUND

DEFINING GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Gentrification and displacement. These concepts are linked to one another as the former usually precedes the latter. The following section will elaborate further on these topics, aiming to establish a clear understanding of concepts central to this document.



What is Gentrification?

Gentrification relates to the process of external entities investing in historically disinvested communities, resulting in the displacement of cultural identity and low-income residents. It can impact both residential and commercial areas. External Forces can take various forms. For example, the process of gentrification can be initiated by private investors seeking to profit from affordable land in underdeveloped neighborhoods, or it can also take the form of public policies that disproportionately impact these communities.



What is Displacement?

Displacement is the involuntary relocation of one's residence or business due to various factors including loss of employment, property condemnation (including eminent domain), redevelopment, affordability issues, economic obsolescence, and regulatory changes.

All forms of displacement are involuntary because circumstances leave residents and businesses no choice but to vacate. While displacement is generally thought to exclusively apply to residents of a community, it may also affect businesses, commercial institutions, and even intangible aspects like culture. The following section will dive deeper into these different forms of displacement.

TYPES OF DISPLACEMENT

Displacement is typically associated with individuals but that is not always the case. This section will outline three types of displacement: residential, cultural, and commercial.



Residential Direct Displacement

Direct displacement, often considered the "mainstream" concept of displacement, occurs when individuals and families can no longer afford to remain in their homes. The primary reasons for this are rising rent costs and issues of affordability, though forced evictions, eminent domain, and redevelopment can also lead to the same outcome. These factors directly cause displacement as they leave residents no other choice but to relocate.



Residential Indirect Displacement

Indirect displacement often stems from direct displacement because the latter often creates suitable circumstances for the former to occur. Rising rent prices and redevelopment typically cater to higher-income individuals, resulting in the direct displacement of low-income residents. Consequently, other low-income individuals cannot afford to occupy these vacancies. One may interpret this as preemptive displacement.



Cultural Displacement

Cultural displacement operates similarly to residential displacement, but it specifically involves the loss of a community's cultural identity, often cultivated by its own residents. Community values and traditions are varied, so cultural displacement can arise in various ways. Cultural displacement and residential displacement often intersect to overlap because residents play a crucial role in preserving culture. Therefore, it is not uncommon for residential and cultural displacement to occur simultaneously.



Commercial Displacement

The negative impact of rising rent prices in a community is not exclusive to its residents. Likewise, local businesses that are part of a neighborhood's cultural fabric, may also face the prospect of relocation or closure. For example, a neighborhood coffee shop may be forced to shut down due to increased rent costs. Just as wealthier individuals may replace residential vacancies left by displaced, low-income residents, larger companies may fill commercial vacancies. In the previously mentioned example, national chains such as Starbucks could take over space which was once occupied by the beloved coffee shop. This is known as commercial displacement.

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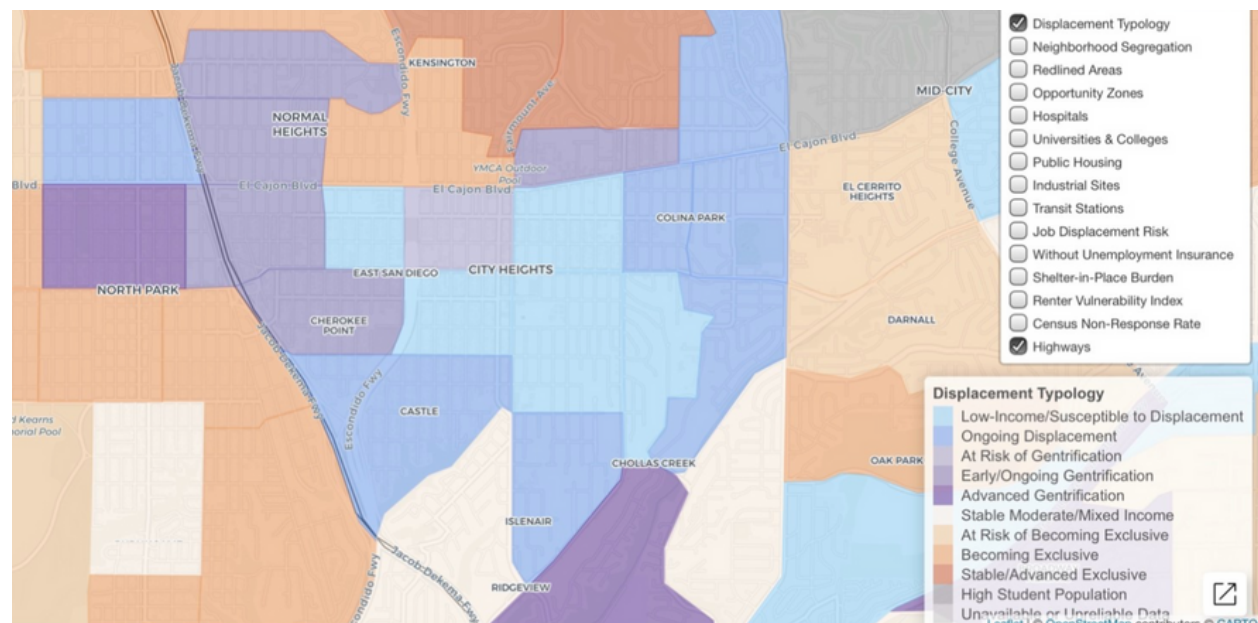
IMPACTS OF GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification almost always results in displacement and reshapes community demographics and culture in the process. Communities undergo such change during this process that they become unrecognizable, losing the unique characteristics that defined them. Displaced individuals will often relocate to more affordable places, which are frequently distant from job centers and their community, leaving them no choice but to start anew.

Gentrification in San Diego

Between 1990 and 2015, the number of gentrified census tracts in San Diego County increased by 18% (Urban Displacement Project). The majority of gentrification and displacement is concentrated in Downtown San Diego and neighboring areas to the east and northeast, such as Golden Hill and North Park, respectively.

Data from the Urban Displacement Project highlights several census tracts within City Heights that are either at risk of displacement or currently experiencing it. City Heights is bordered by North Park to the west, Normal Heights/Kensington to the north, Eastern Area/Oak Park to the east, and Ridgeview/Webster to the south. Most of these surrounding neighborhoods have already begun to gentrify, as made evident by their displacement trends.



On this map, City Heights stands out for its lower gentrification typologies, as none of the tracts within the community have progressed beyond the Early/Ongoing Gentrification stage. Despite this, the risk of displacement poses a significant threat to the residents of City Heights. This risk is exacerbated by the gentrification occurring in the surrounding neighborhoods.

City Heights has emerged as a safe haven for individuals fleeing from conflicts abroad, making it one of San Diego’s most culturally diverse communities. City Heights also boasts a significant Latinx population, which is likely influenced by San Diego’s Spanish and Mexican history, as well as its proximity to Tijuana and the U.S.-Mexico international border.

For many of those seeking a fresh start in San Diego, City Heights has become an attractive option due to the comparably affordable costs of living and the rich ethnic culture. Preserving this unique community identity necessitates a Development Without Displacement Values Statement that reflects the community’s needs and priorities for future development.



“ Preserving this unique community identity will require a Development Without Displacement Values.”



Potential Impacts South of the Border

Due to Tijuana's relative low cost of living and its close proximity to San Diego, it has become an attractive destination for locals to live, especially with domestic living costs skyrocketing in recent years (KPBS). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has enabled many individuals to work from home, which has made it easier for Americans to rent in Tijuana.

Living in Tijuana may be affordable for U.S. nationals due to the strength of the dollar, but the situation is different for Mexican locals. Over the past decade, local rents have doubled and land costs have tripled. Despite the recent increase to the minimum wage in Mexico's northern border zone, many residents still struggle to afford these rents. Various factors may have contributed to these increases since Tijuana has developed substantially. However, the growing presence of Americans is likely to exacerbate these expenses.

Though gentrification and displacement have not been studied at length in this part of the San Diego-Tijuana region, a troubling pattern has already emerged. Taking steps to reduce displacement in City Heights and other San Diego communities may be vital to prevent its impact from spreading to our neighbors to south and throughout the region.

BACKGROUND

DISPLACEMENT-WHAT IS BEING SAID?

Displacement is a major issue that is affecting the entire county, exacerbated by factors such as stagnant wages and rising costs of living. Due to the magnitude of the issue, there are ongoing discussions and efforts aimed at addressing displacement. These initiatives focus on potential anti-displacement strategies, which could provide a blueprint that for addressing similar challenges in other communities that are undergoing displacement.

Some of the experts contributing to these discussions are Dr. Karen Chaple and Dr. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideri. Dr. Chaple is a professor of Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto. Dr. Loukaitou-Sideri is a Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. In their “White Paper on Anti-Displacement Strategy Effectiveness”, Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris examined specific strategies for minimizing the effects of displacement. They analyzed 17 unique strategies and policies falling into one of three categories: Neighborhood Stabilization, Housing Preservation, and Housing Production. Each strategy was evaluated based on its potential effectiveness, implementation scale, timeframe, needed market type, and its coverage within academic literature circles.

The white paper also provides recommendations on which strategies should be prioritized by the State of California, local governments, and communities. It suggests prioritizing many strategies under Neighborhood Stabilization and Housing Preservation due to their “direct and immediate impacts” as opposed to Housing Production strategies. While the latter directly tackle housing issues, these strategies require much longer implementation timeframes as well as a strong market, which is not ideal given the current housing crisis and its implications for residents.

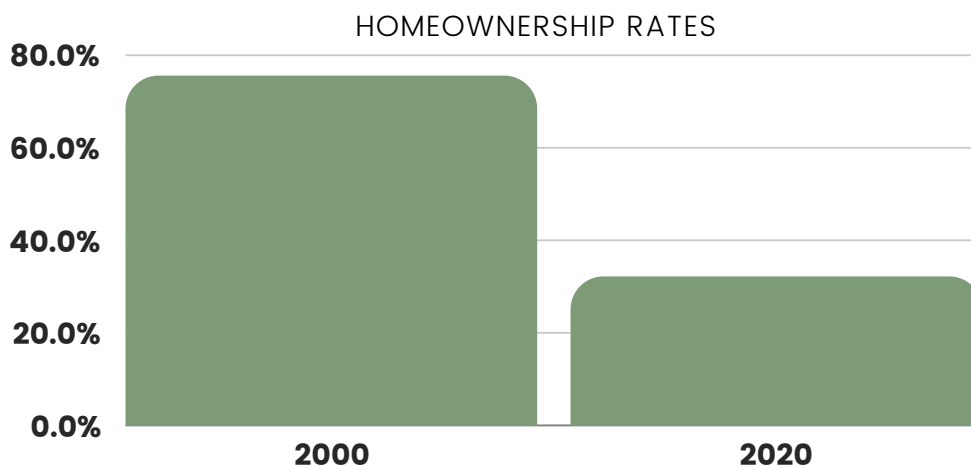
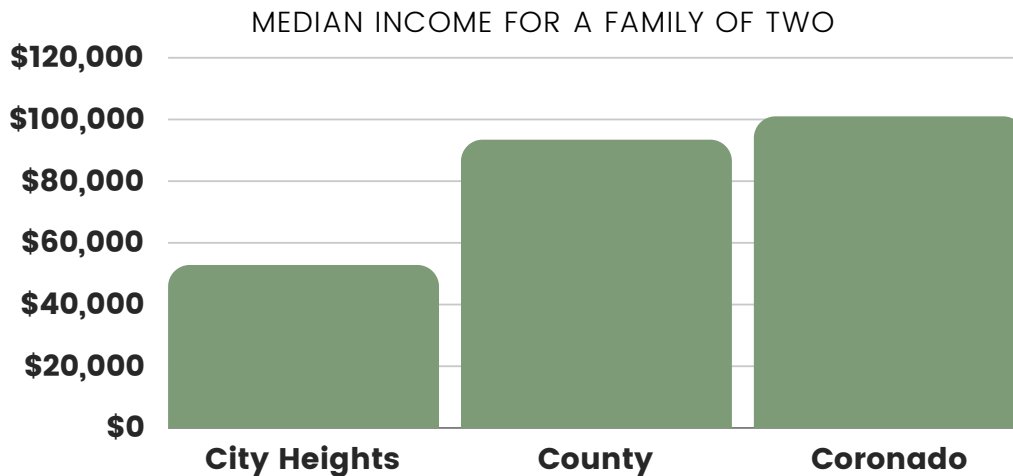
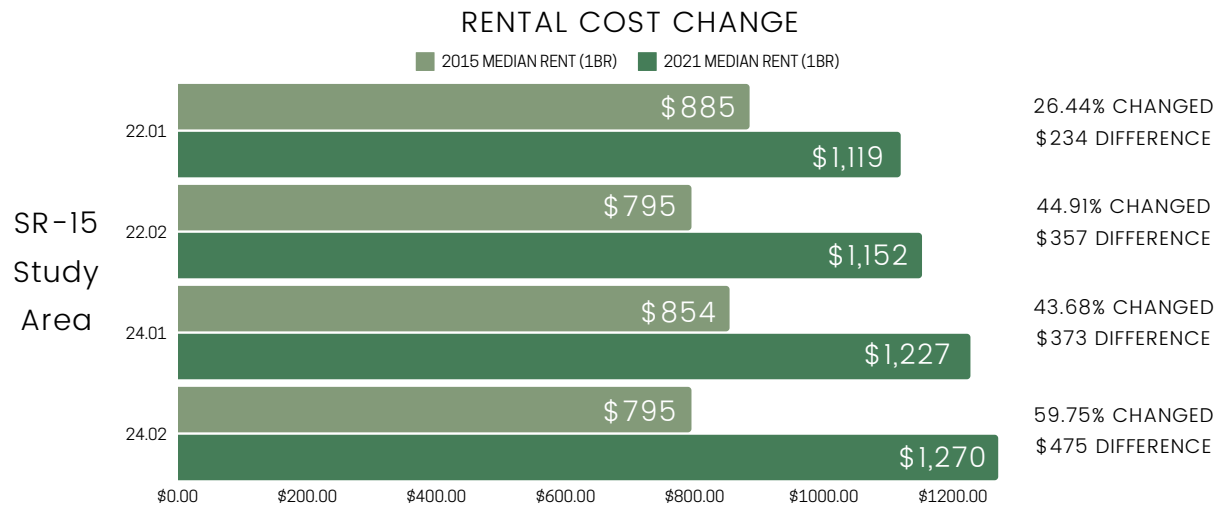
Another resource contributing to the discussion on displacement is a group of students enrolled in San Diego State University's City Planning master's program. These students conducted studies in City Heights to assess its vulnerability to displacement. Their final report, "Assessing Displacement Vulnerability in City Heights", provides context-specific analysis that will aid in addressing issues of gentrification and displacement that are unique to City Heights residents. Concerns about gentrification and displacement were gathered through interviews with City Heights residents, including those who have been displaced, and employees of several City Heights-based organizations such as City Heights CDC, Mid-City CAN, and the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans. This work underscores the significance of these issues for City Heights residents, many of whom come from large ethnic families.

The localized study analyzed the relationship between transit investment and gentrification, along with strategic policies aimed at mitigating fears and risks of residential displacement. The team set out to provide recommendations for two study areas in the community, both of which have experienced high rent increases and are in close proximity to transit. Ultimately, they found that rent stabilization and housing production policies would be most effective for the first study area, a census tract characterized by high density. For the second study area, they suggested the elimination of single-family zoning and the creation of affordable housing units. Additionally, the authors recommended political action based around a shared community identity and vision as a strategy to address gentrification and displacement issues.

The question of how to develop without causing displacement is one that has been raised by different experts. Although the issues of gentrification and displacement are experienced by marginalized communities nationwide, Californian communities face additional challenges due to the state's high cost of living. Experts studying displacement provide City Heights with a potential blueprint that can be tailored to the community's specific context. This is crucial given the urgent need for action, highlighted by data showing significant rent increases, declining home ownership rates, and below-average median incomes in City Heights. However, the efforts of the State Route 15 Transportation Equity & Affordable Housing (TEAH) Task Force will contribute to this conversation and bring community-identified solutions that will support City Heights' development without displacement.

BACKGROUND

DISPLACEMENT AT A GLANCE



U.S. Census Bureau. "Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000." Decennial Census, DEC Summary File 3 Demographic Profile, Table DP4, 2000 & U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Housing Characteristics." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04, 2022.



CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES

CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES VALUES



Development Without Displacement Values are principles created by the community to hold planners, policymakers, and developers accountable for major developments that align with an anti-displacement ethic.”

The SR-15 Transportation Equity and Affordable Housing (TEAH) Task Force is a coalition of community members, resident leaders, and partners from public agencies and non-profit institutions including SANDAG, MTS, the City of San Diego, and more. Together, they are working together to address housing and transportation issues along the SR-15 corridor. While the Task Force is an interdisciplinary group, each member offers unique skills and experiences vital to addressing issues of transportation and housing equity in the community. This group will build on years of effort that have led to vital community infrastructure, including the City Heights and Boulevard Transit Plazas, as well as Teralta Park. With diverse expertise and lived experiences within the Task Force, it's uniquely equipped to provide comprehensive feedback on addressing displacement in City Heights.

The Development Without Displacement Values are a collection of community-generated principles designed to guide planners, policymakers, and developers in upholding an anti-displacement ethic in major community developments. This approach recognizes how the displacement of people, businesses, and cultural institutions erodes and destabilizes communities. The Development Without Displacement Values offer an alternative framework prioritizing community welfare over profit-driven planning, and seeks to preserve the cultural identity of neighborhoods while protecting those most vulnerable to being displaced.

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT VALUES



1. Prioritize the protection of groups most vulnerable to displacement in all key planning and decision-making processes. This includes but is not limited to: low-income renters, small business owners, immigrants & refugees, seniors, and disabled residents.



2. Ensure all major planning and development processes prioritize existing residents and facilitate community cohesion.



3. Cultivate and popularize a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of displacement mechanisms (commercial, residential, cultural...etc) to support the development of rigorous and effective anti-displacement strategies.



4. Center and incorporate the knowledge, expertise, and lived experiences of existing residents in all planning, development, and policymaking processes.



5. Build capacity of displacement-vulnerable groups through community programming, popular education, and advocacy initiatives.

CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES

COMMUNITY NARRATIVES

Recognizing the displacement issue in the SR-15 Corridor, it's important to understand that these conversations are ongoing and not sudden. They are ongoing challenges affecting residents daily, leading to feelings of frustration and nostalgia. In the following section, community narratives will highlight residents' experiences and perspectives on displacement and its impact on the City Heights community.

When engaging with community members, they shared how they have been impacted by displacement. They also highlighted how the expansion of the SR-15 significantly contributed to triggering displacement, leading to various advocacy efforts such as the Visions Campaign. The expansion of the SR-15 had a catastrophic effect on community cohesion, physically dividing the community in two. However, through the Visions Campaign, community members successfully secured Teralta Park - the first freeway cover park in California. This victory paved the way for community members to become involved, but also raised awareness about the impacts of displacement.



CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES

COMMUNITY NARRATIVES

During the SR-15 TEAH Task Force project, City Heights CDC staff interviewed members about their experiences with displacement in City Heights. They voiced concerns about rising rents and development projects impacting the community's celebrated diversity, leading to family separations and a weakened sense of community. The loss of cultural assets, such as small ethnic businesses, was highlighted as a consequence of increased commercial rents. Displacement also contributed to a rise in homelessness, exacerbated by disinvestments and language barriers hindering economic prosperity. Tenant protections became a challenge as residents feared rent increases, neglecting basic housing rights. Overall, ongoing displacement in City Heights has driven people away and negatively affected those who remain.



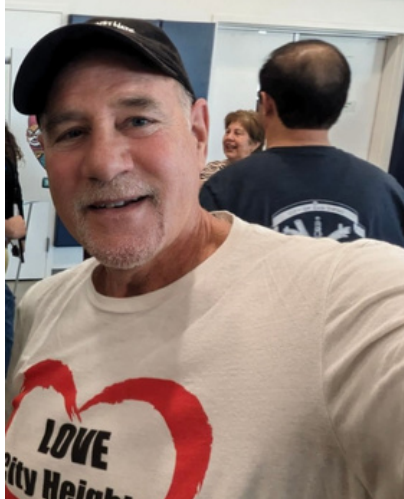
“Home does not feel like home after your neighbor of over 15 years is gone. It is not the same sense of community when your kids can’t play with the kids they grew up with.”

- Esperanza G. (Resident of City Heights and TEAH Task Force member)



“It’s hard to find stability after being displaced. Displacement can be the start of a vicious cycle that makes it harder for people to fulfill their potential.”

- Brittany G. (TEAH Task Force member)



"I want us to be the "Cadillac" of communities. If we involve all our residents and take action we can have both a beautiful community and keep our residents housed."

- Edwin (TEAH Task Force member)



My community matters. We are there for each other. By coming together we can work with our elected officials and keep our community thriving TOGETHER."

- Maria C. (Resident of City Heights/ CHCDC Staff)

Despite the challenges and the toll displacement has taken on the City Heights community, Task Force members expressed hope that this challenge can be addressed. They point to a number of victories resulting from advocacy efforts, such as the development of Teralta Park, the [City Heights Transit Plazas](#), [Landis St. Bikeway](#), and initiatives like free transit for youth under 18 through the [Youth Opportunity Pass \(YOP\)](#). The work done by the TEAH Task Force over the past two years has also been instrumental. Task Force members highlight City Heights' unique history of advocacy, supported by victories and the backing of non-profit organizations. By involving the community and partnering with Community-Based Organizations and government partners, the community believes that it is possible to bring investments to improve and reverse decades of disinvestments in City Heights- all while protecting those who already are part of the community.

A photograph of a community meeting with a green overlay. In the foreground, a woman wearing a black face mask and a blue and white striped tank top is seated at a table, looking down at documents. On the table are several colorful markers and papers. Other people are visible in the background, some seated at tables, some standing. The overall atmosphere is one of a community gathering or workshop.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

OVERVIEW OF CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS



The SR-15 TEAH Task Force, comprising community members, nonprofit staff, and local government officials, addresses transportation and housing issues in the SR-15 Corridor, with a focus on displacement. To facilitate discussions among this diverse group, City Heights CDC initiated Capacity Building Workshops (CBWs). These workshops aimed to simplify complex policy issues, starting with basic concepts and progressing to community-driven priorities in policy processes. Considering the diverse background of participants, language interpretation and inclusive practices were incorporated into CBWs. Additionally, fun community events, such as the Transit & Tacos series were organized to celebrate and engage Task Force members in influencing regional transportation and housing projects like the Proposed Rapid 625 and MTS Social Equity Listening Tour.

Task Force members brought a diverse range of expertise on transportation, planning, and housing issues. The Capacity Building Workshops (CPWs) began with basic terminology discussions, creating a safe space for learning complex planning issues. Task Force members actively engaged in real planning initiatives such as the City of San Diego's BluePrintSD and the Tenant Protection Ordinance. Simultaneously, the City Heights CDC team, guided by principles collaboratively developed with the Task Force, drafted the Development Without Displacement Report. Task Force members, having enhanced their expertise, reviewed the draft, identified gaps, and provided valuable feedback. This collaboration led to a partnership with San Diego State University for a Community Asset Mapping Workshop, which produced valuable displacement data and policy recommendations. Throughout the CPWs, the Task Force remained engaged, honing their skills to co-create the impactful Development Without Displacement Report.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

OVERVIEW OF CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

TEAH AT A GLANCE :

Meetings:

- Total of 24 TEAH Meetings over 3 years
- 6 Community Events

Topics Covered:

- BluePrintSD
- City of San Diego Housing Action Package 2.0
- CalTrans - Transit Plaza Enhancements Project
- Rapid 625 Conceptual Planning
- SANDAG Regional Plan



COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

PARTNERSHIP WITH SDSU SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING WORKSHOP



City Heights CDC partnered with a Master’s of City Planning cohort from the San Diego State University (SDSU) School of Public Affairs to conduct an Asset Mapping Workshop. This workshop was integral for TEAH to identify and preserve community assets as development increases.

The workshop combines practical exercises and data analysis to allow City Heights community members to share their views on neighborhood assets. These assets included local businesses, public spaces, and culturally significant establishments. Surveys, dot-mapping, and group discussions were utilized to pinpoint over 85 locations considered community assets.

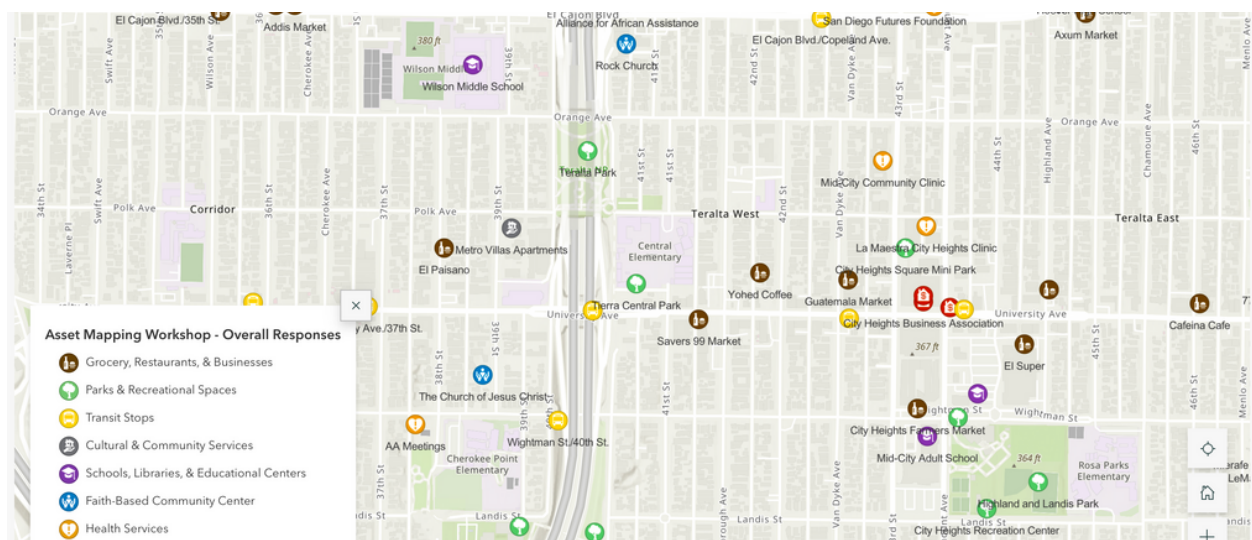
The asset mapping revealed the community’s strong connection to cultural and ethnic assets. Community organizations such as African assistance groups and faith-based institutions were highlighted as pillars of the community. Residents also stressed the importance of public infrastructure , especially pedestrian accessibility to parks and local businesses.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH SDSU SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING WORKSHOP

In terms of housing, community feedback emphasized the need for policies that align rent to median incomes of the community. SDSU's data analysis for the SR-15 study area showed significant rental increases from 2015 to 2021. The community has felt this, and concerns for displacement grow with each passing year.

Public transportation also emerged as a significant asset, with the majority of attendees relying on bus routes for their daily activities. The reliance contrasts the general usage patterns in San Diego County, demonstrating a unique need within community.

In conclusion, the Asset Mapping Workshop was proven invaluable in understanding and addressing community needs in a time of urban development. It helped us pinpoint cultural and ethnic assets for preservation or incorporation into future developments, while also highlighting the need for accessible public spaces and reliable public transportation. Furthermore, it empowered the community by involving them in the planning process. The SDSU School of Public Affairs provided policy recommendations which a TEAH workshop reviewed on 11/21/23. In addition, an ArcGIS Story Map containing more information was created.



Snapshot of the Asset Map Created by SDSU School of Public Affairs

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WORKSHOP



The CBW series reached its peak with the Development Without Displacement Policy Recommendations workshop. Here, TEAH Task Force members leveraged the expertise developed throughout the project and built upon the findings of the Community Asset Mapping workshop. TEAH Task Force members provided input on potential anti-displacement policies identified in the Community Asset Mapping workshop to address displacement in City Heights and along the SR-15 corridor.

At this workshop, Task Force and community members received a resource guide outlining the definition, real-world examples, and potential discussion questions for each policy. The workshop sparked meaningful discussions among Task Force members on the feasibility, implementation, and challenges of the policy recommendations. Community members also contributed by discussing additional policy efforts and initiatives that have not effectively addressed displacement, offering valuable insights into reasons for their failure.

Overall- this workshop was a resounding success. It offered an opportunity for all TEAH Task Force members to reflect on their growth and development. Each member actively engaged in discussions and played an important role in shaping the policy recommendations highlighted in this report.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented in this report will focus on housing production and development that prioritizes equity and supports working families. These policies are designed to proactively prevent displacement by focusing on community needs. To effectively mitigate against displacement, these policies require a collaborative approach which involves government agencies, community organizations, developers, and community members.



1. Establish Community Priority Agreements



2. Index Affordability Requirements to Census Tracts/ CPA Boundaries



3. Community Equity Endowments



4. Mandate Supportive Land Use



5. Support Cultural Preservation

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY PRIORITY AGREEMENTS

Establish Community Priority Agreements:

Community Priority Leasing Agreements mandate that any new housing development built in areas with high displacement rates must first offer units to residents directly affected by displacement. In City Heights, this means that new units in developments are initially offered to local residents. This policy also applies to homeowners selling properties in high-displacement areas, giving community members the first opportunity to purchase. Residents who have lived in the community for a specified number of years will be given priority access to these units with priority given to within applicants who have lived in the community the longest and are most vulnerable to displacement. By prioritizing local residents for new affordable housing units, community priority agreements help ensure that those most at risk of displacement have access to affordable housing options.

Example:

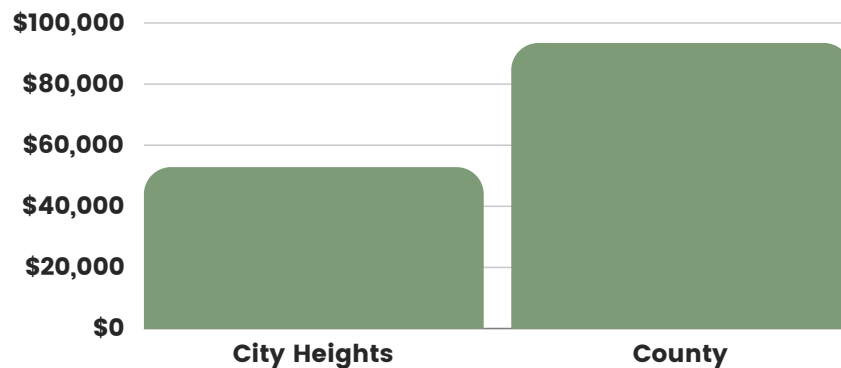
In 2013, the City of San Francisco's Neighborhood Resident Housing Preference (NRHP) policy allocated a percentage of affordable housing units to applicants with current residency or a historical connection to the neighborhood where the housing is being constructed. The policy aims to help mitigate displacement by providing long-time residents with access to affordable housing in their community.

Community Feedback:

- Housing Stability: Affirming the ability of community members to continue residing in the area.
- Community Connectivity: Facilitating sustained connections with the existing community.
- Displacement Mitigation: Proactively addressing and mitigating the impact of displacement.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INDEX AFFORDABILITY REQUIREMENTS TO CENSUS TRACTS/ CPA BOUNDARIES



Index Affordability Requirements to Census Tracts/ CPA Boundaries:

Currently, the eligibility criteria for affordable housing set by the City of San Diego and State of California is based on regional area median income which uses metropolitan-regional data to gauge affordability. However, metropolitan regions vary widely in income levels, cost of living, and demographics across neighborhoods. Indexing affordability requirements with census tract boundaries would enable targeted interventions in neighborhoods that are experiencing rapid changes in population and housing costs. This policy ensures that lower-income residents can still afford housing in areas undergoing redevelopment, despite the overall increase in cost of living in the region.

Example:

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), in their paper "Prioritization in Emergency Rental Assistance," emphasizes the need to set income thresholds based on specific geographic areas, considering the economic diversity within metropolitan regions. This can be achieved by linking affordability indexing to Community Planning Areas, going beyond state legislation requirements and providing a more detailed geographic criterion for affordability regulation.

Community Feedback:

- Community Residency Preservation: Facilitates community members in maintaining housing stability.
- Guiding Targeted Policy Development and Implementation: Directs data-informed targeted policy formulation and implementation to address specific community needs.
- Economic Viability through Smaller Developments: Potential impacts for developers to prioritize smaller-scale construction to address cost feasibility.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY EQUITY ENDOWMENTS

Community Equity Endowments:

Community Equity Endowments (CEE) require any developers or developments within a community to adopt a community benefits agreement. This agreement establishes funds that can either create additional affordable housing units or support programs aimed at addressing displacement. With CEE's community members have the opportunity to collaborate with real estate developers engaged in housing projects within the community, allowing them to actively participate in and influence the local development process, ultimately increasing community assets. CEEs represent an innovative model where a legal contract is established between a community organization and a real estate developer, mandating the developer to provide benefits to the community in which they operate. City Heights residents could potentially benefit from the development by securing profits through grants or contributions, which can then be applied to community services and assets.

Example:

In the most recent iteration of the Barrio Logan Community Plan Update, a Required Community Benefit Agreement was incorporated for developers. This required developers to “support low-income residents and preserve affordable housing to be built in village areas and additional requirements related to tenant noticing and relocation benefits for Barrio Logan renters”.

Community Feedback on Community Equity Endowments:

- Allocation of funds for community programs: Enhancing support for community members with programs addressing rent and legal counsel needs.
- Identification of loopholes in rent stabilization policies: Need rigorous examination to uncover and address any gaps that would be possible for developers to opt-out
- Advocacy for accountability measures: For a successful implementation, the community needs accountability measures to ensure transparent implementation.
- Ongoing funding streams: Establishing Sustainable Funding Channels for the Betterment of communities at risk of displacement.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

MANDATE SUPPORTIVE LAND USE

Mandate Supportive Land Use:

Implementing Mandate Supportive Land Use policies involves positioning public transportation infrastructure and services, such as public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian walkways in areas where they can effectively meet the needs of local residents and businesses. This approach serves several purposes, including reducing traffic congestion, improving public health, stimulating economic development, and enhancing transportation accessibility for communities. By strategically locating transportation infrastructure and services in areas where they are most needed or utilized, these policies can help to reduce transportation costs and improve access to jobs, healthcare, and other essential services for these communities. Mandating supportive land uses is essential to align infrastructure with community needs, preventing disparities in placement that can occur without clear directives. By requiring these measures, we ensure fair implementation and prevent the concentration of resources in wealthier areas, at the expense of low-income neighborhoods. Supportive land uses are crucial for creating sustainable, equitable, and economically vibrant communities. They strategically place infrastructure and services to comprehensively address local needs and challenges, enhancing overall quality of life.

Example:

Housing units near transit are exempt from minimum parking requirements for the development to optimizing housing supply. Instead of relying on personal vehicles, residents are encouraged to use public transit, which is why transit access within a one-mile walking distance is required. The emphasis is on creating housing solutions that are well-connected to public transit networks, reducing the overall demand for parking spaces and promoting a more environmentally friendly and efficient use of urban space.

Community Feedback on Mandate Supportive Land Use:

- Community Needs Assessment: A thorough identification of community needs report needed to identify gaps.
- Advocacy for accountability measures: Addresses potential loopholes in the implementation process to prevent delays and guarantee accountability.
- Preserving Community: Important to bring infrastructure investments without displacing community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT CULTURAL PRESERVATION



Support Cultural Preservation:

Supportive cultural preservation aims to proactively protect assets identified by the community as culturally valuable. These assets range from ethnic restaurants, markets, to community and cultural resource centers. In City Heights, these protections are important because when displacement occurs, small resident-owned businesses are often the first to leave due to high prices and changes in community composition.

Example:

Researcher Andrea Dumovich from the University of Southern California applied asset mapping to address community displacement in San Francisco. Through her thesis, "Preserving San Francisco's Cultural Heritage in the Clement Street Corridor" (2018), Dumovich used the asset mapping model to gather input from residents facing challenges due to rising rent. Collaborating with the community organization "SF Heritage," she identified culturally significant assets and established a "Cultural Heritage Asset" designation program. This initiative aims to protect local businesses and organizations, connecting them with resources to safeguard their presence in the community.

Community Feedback on Policies that Support Cultural Preservation:

- Community Engagement: Policy will require meaningful, intentional, and accessible community engagement efforts to identify community assets.
- Implementation/ Equity Considerations : Locations/Businesses/Resources identified to be cultural assets must be accessible to all community members.

CONCLUSION

This report and the proposed policies collectively aim to counteract displacement and foster the preservation of community cohesion in high-risk displacement areas. The establishment of affordability requirements tied to census tracts goes beyond state legislation, providing a more nuanced geographic approach to indexing affordability. Additionally, these policies strive to protect City Heights residents from displacement by reshaping investment dynamics, empowering the community economically, and promoting the construction of affordable housing units with priority leasing agreements. The overall approach underscores the importance of supportive land uses, strategically placing transportation infrastructure to comprehensively address local needs and challenges, ultimately contributing to the development of sustainable, equitable, and economically vibrant communities. This multifaceted strategy is intended to maintain economic diversity, preserve community ties and cultural traditions, instill a sense of ownership and investment among local residents, and encourage active participation in community planning efforts for a more inclusive and equitable community.



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The SR-15 Transportation Equity & Affordable Housing (TEAH) Task Force has done innovative and transformative work. However, all of this would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals. The work of the SR-15 Transportation Equity & Affordable Housing (TEAH) started in 2021 but its work stems from the Visions Project - which was the alternative that community members proposed in the 1980's to the expansion of the SR-15. Eventually, the freeway was expanded. However, advocates were able to secure Teralta Park - the first freeway cover park in the State of California. This victory paved the way for a wave of transportation justice in City Heights- to where the TEAH Task Force can find its origin. We are thankful to each and every community member that participated in these efforts. Community members like Edwin, Jair, Esperanza, Brittany, Elora, Daniel, Dike, Nam, Guillermina, Janet, and others have made this project truly community driven at its core. Through their dedicated involvement - The SR-15 TEAH Task Force was able to address community issues that ranged from addressing decades of infrastructure and transportation disinvestments, to ongoing displacement and the housing crisis with solutions that would work for community members of the SR-15 corridor.

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Without the involvement and dedication of Task Force members and community partners, the work done by the SR-15 TEAH Task Force would not have been possible. But all of these individuals who have supported these efforts have done so to support the cultural diversity and richness of the City Heights community. This community has a long history of struggles stemming from decades of disinvestments and environmental racism. However, the City Heights community also has a long history of resiliency- that is demonstrated in its advocacy and organizing efforts. It is this community that inspired everyone involved and dictated the duration of this project. It is our hope that this work inspires other communities to become involved in dictating how their community looks like. We dedicate this project to the community of City Heights- with the hope that it will get us closer to a City Heights where there are sustainable transportation options and housing is within reach for all.

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development without displacement

Thank you for your continued support in building a better quality of life in City Heights.



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