



Gentrification, Displacement & Government

All cities, including Denver, are dynamic and always changing. Intense growth in Denver has come with skyrocketing housing prices, individual displacement and homelessness, serious concerns across all our communities. But there are additional challenges and responsibilities when an area with many families of color and unique cultural infrastructure experiences large-scale displacement, harming not only individuals, but fracturing a close-knit community and threatening the diversity and rich tapestry of urban neighborhoods that we all value. Our challenge is to keep investing and improving areas in need without involuntarily displacing long-time residents.

Process of Gentrification

- Bank redlining and government-sanctioned segregation create a few neighborhoods with concentrations of low-income people or people of color, followed by lack of investment over decades
- Communities fight to bring back investment and amenities (parks, better transportation, grocery stores, better housing)
- Improving conditions attract new residents and businesses
- Rents and property values rise
- Longtime residents are displaced or experience a change/loss of racial diversity, institutions of cultural identity

Harms of Displacement

FOR THOSE WHO REMAIN:

- Loss of support network (neighbors, family and childcare)
- Loss of services (culturally-specific groceries, hair salons)
- More money goes to housing, less to cover food, education, etc.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TO MOVE:

- Cannot enjoy amenities that finally arrived
- Increased commute time and cost, less time with family
- Loss of home/neighborhood

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

A growing preference for urban living and growth are powerful economic forces also involved in gentrification, but government's historic role in segregation and disinvestment creates special responsibility to utilize public policy tools to mitigate and reduce the negative affects of past policies. This work requires collaboration beyond government, including with impacted residents. A few solutions we could work on together:

EXPANDING EXISTING CITY TOOLS

- Broaden property tax rebates to more homeowner families
- Fund creation/preservation of more affordable homes in rapidly changing areas and mixed use buildings, dedicate portion to existing residents
- Keeping projects affordable for 99+ years
- Expanding zoning and land-use links to affordability (density bonus, accessory units)

PROPOSALS NOT YET APPROVED

- Goals for training and hiring vulnerable residents on city projects
- Protecting renters with lease copies, non-discrimination for voucher holders, expanded eviction defense
- Resident decision-making on community-scale infrastructure

NEW IDEAS NEEDED

- How to maintain culturally diverse businesses and non-profits
- Preserving affordability for non-subsidized housing (rent control of private owners is prohibited in CO)
- Strategies to increase wages
- Improving inclusivity and access to higher opportunity neighborhoods

Contact us to continue the conversation, or for more information and resources:
bit.ly/GentrificationAndDisplacement