White Paper on Anti-Displacement Strategy Effectiveness, Revisited

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Executive Summary

Since the passage of AB 32 in 2006, the State of California has embarked on an ambitious program to promote more sustainable communities in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As public agencies have increased investments, from transit to parks to housing, communities have expressed concern about unintended consequences, in particular, the displacement of low-income residents. Public agencies seek greater understanding of these consequences in order to ensure that their investments benefit low-income households and communities.

Research on the impacts of public investment on displacement generally yields mixed findings (see the review in Zuk et al., 2018), with local policies and neighborhood context playing an outsize role in determining whether households can stay in place (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).[1] This raises the question, then, of which anti-displacement strategies work, where, and why? Despite the push to implement anti-displacement policies, there is a dearth of systematic evidence on the effectiveness of such approaches, i.e., their ability to reduce displacement either directly or indirectly.

This white paper, originally published in 2021 and updated in 2026, lays the groundwork to identify this evidence gap. Drawing on a review of almost 400 articles in the academic and gray literature, as well as interviews with 25 practitioners and academics, we summarize the literature on anti-displacement strategies, specify a research agenda specifically for the State of California, and lay out some sample research designs. In total, we reviewed the literature on 21 distinct policies. For each, based on the previous studies, we determined the potential to prevent displacement (asking by how much? how directly?), the type of market necessary to make it effective, the implementation scale, and the likely timeframe in which it works. Complementing this literature review, this report provides an inventory of anti-displacement policies across all California jurisdictions, available at https://www.urbandisplacement.org/maps/california-anti-displacement-policy-map/

There is relatively little rigorous research on *the effectiveness* of anti-displacement strategies, and even less research comparing effectiveness across policy approaches, contexts, or timeframes. Critically for the State of California, the literature suggests that not all public investments will lead to displacement; but we understand little about the types of safeguards that should accompany investments in order to avoid displacement in different contexts. We also conclude that there are serious gaps in the evaluation literature in terms of racial disparities in displacement impacts. Gaps occur because of five different challenges: the lack of a natural experiment or quasi-experimental framework; the dearth of appropriate data; insufficient sample sizes, particularly to measure variations by racial/ethnic group; insufficient or inappropriate timeframes; and insufficient variation of context.

For each policy, based on the previous studies, we determined level of literature coverage, the type of housing market necessary to make it effective, the implementation scale, and the likely timeframe in which it works (slow- versus fast-acting). We also include an assessment of the general direction of the literature on its potential to prevent displacement: positive, meaning that most of the literature finds an

[1] For this report, we define displacement as a situation in which households are forced involuntarily to move out for economic or physical reasons (because of eviction, rent increase, demolition of existing housing, etc.) or are prevented from moving into a neighborhood (i.e., excluded) because of high rents or other conditions they are unable to control or prevent. We define as anti-displacement policies various strategies, programs, and laws that intend to counteract the displacement pressures felt by some households.

association between the strategy and reduction in displacement; mixed, meaning studies present conflicting results; or unknown, meaning the literature either doesn't address displacement, is inconclusive, or has methodological weaknesses. Caveats apply. Even if a strategy is positive, reducing some displacement, it may have unintended consequences that may increase displacement, such as constraining housing supply. A strategy assessed as having mixed impact (such as market-rate production) may actually be more cost-effective at reducing displacement than some of the strategies rated positive. Further, specific contextual characteristics may shape the effectiveness of particular policies (for instance, the simultaneous implementation of multiple policies). In general, we find that preservation and tenant protection strategies are more highly associated with reductions in displacement than production strategies—but the literature does not yet provide evidence on which strategies keep more households in place and which are most cost-effective (and potentially scalable).

Table ES-1. Literature Review Summary Table.

Category	Policy Name	Literature Coverage Level	Preliminary Assessment	Housing Market Type	Implementation Scale	Timeframe to Prevent Displacement
Production Strategies	Market-Rate Housing Production	High	Mixed	Strong	Local, State	Long-term
Production Strategies	Subsidized Housing Production	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Local, State, Federal	Long-term
Production Strategies	Inclusionary Zoning + Developer Incentives	Medium	Mixed	Strong	Local, State	Long-term
Production Strategies	Impact + Linkage Fees	Medium	Mixed	Strong	Local	Long-term
Production Strategies	Accessory Dwelling Units	Medium	Mixed	Neutral	Local, State	Slow-acting
Production Strategies	Housing Overlay Zones	Low	Mixed	Strong	Neighborhood, Local	Slow-acting
Production Strategies	Land Value Recapture	Low	Unknown	Strong	Local, State	Slow-acting
Preservation Strategies	Unsubsidized Affordable Housing	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Local, State	Fast-acting
Preservation Strategies	Subsidized Housing Preservation	Low	Positive	N/A	Local, Federal	Fast-acting
Preservation Strategies	Housing Rehabilitation	Medium	Mixed	N/A	Local, State, Federal	Fast-acting
Preservation Strategies	Condominium Conversion Restrictions	Medium	Positive	Strong	Local	Fast-acting
Preservation Strategies	Community Control of Land	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Neighborhood, Local	Fast-acting

Preservation Strategies	Short-term Rental Restriction	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Local	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	Rent Control	High	Mixed	Strong	Local, State	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	"Just Cause" Evictions	Low	Positive	Strong	Local	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	Tenant Right to Counsel	High	Positive	Strong	Local	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	Rental Assistance Programs	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Local	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	Tenant Opportunity to Purchase	Medium	Positive	Neutral	Local	Fast-acting
Tenant Protection Strategies	Community Benefits Agreements	Medium	Unknown	Strong	Neighborhood, Local, State	Slow-acting
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Tenant Protection Strategies	Green Retrofit Pass-through Limits	Low	Unknown	Neutral	Local, State	Fast-acting

Neighborhood stabilization and tenant protection policies have the most direct and immediate effect on mitigating displacement. Given that most households with affordable housing live in unsubsidized units, housing preservation programs for naturally occurring affordable housing have the most potential for significant impact (so long as public funding is available via bonds, tax abatements, or other means). Housing production strategies can help indirectly in decreasing displacement by retaining or adding to the affordable housing stock. However, housing production policies typically require strong markets, and longer time spans.

State agencies may best prevent displacement by prioritizing housing preservation and tenant protection policies where possible, whether in incentive programs or planning documents. However, the state's direct power to curb displacement lies primarily in the long-term, in how it channels its investments and disposes of its assets, i.e., public land, in order to foster housing production, preservation, and stability. The state should prioritize preservation and stabilization strategies whenever it is providing funding to jurisdictions. Over the long term, the state can spur affordable housing production in a climate-friendly way through its strategic disposition of public lands, supporting housing development in transit-accessible areas. State agencies will need to coordinate, perhaps via an interagency working group on anti-displacement policies, in order to make these policies consistent and scale up their approach.

This review revealed several data needs that were beyond the scope of this project, including the need to track residential mobility as well as the need to survey and interview both displaced residents and government and nonprofit housing staff working on stabilizing communities, to identify the reasons behind displacement and the policies that may prevent it. The state should monitor displacement trends over time across the state, and in the absence of rigorous research on which policies are most effective, it could be valuable to survey local officials and advocates about which are most successful on the ground. Case studies describing how the approaches worked in different geographies could help agencies decide which to incorporate into their guidelines for investment. The state might also support local jurisdictions seeking research on how to design effective anti-displacement policies that will be relevant for their own particular contexts.

Though funding is always sparse, new opportunities to support anti-displacement policies and programs arrive continually in the form of infrastructure investment, and the state should ensure that it enacts guidelines that strongly encourage jurisdictions to adopt anti-displacement policies, as in the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program. Should housing prices and land costs dip, the state and its jurisdictions should take advantage of the moment to purchase private multi-family buildings and convert them to permanent affordable housing. The period after the Great Recession showed that the private sector was poised to make a profit on housing; in the future, California needs to be prepared to ensure that displacement does not result from rapid economic changes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the State

- When designing guidelines for competitive funding programs that provide support for infrastructure or housing, encourage jurisdictions to adopt anti-displacement policies, with priority for neighborhood stabilization and tenant protection strategies, due to their direct and immediate impact, and housing preservation programs for naturally occurring affordable housing, due to their potential for large-scale impact.[2]
- Use available tools to spur housing production, in particular, the strategic disposition of public lands.
- Establish an interagency working group on anti-displacement policies in order to enact consistent policies across agencies.
- Explore possibilities of collaboration and pooling of resources between state housing agencies and other agencies, such as Caltrans, to spur production of affordable housing
- Identify opportunities in existing and planned programs to collect data and conduct evaluations of impacts on displacement.

[2] One example comes from the Equitable Building Decarbonization Program guidelines: “This program includes tenant protections, which include the following elements: rent increase limitations, eviction protections, information for tenants and property owners on rights and responsibilities under the program, and requirements related to project work and temporary displacement.” https://www.energy.ca.gov/publications/2023/equitable-building-decarbonization-direct-install-program-guidelines

Recommendations for Local Governments and Communities

- Jointly develop a strategic plan for neighborhood stabilization, including a prioritization scheme for anti-displacement policies in the jurisdiction to incorporate into applications for state and federal funding.
- Use effective outreach to communities at risk of displacement to diminish accessibility barriers to existing anti-displacement programs.
- Build organizational capacity to carry through implementation of existing policies
- Seek to balance tenant protection policies with increased production of affordable housing units.
- Help build capacity in local communities by ongoing education about displacement issues and support for community organizing.

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Introduction

Since the passage of Assembly Bill 32, The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the State of California has embarked on an ambitious program to promote more sustainable communities in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As public agencies have increased investments, from transit to parks to housing, communities have expressed concern about unintended consequences, in particular, the displacement of low-income residents. The residential displacement of low-income residents can result in concentrating disadvantaged groups in places with environmental burdens and/or long commutes, counter to the state's climate, environmental, and equity goals. Public agencies should have a greater understanding of these consequences in order to ensure that their investments benefit low-income households and communities.

Research on the impacts of public investment on displacement generally yields mixed findings (see the review in Zuk et al., 2018). Local policies and neighborhood context play an outsized role in determining whether households can stay in place, particularly when certain neighborhoods experience disproportionate displacement pressures (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019). This raises the question: which anti-displacement strategies work, where, and why? Despite the push to implement anti-displacement policies, there is a dearth of evidence on the effectiveness of such approaches, i.e., their ability to reduce displacement either directly or indirectly.

For this report, we define as anti-displacement policies various strategies, programs, and laws that intend to counteract the displacement pressures felt by some households. We define displacement as a situation in which households are forced involuntarily to move out for economic or physical reasons (because of eviction, rent increase, demolition of existing housing, etc.) or are prevented from moving into a neighborhood (i.e., excluded) because of high rents or other conditions they are unable to control or prevent. Due to the lack of comprehensive datasets on residential mobility or surveys on motives behind residential relocation, there is no data available on how many Californians are displaced from their homes each year. Displacement researchers often estimate the amount of displacement based upon the amount of out- or in-migration relative to previous averages.

This white paper, originally published in 2021 and updated in 2026, lays the groundwork to fill this evidence gap. Drawing on a review of almost 400 articles in the academic and gray literature, as well as interviews with 25 practitioners and academics, we summarize the literature on anti-displacement strategies, specify a research agenda for the State of California, and lay out some sample research designs. Overall, the goal of the paper is to help the State identify and prioritize concrete anti-displacement measures to incorporate into policies on sustainable communities and investments, and ultimately to generate deeper knowledge on the role of policies in mitigating displacement.

As we embarked on this project, it became clear that government stakeholders have a variety of research needs that are beyond our scope. We review anti-displacement strategies in use generally and make broad recommendations for California agencies, but ultimately we cannot answer the questions of how agencies can be most effective at stabilizing communities, how they can best coordinate, and what is the appropriate scale for policy implementation, which may also be different from one geography to another. Where there is evidence of policy or program effectiveness, we provide specific examples, but we do not describe the hundreds of cases where implementation has occurred without any evaluation.

We begin with a summary of the literature review (see Appendix A for the full review), including a description of major findings and identification of gaps. The next section examines anti-displacement approaches in California, providing a methodology for inventorying policies and describing priorities for a research and policy-making agenda in the state. After an overview of potential research designs to evaluate five promising strategies, the conclusion recommends next steps for research and policy-making.

Summary of Findings from Literature Review

This section begins with an overview of the various strategies that have been used to mitigate displacement. We next identify the subset of these strategies that researchers have evaluated in terms of their impact on displacement (or proxies for displacement, like rising rents). We then describe the findings from the literature on each strategy, as well as the research gaps we identified in the process. (Appendix A includes the full literature review, as well as references.)

Overview list of policies

Considerable work, including work by the authors, has begun to synthesize the literature on anti-displacement strategies (Chapple et al., 2023; Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2021; Zuk et al., 2018). However, there is a further need to understand which anti-displacement strategies work, where, and why. With these questions in mind, we reviewed and summarized the academic and professional (gray) literature on anti-displacement strategies and examined how it assesses the effectiveness of various strategies in mitigating displacement.

We first looked at a long list of about 40 different anti-displacement policies identified in our previous research (Chapple 2016, Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019), divided into three major categories (see Appendix A): policies that lead to 1) *production* of housing; 2) *preservation* of existing affordable housing; and 3) *tenant protection* (keeping residents in place). Whether producing or preserving affordable housing stock or protecting tenants, the likelihood of displacement diminishes. The long list of anti-displacement policies includes a number of policies and programs that support overall prosperity; with the exception of community benefits agreements, these do not specifically address displacement, so they were excluded from the literature review.

For the original white paper, we utilized five different academic research engines to undertake an initial search for literature that discusses the effectiveness of each of these strategies as they relate to avoiding displacement. From this initial list, we chose to focus on the 19 policies for which we could find research regarding their effect on displacement or on what we consider as "proxies for displacement," such as loss of affordable units or increasing rents or land values. We focused on policies directly instigated or supported by the public sector rather than purely market-driven mechanisms (e.g., ad hoc development). Some are approaches that try to prevent direct displacement (e.g., demolition controls or rental assistance), while others aim to reduce displacement more indirectly (e.g., rent stabilization or asset building). We concentrated on policies that can be primarily instigated by municipal and/or state governments; we did not look at the full array of federal programs, though we reviewed the literature on federally funded foreclosure assistance programs and one federal rental assistance program (the RAD

demonstration program). Lastly, we chose not to examine policies that may indirectly facilitate housing production, such as, for example, highway construction.

For the 2026 update, we examined these 19 strategies plus two more: short-term rental regulations and pass-through limitations for green energy retrofits. We also conducted additional reviews on anti-displacement approaches in rural areas and rental assistance programs and eviction moratoria during the Covid-19 pandemic. We used the Scopus database to identify updated literature for this literature review, conducting searches for 2020 onwards using key words for each topic area and impacts on residential displacement. For example, for a search to identify new literature on new market-rate housing production and filtering, the following search terms were used: "new apartment buildings" OR "market- ate production" OR "market rate development" AND "filtering" AND residential displacement. Literature was selected based on its evaluative nature where possible, and contexts similar to California were prioritized. In addition, we conducted brief google searches for gray literature on the topic areas. Overall, this search yielded 243 new citations for the literature review.

In total, we reviewed the literature on 21 distinct policies, summarized in Table 1. For each, based on the previous studies, we determined level of literature coverage, the type of market necessary to make it effective, the implementation scale, and the likely timeframe in which it works (slow- versus fast-acting). Low literature coverage means less than five articles, Medium means 5 to 12 articles, and High means more than 12 articles. We also include an assessment of the general direction of the literature on its potential to prevent displacement: positive, meaning that most of the literature finds an association between the strategy and reduction in displacement; mixed, meaning studies present conflicting results; or unknown, meaning the literature either doesn't address displacement, is inconclusive, or has methodological weaknesses. Caveats apply. Even if a strategy is positive, reducing some displacement, it may have unintended consequences that may increase displacement, such as constraining housing supply. A strategy assessed as having mixed impact (such as market-rate production) may actually be more cost-effective at reducing displacement than some of the strategies rated positive. Further, specific contextual characteristics may shape the effectiveness of particular policies (for instance, the simultaneous implementation of multiple policies). In general, we find that preservation and tenant protection strategies are more highly associated with reductions in displacement than production strategies—but the literature does not yet provide evidence on which strategies keep more households in place and which are most cost-effective (and potentially scalable).

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Findings

Production strategies

Production of either market-rate or affordable housing may combat displacement by increasing housing supply; market-rate development is an indirect approach, while affordable housing provision is direct. We reviewed the literature on seven strategies; the first two directly produce new units, while the remaining five are policy or planning mechanisms that may increase production through fees, mandates, zoning changes, and/or incentives: *Housing Production (Market-Rate and Subsidized), Inclusionary Zoning, Impact and Linkage Fees, Accessory Dwelling Units, Upzoning and Housing Overlay Zones,* and *Land Value Recapture*. One common characteristic of production strategies is that they typically require several years, from planning to construction and development, for their effects on displacement to be measurable. Another common characteristic of the reviewed production strategies, with the exception of *Accessory Dwelling Units* and *Subsidized Housing Production*, is that they require a strong market to be effective, since strong markets lead to more housing development through both the market and regulation. Additionally, production strategies generally lack a clear timeline for impact, and long-term impacts may differ dramatically from those in the short-term. This is in contrast to stabilization strategies, and to a lesser extent, preservation strategies, which are typically implemented through legislation and have clear "start" and "end" dates that enable easier measurement of their outcomes.

There is a growing consensus that by increasing the supply of housing, *new housing production* helps moderate housing costs, makes housing more affordable to more households, and relieves displacement pressures (Been et al., 2019, 2025). Studies generally show that construction of new market-rate housing, especially in the short-term and outside of hot markets, slightly reduces exclusion by opening up housing opportunities for low-income in-movers (Asquith, Mast, and Reed, 2023; Chapple et al., 2022; Chapple and Song, 2025; Mast, 2023; Pennington, 2021). But caveats apply. Thus far, upzoning has had mixed results on new supply, with the exception of broad upzoning as in the case of New Zealand and ADUs in California (Freemark, 2023; Greenaway-McGrevy and Phillips, 2023; Marantz et al., 2023),

and the New York City case suggests that it may slightly increase out-migration of low-income residents (Davis et al., 2026). New market-rate production may actually result in rent increases in lower-priced residential buildings nearby (Damiano and Frenier, 2026), and may not alleviate displacement over the long-term as low-income newcomers cannot move in (Pennington, 2021; Chapple et al., 2022). Production of subsidized housing is a stronger guarantee against displacement, resulting in slight increases in both in- and out-migration in both the short- and long-term (Chapple and Song, 2025; but see Pennington, 2021).

One incentive mechanism for production is through *Inclusionary Zoning* (IZ), which allows municipalities to require private developers to build a share of affordable housing units within their new market-rate developments, or contribute a comparable amount to building affordable housing off-site. In return, developers may receive incentives such as density bonuses, expedited permits and approvals, relaxed design standards (including parking and height allowances), fee waivers, additional subsidies for affordable units, or fee restrictions. The literature shows that IZ programs have the ability to produce affordable units, but the extent of their effectiveness depends on the presence of a strong market, as well as on the particular terms of each program (Kontokosta, 2014; Schuetz et al., 2009). Additionally, the typically low share of affordable units required by IZ programs (usually 10-15% of the total units produced) results in low numbers of new affordable units. There are also concerns that in the absence of legislation to the contrary, affordable units developed through IZ programs will not remain affordable in perpetuity (Mast, 2023). One study of inclusionary housing in San Francisco found that it reduced exclusionary displacement but resulted in heightened out-migration (Chapple and Song, 2025). We need more research to understand what share of affordable housing may be the "tipping point" in different contexts and housing markets.

Affordable Housing Linkage Fees is another production strategy that municipalities can add to their toolkit for the production of affordable housing; it allows them to collect a fee that can be used for the construction of affordable housing from market rate housing and commercial developments that meet certain size or use criteria. Since this policy represents more of a stick than a carrot for private developers, it requires a strong real estate market and developers who are particularly keen on building in the city that has instigated linkage fees. Indeed, some jurisdictions may be hesitant in imposing linkage fees, fearing they might push development to nearby communities without linkage fees, thus reducing other revenue streams such as sales tax. In general, development fees raise housing prices, and linkage fees may have the same impact, thereby increasing displacement inadvertently. Nevertheless, studies and reports from cities that have enacted such programs (such as Boston and San Francisco) find that they were able to collect significant funding towards the construction of affordable housing units (Boston Planning and Development Agency, 2018; BAE and Placeworks, 2016).

Accessory Dwelling Units represent another mechanism for the production of housing, especially in low-density, single-family zoned areas. Since land costs are free and the size of these units is modest, ADUs are a relatively low-cost way to produce new housing (Woetzel et al., 2016). While municipalities need to approve ADU-supportive ordinances, and many California municipalities have done so, this strategy relies on the individual homeowners to opt in and construct the ADUs. Recent studies show that this has started happening in California, as ADU permits and completions have increased dramatically over the last years, even in low-income communities, and now account for almost 20% of all housing units produced in the state (Casita Coalition, 2014; Marantz et al., 2023). However, there is no research to date that examines the direct impact of ADUs on preventing displacement. There is also concern that

most municipalities do not require that ADUs are affordable; a recent study found that just 6% of California jurisdictions have adopted legislation to facilitate homeowners providing subsidized ADUs via deed restrictions (Chapple et al., 2020). ADU construction may even lead to gentrification by adding to the value of the original property; however, recent research suggests that slight drops in neighboring property values may occur (Tanrisever, 2025). Thus, ADUs may represent an effective strategy to add low-cost housing, but their effectiveness in preventing displacement may rely on additional regulations instigated by municipalities that keep these units affordable.

Housing Overlay Zones (HOZ) apply only to specific districts within a jurisdiction and also offer carrots to developers such as density bonuses, relaxed development standards, and streamlined permits or environmental review for projects in return for the provision of a certain amount of below market housing. HOZs may be a promising strategy to counteract possible displacement effects of public investments within a specific district, but there is almost no evaluative literature on the topic.

While a *Linkage Fee* taxes new development, *Land Value Recapture* (LVR) taxes land; it is a tax that jurisdictions may impose on landowners who witness an increase in their land values thanks to a public sector action (such as rezoning or infrastructure investments). The LVR fee can help jurisdictions collect revenue that can be then earmarked for affordable housing; it can also help counteract the displacement impacts of public investment. However, few jurisdictions have dedicated LVR revenues to housing production yet, and so there are no studies that examine the relationship between LVR collection, affordable housing development, and displacement reduction (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).

Preservation strategies

Since housing production strategies require high costs, strong real estate markets, and long-term horizons, strategies that preserve affordable rental units in older buildings may be more effective and feasible for counteracting displacement forces in some communities (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019). We reviewed the literature on six preservation strategies: *Protection of Unsubsidized Affordable Housing, Subsidized Housing Preservation, Housing Rehabilitation, Condo Conversion Restrictions, Community Control of the Land,* and *Short-term Rental Restriction.* One common characteristic of these policies is that they operate in a shorter-term than the previously discussed production strategies, and directly impact displacement. Additionally, since these strategies are dealing with existing housing units, they do not need to rely on a strong real estate market.

The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies estimates that about three quarters of Americans dwelling in affordable housing live in unsubsidized affordable units (also called *Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing* – NOAH) (JCHS, 2020). Therefore, the *Protection of Unsubsidized Affordable Housing* is critical in ensuring housing affordability, and policies that help preserve NOAHs can be particularly effective in avoiding displacement. Different cities have instigated a variety of programs to protect this housing stock, based on priority criteria such as estimated rehabilitation cost, gentrification potential, proximity to transit, property size, property age, distance from hazards, etc. (LA County Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund, 2020; Abdelgany, 2016). Some municipal programs aim at acquiring and rehabilitating these units, while others give financial incentives and technical assistance to their owners to do so.

(Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative, 2013). We should note, however, that *Rehabilitation Programs* aiming to upgrade private units may lead to resident displacement, unless strict policies are in place to prevent such displacement.

Condo Conversion Restrictions is such a protective policy, initiated by some cities aiming to protect existing tenants of multi-family buildings that could be displaced, if the building owner converts rental units into condos. Such restrictions enact eligibility criteria for condo conversion and restrict the total number of units that can be converted in a year. Thus, condo-conversion restrictions may help limit somewhat the numbers of displaced households.

Subsidized Housing developments, historically federally funded, make housing accessible to the lowest-income households. However, the federal government is no longer building such housing and now focuses only on the rehabilitation of existing developments. Approximately five million rental homes, 10% of the total rental stock, are supported by project-based federally funded subsidies, with affordability restrictions set to expire for approximately 375,000 of these homes by 2029 (Emmanuel et al. 2024). The federal HOPE VI program demolished about 100,000 public housing units, replacing them with mixed-income new developments, resulting in significant displacement (Keene and Geronimus, 2011). In 2010, the federal government reinstated the requirement of replacement of its demolished units on a one-for-one basis, and introduced the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which brings public, nonprofit, and sometimes private organizations together to rehabilitate and operate the sites (Hanlon, 2017). As of 2024, HUD has converted over 250,000 units for the program with approximately 60,000 units currently in the pipeline (RAD Resource Desk, 2024). Initial evaluations show that only 2.3% of residents did not return to their original unit or another subsidized housing unit. However, critics of RAD are concerned that transferring ownership of public housing to outside organizations that are susceptible to market forces could mean residents are more at risk of displacement because of foreclosure or bankruptcy (Schwartz, 2017).

Community Land Trusts (CLT) and similar policies that give tenants control of the land they reside upon offer collective ownership and effectively remove this land from the private market. The literature indicates that such policies are rather rare in the US, as they require coordinated tenant action and economic resources; where CLTs do exist, they do not help those in the lowest incomes (Thaden, 2012). While public entities are usually not involved in CLTs, local governments can actively pursue the acquisition of abandoned or tax delinquent properties and the development of *Land Banks* that would allow them to put these properties into affordable housing uses. When considering disposition strategies for excess land, local governments can work with CLTs to identify sites with greatest potential: for example, providing land in high-cost central areas or transit-oriented neighborhoods may be effective not only in facilitating accessibility but also increasing potential for home equity growth (Manweller, 2020).

Short-term Rental Restrictions can limit the negative impacts of short-term rentals, namely increases on residential rents and reductions in the long-term rental housing supply. Research examining the impacts of STR regulations on housing supply and rents generally find that such restrictions are effective in reducing housing costs and maintaining rental supply (Chen et al., 2022; Koster et al., 2021; Bei and Celata, 2023), which should affect displacement at least indirectly. There is variation in the extent of these impacts, due to different forms of regulation, enforcement, and contexts.

Tenant protection strategies

Arguably, tenant protection or neighborhood stabilization strategies that offer tenants protections allowing them to stay in their changing neighborhoods are a more direct form of anti-displacement policy than housing production or preservation. Additionally, most of these protections require only a brief rollout period. Tenant supports may be particularly important for vulnerable populations; for example, seniors may require "senior-friendly" strategies (Sheppard, 2025). At the same time, overly strict tenant protections can discourage landlords, especially "mom-and-pops," from keeping units available on the market. We reviewed the literature on eight stabilization strategies: *Rent Control, "Just Cause" Evictions, Tenant Right to Counsel, Rental Assistance Programs, Tenant Opportunities to Purchase, Foreclosure Assistance, Community Benefit Agreements,* and *Pass-through Limitations for Green Energy Retrofits.*

Rent Control policies restricting the amount of annual rent increases in certain (not new) buildings represent a common mechanism that US cities have used to stabilize rents. The literature generally finds that rent control policies are effective in preventing displacement and stabilizing neighborhoods, but act to exclude low-income residents from moving in (Chapple et al., 2022; Diamond et al., 2018; Pastor et al., 2018). On the other hand, while studies find that rent control policies do not discourage new housing construction (since they do not regulate new units), owners of rent controlled units may pull them off the rental market, convert them to condos, renovate them so they are no longer covered by rent control, or let their properties deteriorate. Therefore, rent control policies become more effective as anti-displacement tools if they are accompanied by other policies such as restrictions on condominium conversions (discussed above) or "Just Cause" eviction regulations (discussed below).

Just Cause Eviction Programs forbid property owners from evicting tenants except under certain specified circumstances, such as nonpayment of rent, violation of lease terms, or permanent removal of a dwelling from the rental market. The limited literature that exists and has evaluated some of these programs finds evidence that they contribute to the decline of evictions and help to keep low-income residents in place in gentrifying neighborhoods (Chapple et al., 2022; Cuéllar, 2020).

Tenant Right to Counsel Programs offer renters access to legal representation in eviction cases. A number of jurisdictions around the country have recently established such programs; some are offered only to tenants below certain income thresholds. The limited literature that evaluates tenant right to counsel programs in Boston, New York, and San Francisco finds that in all three cities they are indeed helping to keep threatened residents at their homes (Boston Bar Association, 2012; Fracassa, 2020,=; Mironova, 2019).

The literature finds that small sums of unpaid rent account for a large share of filings against tenants (Desmond, 2016). For this reason, *Rental Assistance Programs* offering low-income tenants emergency funds to pay rent during moments of economic hardship can be very effective in staving off eviction pressures and displacement. Research on emergency rental assistance programs during the pandemic found that the programs supported and stabilized households, though some research found less of a direct impact on evictions (Teresa et al., 2025; Collinson et al., 2025; Manville et al., 2022; Reina and Lee, 2023). The literature that exists on rental assistance programs indicates that their efficiency can be compromised, however, by lack of familiarity with such programs among households that need them, as well as lengthy processes to confirm eligibility (Aghayev, Feng, and Wiens, 2017).

Many cities are exploring legislation to give tenants the first right to purchase their own unit, if it is being converted into a condominium. Washington DC initiated the *Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act* (TOPA) in 1980, and its First Right to Purchase Program provides financial and technical assistance to income-qualifying tenants that want to use TOPA to purchase their unit. A study examining DC's TOPA program found that it was been able to help 58% of tenants in the sample to purchase their units (Gallaher, 2016). The Washington DC experience shows that, with low-cost financing to low-income tenant associations, and the requirement that cooperatives remain limited-equity for the lifetime of their loan, "even very low-income tenants could purchase their homes" (Huron, 2018). However, such programs require significant financial resources from municipalities; many such programs are likely unable to serve households at the lowest income levels. Moreover, recent research suggests that the program may dampen the production of new housing (Sayin and Calma, 2025). Washington DC revised its TOPA policy in 2025, limiting the types of buildings the program applies to (B26-0164 2025).

While rental assistance programs target renters, *Foreclosure Assistance Programs* aim at assisting homeowners by offering them different means of financial and non-financial (counseling) support to avoid displacement. Such programs can be initiated at the local (municipal) and state levels. Existing literature indicates that these programs can benefit vulnerable homeowners. In particular, a large study by the Urban Land Institute found that households with troubled loans during the Great Recession that received counseling were significantly more likely to avoid default at various stages, prevent completed foreclosures, benefit from loan modification, and subsequently remain current on their mortgages relative to households not receiving counseling (Mayer et al., 2012).

Community Benefit Agreements (CBA) are legally binding contracts associated with certain large development projects. CBAs happen between local stakeholders and developers, often brokered by government entities. They usually take place in strong real estate markets, in which developers are willing to grant concessions (such as affordable housing, job opportunities, etc.) to neighborhood groups in exchange for enjoying substantial financial returns upon project completion (Cummings, 2007; Pastor et al., 2015). In theory, CBAs can help stabilize neighborhoods and ease some displacement pressures, but in practice they have rarely provided significant affordable housing. However, the literature lacks evaluative studies that examine the impact of existing CBAs on anti-displacement efforts.

Pass-through Limitations for Green Energy Retrofits, i.e., limits on rent increases when landlords retrofit housing units, are a policy approach that has not been studied but is likely important. While there is insufficient research on impacts of pass-through limitations for green energy retrofits specifically, recent frameworks supporting anti-displacement measures emphasize tenant protections, relocation and return rights, and prohibitions on rent pass-throughs as key strategies (von Platten et al., 2022; Palm et al., 2020). Case studies have primarily examined subsidized affordable housing and have shown that deep retrofits are possible when paired with subsidies (Sunikka-Blank et al., 2012; Downing & Hsu, 2024).

In conclusion, tenant protection policies have the most direct and immediate effect on mitigating displacement. Given that most households with affordable housing live in unsubsidized units, housing preservation programs have the most potential for significant impact. Such policies can become even more effective when used simultaneously, in association with one another. On the other hand, housing production strategies can help indirectly in decreasing displacement by retaining or adding to the

affordable housing stock. However, housing production policies typically require strong markets, and longer time spans.

Rural and Weak Markets

Unlike displacement in California's cities and coastal areas, rural displacement often takes the form of market-shock pressures, where sudden demand rapidly raises rents and home prices in places with limited housing supply, weak planning capacity, and few preservation tools. In California, these dynamics are visible in lifestyle migration to coastal and mountain counties, persistent eviction and overcrowding in the Central Valley, and growing evidence that housing instability is a major public health concern in northern rural communities. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these shifts, increasing rural demand while exposing structural vulnerabilities in insurance markets, federal investment, and regional coordination. The literature on rural displacement remains less developed than urban research but is expanding to address affordability loss, preservation risks, and shrinking subsidy programs. National and California-focused studies show that a large share of rural renters are cost-burdened and that subsidized housing stock is declining as mortgages mature and refinancing options remain limited (Scally et al., 2019; HAC, 2023).

Gaps in the literature

As we combed the literature on anti-displacement strategies, we became aware of what was missing. We examine what we perceive as gaps in the literature below.

Dearth of policy effectiveness literature: We found very few studies measuring a policy's impact on displacement directly. Most existing literature examines certain indicators that may be related to displacement (proxies for displacement), but not the actual numbers of households that were able to stay or enter a neighborhood as a result of a particular anti-displacement policy.

Selective use of displacement indicators. Additionally, the literature tends to use some more easily found proxies for displacement than others that are more difficult to identify or calculate. Many studies examine a policy's effect on rent prices or property values, but fewer studies collect data on evictions, move-outs, or loss of naturally occurring affordable housing. This is likely due to the lack of readily available data on household residential mobility, both voluntary and involuntary, particularly over long time periods.

Relationship between displacement and public investments. Recent studies including those of the authors have started examining the relationship between certain types of public investment (in particular transit infrastructure) and displacement risk. But not all types of public investments lead to displacement. More studies are necessary to examine the impact of diverse public investments on displacement, and importantly, the type of safeguards that should accompany public investments in order to avoid displacement in different contexts. Additionally, while empirical evidence pinpoints to some unintended displacement effects of public investments, there is insufficient research about the most effective mitigation for such adverse impact by specific investment types.

Dearth of inquiry on racial impacts of policies. A number of studies clearly show that communities of color have historically borne - and continue to bear - a disparate impact of displacement pressures.

Therefore, it is surprising that we find a dearth of studies on the effects of anti-displacement policies disaggregated by race, in other words how particular policy interventions have (or have not) prevented displacement of communities of color, and which are effective policies to offer such protection. Without explicitly disaggregating policy effectiveness by race, the existing literature seemingly assumes that policies work equally well for all communities, which is problematic.

Isolated examination of policies. Most studies examine the effectiveness of a particular policy in isolation rather than in coordination with other policies, legislation, or community action that together may be effective in preventive displacement.

Dearth of literature on contextual characteristics. Few studies address how specific contextual characteristics may shape the effectiveness of particular policies; in fact, the preponderance of studies have only examined strong-market metros like San Francisco or New York. Yet, factors such as local politics, housing markets, history, or demographics of a jurisdiction may make it easier or more difficult to implement certain policies and ensure their effectiveness. Certain policies may require a strong market to be effective, and some policies may be effective only in particular parts of a metropolitan area.

Lack of analysis of barriers to implementation. There is very little written about the different barriers (economic, institutional, social, political) that may affect the implementation of anti-displacement policies. Certain policies may require a long-term horizon to become effective, and some policies may be effective only if complemented with particular provisions or other policies. Although we did not examine community organizing specifically (since it is not an anti-displacement strategy per se), case studies suggest that organizing can facilitate implementation and reduce displacement (e.g., Harris and Céspedes 2015). Community organizing seems to be an effective means to win implementation of certain types of policies, including community benefit agreements and tenant protections. However, it has also been used effectively to stop new housing production (as well as tenant protections). It would be helpful to understand more about what policies have required significant organizing to establish and/or meaningfully enact.

Lack of a review of best practices. While particular anti-displacement policies or legislation may not fit all geographic contexts equally well, the lessons and impacts from the application of particular policies in jurisdictions of different states or even other countries could be useful to other jurisdictions. However, the literature is generally lacking a discussion about best practices.

Implementation

Policies will only be effective if they are implemented well. To understand implementation of anti-displacement policies and programs better, and how anti-displacement programs were understood on the ground, we conducted interviews with five departments and one nongovernmental organization across six cities: Arcata, Fresno, Los Angeles (both the Housing and Planning departments), Menlo Park, and San Francisco. The majority of interviews were at the director level or jointly with directors and staff.

Across the interviews, respondents identified tenant protections, housing preservation, and housing production as the main ways to keep people in place. Frequently cited policies included just cause

eviction, tenant right to counsel or eviction defense programs, resident protection and anti-harassment ordinances, mobile home rent control, and SRO (single-room occupancy) preservation. Mobile home rent stabilization was described as effective in certain parks, particularly where residents are organized, but uneven across locations. Preservation tools such as replacement requirements and subsidized or unsubsidized affordable housing preservation were emphasized as important for preventing net loss of low-cost units. Housing production, both market-rate and 100% affordable, was repeatedly mentioned as necessary to address rent pressure, though cities face political limits, infill constraints, and concerns about impacts on feasibility.

Respondents consistently emphasized that implementation, enforcement, and funding shape whether policies are effective. Programs such as rental inspection systems, tenant-based rental assistance, eviction notice requirements, and rent registries were described as labor-intensive, costly, and dependent on staff capacity. Many jurisdictions reported delays between policy adoption and meaningful enforcement due to fee studies, hiring timelines, reporting requirements, and limited administrative resources. Rental assistance programs were seen as helpful but difficult to sustain, often relying on grants and capped enrollment. Outreach challenges, including language barriers, lack of awareness, documentation requirements, and complex application processes, were frequently cited as limiting access for residents who might otherwise benefit.

Several policies were described as proposed, partially implemented, or included in housing elements but not fully operational, including local rent caps beyond state law, stronger or better-used rent registries, tenant preference systems, TOPA-style programs, and expanded relocation or rental assistance. Some respondents questioned the practical value of Prohousing Designation given monitoring burdens and limited funding, preferring to focus on delivering housing and preservation projects. Overall, interviewees stressed that displacement prevention depends on a combination of protections, preservation, production, and sustained resources, and that policies alone do not prevent displacement without enforcement, staffing, and clear communication to affected residents.

Interviewees described their experience implementing these programs and what they had heard from communities and local advocacy groups. The conclusions from the interviews listed below serve as a counterpart to information from the academic studies, as policymakers often do not have the time and resources to conduct formal evaluations of programs in practice. Several interviewees mentioned the need for data, in particular, this came up in discussions about antiharassment and goals to proactively use data to understand bad actor landlords.

In sum, the interviews led us to the following conclusions about policy implementation:

- **Tenant protections are central but can be uneven in impact.** Policies such as just cause eviction, tenant right to counsel or eviction defense, tenant protection and anti-harassment ordinances, and mobile home rent control were consistently identified as important tools for keeping people housed. Their effectiveness varies by context, coverage, and resident awareness, with some protections applying only to certain unit types or populations.
- **Housing preservation is critical to preventing net loss of affordable units.** Respondents emphasized SRO preservation, replacement requirements, mobile home protections, and subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing preservation as key strategies. Aging buildings,

deferred maintenance, and high rehabilitation costs complicate long-term preservation, but these policies were viewed as essential to preventing displacement.

- **Implementation capacity determines the impact of policies.** Many policies exist on paper but are constrained by limited staffing, delayed enforcement, complex administration, and insufficient funding. Jurisdictions described multi-year gaps between policy adoption and effective implementation, with rent registries, eviction notice systems, and inspection programs often underused due to capacity limitations.
- **Rental assistance helps stabilize households but is difficult to sustain.** Tenant-based rental assistance and emergency rental assistance were described as effective for preventing displacement, particularly where other subsidies are unavailable. However, these programs are resource-intensive, often grant-funded, capped in size, and administratively burdensome, limiting their scale and longevity.
- **Outreach and accessibility barriers limit program effectiveness.** Language barriers, lack of public awareness, documentation requirements, credit standards, and complex application processes prevent many eligible residents from accessing existing programs. Respondents repeatedly noted that many residents often do not know programs exist or cannot navigate them without support.
- **Displacement prevention requires balancing protections with housing production.** Interviewees consistently described the link between displacement and rent pressures and limited supply, noting that both market-rate and affordable housing production are part of the solution. Cities face tensions between strong protections, replacement requirements, and development feasibility, especially in areas with political resistance to broader rezoning.

A Research and Policy-Making Agenda for the State of California

Most of the strategies described in the literature are at least somewhat effective at mitigating displacement. Those that do not are either too indirect (e.g., impact and linkage fees), too small scale (community benefits agreements), not well developed enough (land value recapture), or too program specific (housing rehabilitation). Yet, the state can only affect a handful of these strategies directly (see Table 1, above): housing production, accessory dwelling units, inclusionary zoning and developer incentives, land value recapture, and naturally occurring affordable housing.[3] Even if the state cannot implement many of the other strategies directly, it can require jurisdictions to adopt them as a condition for public investment.

Were the state or its agencies to mandate anti-displacement policies in some form, they would need to account for the variation in markets across the state. For the most part, research has identified the effectiveness of anti-displacement policies only for strong market metropolitan areas. Little is known about how they would work in weaker markets, exurban, or rural areas. The issues across California are quite diverse: for instance, coastal or mountain towns may be dealing with housing problems related to tourism or second homes, while residents living in the wildland urban interface may experience displacement due to fire. In many of these areas, displacement may be induced by disinvestment in addition to investment. Thus, more research is needed to understand the effectiveness of some anti-displacement policies in these contexts. However, based on available evidence in different geographies, we are fairly confident that the following strategies are likely effective at stabilizing communities across

[3] In addition, it guides housing rehabilitation and foreclosure assistance under federal programs.

different market contexts: production of subsidized housing and ADUs, preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing, and foreclosure assistance.

In general, preservation and tenant protection strategies are the most effective in stemming displacement in a short-term timeframe; after all, most residents of affordable housing live outside of publicly subsidized units, and thus may be at risk as housing prices increase. State agencies may best prevent displacement by prioritizing housing preservation and tenant protection policies where possible, whether in incentive programs or planning documents. For example, at present, jurisdictions can gain a Prohousing Designation for housing production but not preservation; the state should also reward proactive efforts to preserve housing affordability through programs like TOPA or small site acquisition funds. Similarly, HCD's Local and Regional Early Action Planning grants, which focus primarily on planning for housing production, are another opportunity to maintain affordability through preservation. Efforts by jurisdictions to affirmatively further fair housing under AB 686 and prepare Environmental Justice elements under SB 1000 will provide a way to preserve housing affordability in high-resource neighborhoods. Supporters of tenant community preference policies, prioritizing current or former residents of an area, have described how they can advance racial justice and anti-displacement efforts (Thurber et al., 2021; Goetz, 2019), but there has been limited research on their anti-displacement impacts, and such policies have been subject to controversy regarding segregation and fair housing concerns (O'Regan, 2019; Zaveri, 2024).

However, the state's direct power to curb displacement lies primarily in the long-term, in how it channels its investments and disposes of its assets, i.e., public land, in order to foster housing production, preservation, and stability. In fact, the Strategic Growth Council, in conjunction with CARB, already gives preference to projects with anti-displacement policies in both the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) and Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) programs. The draft guidelines for Round 10 of AHSC funding awards points to applicants not just for voluntarily implementing anti-displacement measures (such as tenant counseling), but also for being located in a jurisdiction that has production, preservation, and/or stabilization strategies (one point per strategy); grantees may receive funding for anti-displacement programs. TCC instructs applicants to implement anti-displacement policies, providing a long list of example policies.[4] These lists might be expanded to include even more options, if the policies can be clearly related to public investment impacts: for example, applicants could be encouraged to establish community benefits agreements with local communities that provide for housing production or preservation.[5] Such policies will need to have specific requirements regarding tenant relocation and return, so that there is preference for displaced community members.

Another key state leverage point is the disposition of public land. Executive Order N-06-19 prioritizes excess state-owned land for affordable housing, requiring state agencies to identify and report such lands; AB 1255 requires cities and counties as well to produce an inventory of surplus lands; and AB 1486 connects affordable housing developers to potential opportunities. This land provides one of the state's best opportunities to support housing production, perhaps even scaling up promising subsidized housing strategies like community land trusts. Once these inventories and developer connections are in

[4] Most of these are included in the list of policies evaluated in the literature review (Appendix A).
[5] On the other hand, other policies, such as foreclosure assistance, are less appropriate because of the lack of a clear connection to public investment.

place, the state should develop a strategic plan that identifies both the land best suited for different types of CLTs and the local stakeholders who might collaborate on projects.

Ultimately, individual jurisdictions will need to take action on anti-displacement policies and programs in order to qualify for state investments or assets such as public land. In most cases, there will not be any existing research that shows definitively which anti-displacement policy will be most effective in a specific context. For example, community land trusts may be more effective in terms of providing home equity in an area with high land costs, but more feasible where land costs are low. ADUs may yield more units in an area with low land costs, but may have more affordability impact in expensive neighborhoods. As our literature review shows, studies rarely evaluate effectiveness across several policies at once and typically have findings that apply only to selected contexts. Public investments are challenging to study (as described in the next section), many are quite recent, and most jurisdictions don't have anti-displacement policies in place to study yet. Thus, jurisdictions will need to move forward in the absence of significant new research. But almost any anti-displacement policy is likely to help keep some residents in place, and thus there is an imperative to act.

What jurisdictions can do is examine other jurisdictions with similar characteristics that have implemented the policies. This report includes an inventory of anti-displacement policies across all California jurisdictions, available at https://www.urbandisplacement.org/maps/california-anti-displacement-policy-map/.[6] Appendix B describes the sources where each anti-displacement policy can be found, from the municipal code to the housing element.

Jurisdictions will likely have to conduct additional research also on program costs and indirect impacts, which vary widely across approaches. For example, producing a new housing unit may be a very expensive way to keep a household in place, but enacting rent stabilization policies may have indirect costs as landlords remove rental inventory.

Research Design Summary

There is relatively little rigorous research on the effectiveness of anti-displacement strategies, and even less research comparing effectiveness across policy approaches, contexts, or timeframes. This occurs because of five different challenges: the lack of a natural experiment or quasi-experimental framework; the dearth of appropriate data; insufficient sample sizes, particularly to measure variations by racial/ethnic group; insufficient or inappropriate timeframes; and insufficient variation of context.

The first major challenge is identifying an experimental framework to study, i.e., either a "natural experiment" with random assignment to policy treatments, or a quasi-experimental approach with deliberate assignment to treatment and control groups by the researcher. Programs to preserve unsubsidized affordable housing or tenant opportunity to purchase laws, for example, are not widespread and therefore studies of individual programs may not be broadly applicable. The jurisdictions that have adopted anti-displacement policies are not random, but have self-selected into the policy for some reason. In theory, it might be possible to examine the impacts of a state program by looking at its outcomes for applicants who receive an award versus those who do not. However, high

[6] The inventory was developed via manual searches of legal databases and jurisdiction websites throughout 2025. Housing staff in all California jurisdictions with email contact information available were given the opportunity to review and correct the inventory in early 2026.

variation in the number and types of participants will be necessary to make conclusions about efficacy, and even then, intervening factors or omitted variables may ruin the experiment. For example, our study examining the impact of investment in transit stations (Chapple et al., 2017) found that displacement did not occur when there were new market-rate or subsidized housing units nearby, but this does not necessarily mean that requiring transit authorities to build new transit-oriented development with housing will mitigate displacement everywhere. The construction projects that mitigated displacement may have been built independently of the transit station; they may have accommodated in-movers to the neighborhood rather than displaced locals; and we may not have controlled for a variety of other factors that were intervening, e.g., just cause eviction policies or the availability of 3+ bedroom units.

Accessing appropriate data is another challenge. ADU policy, for example, may present a natural experiment for study due to the implementation of a variety of different measures to encourage ADU development across the state, which have been adopted with enthusiasm by some jurisdictions and resisted by others. However, the data on who is able to access an ADU and at what cost may be difficult to come by. Rental data is difficult to collect at a large scale and research often must utilize third-party, private databases (such as CoStar), which may not always be the most up to date, and tend to cover only large apartment buildings. Even with resources to conduct extensive surveys, response bias (e.g., when households are renting ADUs as short-term rentals in violation of local law) may render results non-representative.

Likewise, data on individual household mobility is hard to obtain. Yet, it is only possible to understand if displacement is really occurring through data on who is moving in and out of each housing unit (rather than using aggregate totals for the neighborhood or census tract). Household mobility data is most readily available from credit bureaus and tax agencies, which collect the data as a byproduct of their mission. Academic researchers have had some success in accessing credit bureau data via intermediaries such as the Federal Reserve Bank or the California Policy Lab (see Ding et al., 2016). However, one shortcoming of this source is that it typically lacks data on race/ethnicity and household incomes, forcing researchers to rely on credit scores as a proxy. Mobility data is also commercially available from proprietary sources like Infutor or InfoGroup (now Data Axle), who combine credit data with postal service address files and provide estimations of income. Researchers are just starting to validate this data, but report that it underreports renters and low-income households, and is inconsistent in tracking households over time (Ramiller et al., 2024). Although other sources of individual mobility data (e.g., travel behavior) are becoming quite common, it is challenging to link these to residence in (and displacement from) a particular housing unit. Until researchers have access to more reliable data on individual household mobility, it will not be possible to conduct rigorous evaluations of policy impact.

Another related issue is sample size, especially of underrepresented groups. For example, the various rental assistance and tenant right to counsel programs across the country are proving difficult to study because the sample sizes of individuals served is too small. As discussed in the literature review, little is known about how these policies may affect various racial and ethnic groups in different ways; moreover, analyses are often aggregated to spatial units, concealing different outcomes by race/ethnicity. Yet research needs to disaggregate outcomes of interest (e.g. displacement pressures or mobility) by these categories in order to understand how policies can overturn patterns of systemic racism in our communities.

Anti-displacement policies and programs typically experience a time lag between enactment and outcomes. For instance, San Francisco implemented a community opportunity to purchase law in 2019: results will not only be too small scale to evaluate, but also might not be available for a few years given challenges of property disposition and occupancy. Similarly, California's state, regional, and municipal agencies have embarked on a series of investments – many funded via cap-and-trade funds – in parks, infill development, active transportation, and transit. Although researchers are currently studying these investments to determine their impacts on housing markets, they are encountering multiple challenges regarding the timeframe. First, the agencies did not collect and record data on the timeline for planning and construction, so it is not clear how to demarcate the "before" and "after" periods. Second, although there have been thousands of investments, some have occurred during times of recession, others during recovery or boom periods, and this macro context impacts outmigration rates, potentially dwarfing local factors. Such problems can usually be resolved readily by controlling for time period in multivariate regression models; however, with many different types of investments across many geographies and time periods, sample sizes may become too small to understand the impact of a particular investment in a particular place at a particular time. Third, there is the problem of the impact and comparison area: whether drawn as a radius from the project or chosen as a matched pair via propensity score matching, it may potentially be contaminated by other investments, both public and private sector – and there is no comprehensive database from which to identify these. Finally, there is the issue of whether the jurisdictions had anti-displacement policies in place when the investment was made; there is no comprehensive inventory of anti-displacement policies across the state's jurisdictions to consult, and even if there were, it would need to incorporate the timing of implementation and any amendments.

The final challenge is that of context. As described above, the literature to date on anti-displacement policy effectiveness has focused largely on the most progressive cities (like San Francisco) within strong-market coastal metropolitan areas. One solution is expanding the study area to the state level, which both facilitates controlling for institutional context and encompasses geographically distinct areas, from urban to exurban to rural. However, this variation also introduces new problems, since it is not possible to control completely for local political, institutional, and built environment factors.

Despite these shortcomings, we present potential research designs for studying the effectiveness of anti-displacement policies in Appendix C. We selected these policies – tenant right to counsel, rental assistance, ADUs, TOPA, and unsubsidized affordable housing – based upon the information gathered from our literature review, as well as stakeholder feedback and interviews.

Policies such as tenant right to counsel and rental assistance are especially well suited for rigorous evaluation because they generate direct, measurable outcomes related to evictions and residential instability. These interventions create clear treatment periods, geographically bounded populations, and administrative data that can be used to track who seeks assistance, their demographic characteristics, and their housing outcomes. This makes it possible to design quasi-experimental or natural experiment approaches, such as comparing outcomes before and after policy implementation or across jurisdictions with different eligibility thresholds. For example, variations in program design across cities, including phased rollouts, income eligibility, or universal access, enable researchers to isolate policy effects while minimizing spillover effects. These approaches also allow for deeper analysis of the mechanisms driving displacement, including rent arrears, legal representation, and information barriers that limit program uptake.

A second group of interventions, including tenant opportunity to purchase, unsubsidized affordable housing preservation, and accessory dwelling unit (ADU) policies, focuses more on long-term stability and structural affordability. These policies require longer time horizons and more complex evaluation strategies because outcomes such as ownership transitions, rent trajectories, neighborhood demographic change, and housing production unfold gradually. However, they offer significant opportunities for comparative and experimental research. For instance, TOPA and COPA programs could incorporate randomized or matched designs to compare supported and unsupported buildings, while preservation programs could target selected neighborhoods and track displacement outcomes relative to control areas. Similarly, the uneven implementation of ADU policies across jurisdictions provides a natural laboratory for studying how housing supply, affordability, and neighborhood change interact. These approaches emphasize not only displacement outcomes but also equity impacts, including which populations benefit, whether affordability is maintained, and how exclusionary dynamics may persist or evolve.

The state has already or could potentially pass legislation to support ADUs and unsubsidized affordable housing, while the other policies would need to be enacted by local jurisdictions. Since programs to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing, tenant right to counsel, and tenant opportunity to purchase are not widely implemented but are under consideration in the state, there is a chance to embed evaluation research into their implementation. These all have relatively high potential to prevent displacement (ranked either high or medium in our list) and a relatively low amount of literature produced about them (ranked either medium or low in our list). Interviews with both practitioners and academics helped us to refine the list further, identifying policies that are unlikely to be implemented, to have significant impact specifically on displacement, or to reach the scale necessary to study.[7] Additionally, we tried to select policies feasible for research in California, meaning they have already been enacted or are being proposed in various places across the state. For this reason, while we wanted to propose research on upzoning policies, there are not enough examples of large-scale upzoning reform within California to provide the necessary data.

Research challenges, from lack of appropriate experiments to deficient data, stand in the way of conducting impactful studies on anti-displacement policy effectiveness. As the state of California enacts legislation to stem displacement in the future, it should build evaluation mechanisms into the programs. The state should also look at opportunities for research within its current programs. In this section we have suggested five policies that are ripe for research from a technical point of view, but another approach would be to target the policies that would likely be most feasible and/or make the most difference, such as disposition of public land to affordable housing developers and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing. Then, research might focus primarily on implementation, e.g., analyzing the costs and benefits of each approach in a particular context, or producing case studies that

[7] We conducted interviews in July through October, 2020 and again in April to August, 2025 with thirteen practitioners (Dan Rinzler, California Housing Partnership Corporation (in both 2020 and 2025); Daniel Saver, Metropolitan Transportation Commission; Joe Donlin, Strategic Actions for a Just Economy; Alexandra Gallo, Strategic Growth Council; Sophie Young, Strategic Growth Council; Nicole Cartwright, Strategic Growth Council; Josh Rosa, Department of Housing and Community Development; Jess Negrete, Department of Housing and Community Development; Kevan Rolfness, Department of Housing and Community Development; Claudia Mildner, Department of Housing and Community Development; Leslie Valencia, City of Menlo Park; Chelsea Kirk, Strategic Actions for a Just Economy) and five academics (Ingrid Gould Ellen, New York University; Paavo Monkkonen, UCLA; Michael Lens, UCLA; Daniel Immergluck, Georgia State University, Carolina Reid, UC-Berkeley).

can make the case to a broad constituency. Ideally, researchers would design studies to enrich our understanding of which approach would bring the biggest bang for the state's buck.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In recent years, California state agencies working on both the climate and housing crises have turned their attention to how to mitigate unintended displacement impacts from climate mitigation/adaptation investments and how to effectively accelerate sustainable and equitable housing production. With the carrot of its investments and the opportunity presented by its assets, the state can help meet both goals. Preservation and stabilization strategies are the most effective in stemming displacement in a short-term timeframe, and the state should prioritize these whenever it is providing funding to jurisdictions. Over the long term, the state can spur affordable housing production through its strategic disposition of public lands. State agencies will need to coordinate, perhaps via an interagency working group on anti-displacement policies in order to make these policies consistent and scale up the approach.

This review revealed several additional data needs that were beyond the scope of this project, which focused on assessing research rather than describing existing conditions. The state should monitor displacement trends over time across the state via secondary data on household residential mobility and surveys and interviews with residents. The policy inventory that accompanies this report could be expanded by itemizing the local, state, and federal government policies, programs, and funding sources that influence implementation of each. In the absence of rigorous research on which are most effective, it could be valuable to survey local officials and advocates about which policies are most successful on the ground. Case studies describing how the approaches worked in different geographies could help agencies decide which to incorporate into their guidelines for investment. The state might also support local jurisdictions seeking research on how to design effective anti-displacement policies that will be relevant for their own particular contexts.

Future opportunities will arrive in the form of infrastructure investment, and the state should ensure that it enacts guidelines that spur jurisdictions to adopt anti-displacement policies, as in AHSC. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding creates both opportunity and risk for tenants, as home energy rebates and tax credits flow to property owners, with limited safeguards to prevent rent increases or evictions following upgrades. These programs hold high potential for climate resilience, but also high potential for displacement via pass-through costs and direct displacement through retrofits if not implemented equitably and intentionally. Strong tenant protections, particularly as it pertains to maintaining affordability, are therefore essential to align decarbonization goals with housing stability.

Should housing prices and land costs dip, the state and its jurisdictions should take advantage of the moment to purchase private multi-family buildings and convert them to permanent affordability. The period after the Great Recession showed that the private sector was poised to make a profit on housing; this time, California needs to be prepared to ensure that displacement does not result.

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Appendix A

Anti-Displacement Strategies and their Effectiveness

A Review of the Literature

January 2021, updated February 2026

Cody Zeger, Andrew Miller, Madeleine Parker, Blaire Frett, Karen Chapple, and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris

Introduction

Concern over the displacement impacts of climate mitigation strategies is only growing in the State of California and across the country. Considerable work has begun to synthesize and structure the literature on the effectiveness of diverse anti-displacement strategies (Chapple et al., 2017; Zuk et al., 2019). As a start, a CARB funded study (Chapple et al., 2017) inventoried the anti-displacement strategies for Bay Area and Los Angeles County jurisdictions and surveyed housing policy staff in the Bay Area and Los Angeles County to learn about some of the implementation and policy design challenges of existing strategies.

As CARB works to promote more sustainable communities and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there is a further need to better understand how to mitigate potential unintended displacement impacts of public investments in order to address equity concerns. While there is some empirical evidence that shows that some public investments can have the unintended consequence of displacing low-income residents, there is insufficient research and evidence about the most effective solutions to mitigate this impact. CARB seeks to understand the effectiveness of various anti-displacement strategies in order to ensure that future public investments benefit low-income households and communities in gentrifying areas.

Goals

The goals of this section of the report are:

1. To review and summarize the academic and professional (gray) literature on anti-displacement strategies and to examine how it assesses the effectiveness of various strategies in mitigating displacement;
2. To identify where there are gaps in the research and what additional research work is necessary for a clearer picture of the opportunities and challenges faced by various policies.

Methodology and Report Layout

For this report, we define displacement as a situation in which households are forced involuntarily to move out for economic or physical reasons (because of eviction, rent increase, demolition of existing housing, etc.) or are prevented from moving into a neighborhood (i.e., excluded) because of high rents or other conditions they are unable to control or prevent. We define as anti-displacement policies

various strategies, programs, and laws that intend to counteract the displacement pressures felt by some households. These include approaches that try to prevent direct displacement (e.g., demolition controls or rental assistance), as well as those that aim to reduce displacement more indirectly (e.g., rent stabilization or asset building).

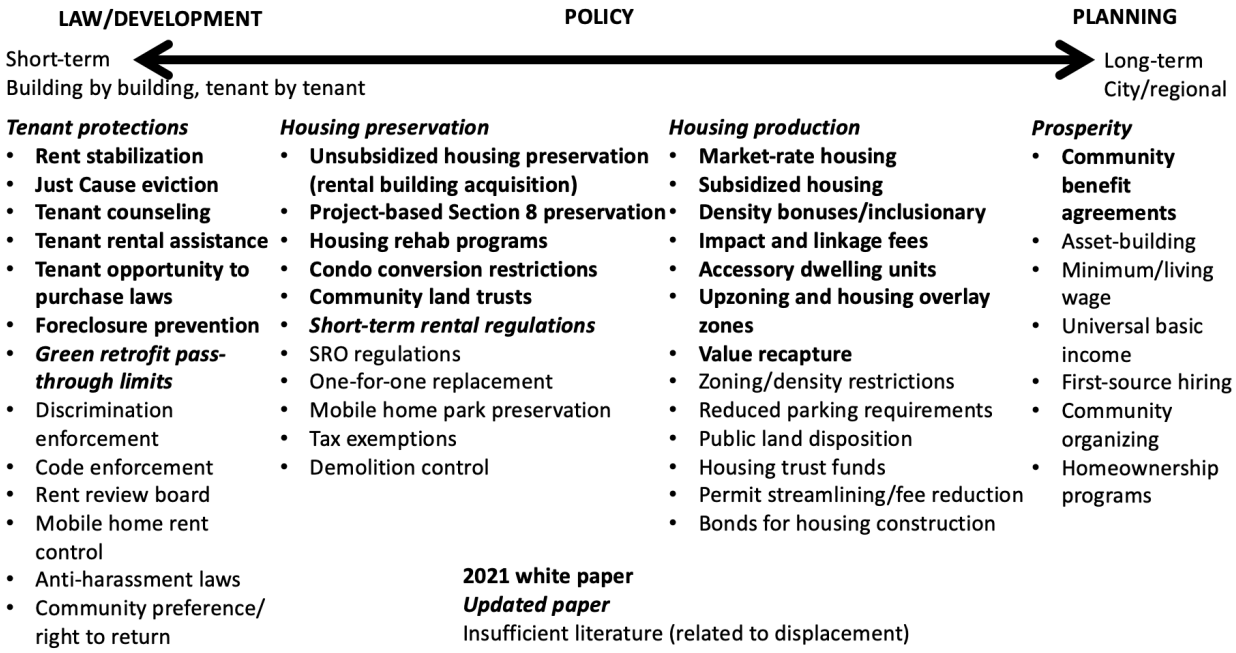
We began this report by looking at a long list of about 40 different anti-displacement policies put together from our previous research (see below, adapted from Chapple 2016). We then did an initial search for both peer-reviewed and gray literature that discusses the effectiveness of each of these policies as they relate to avoiding displacement. This process involved using five academic search engines as well as resorting to Google's standard search when we failed to identify research. From this initial list we chose to focus on the policies for which we could find any research regarding their effect on displacement. A pared-down list of about 20 policies ensued. After combining a few of these policies commonly examined together, we ended up with 17 policies, analyzed in 152 articles (70 gray literature, 62 academic journal articles, 15 media reports, 4 books, and 1 thesis). The full list of anti-displacement policies includes a number of policies and programs that support overall prosperity; with the exception of community benefits agreements, these do not specifically address displacement, so they were excluded from the literature review.

For the 2026 update, this research examined these 19 strategies plus two more: short-term rental regulations and pass-through limitations for green energy retrofits. We also conducted additional reviews on anti-displacement approaches in rural areas and rental assistance programs during the Covid-19 pandemic. We used the Scopus database to identify updated literature for this literature review. Scopus was chosen based on its comprehensiveness for the subject area. Searches were conducted using key words for each topic area and impacts on residential displacement. For example, for a search to identify new literature on new market-rate housing production, the following search terms were used: "new apartment buildings" OR "market rate production" OR "market rate development" AND "filtering" AND residential displacement. The search was conducted for literature from 2020 onwards for the topic area updates; we excluded literature on other forms of displacement (e.g., business or commercial displacement, or cultural displacement) as outside the scope of the study. Literature was selected based on its evaluative nature where possible, and contexts similar to California were prioritized. In addition, we conducted brief google searches for grey literature on the topic areas. Overall, this search yielded 243 new citations for the literature review.

The sections that follow discuss each of these 21 policies following a similar analytical framework that includes:

- Policy description
- Extent and type of literature that covers the policy's effect on displacement
- Summary and evaluation of literature
- Need for further research

Figure 1: Inventory of anti-displacement strategies.



Alt-text: Figure shows a table listing anti-displacement policies organized by category, including tenant protections, preservation of affordable housing, new housing production, and prosperity. Categories read from left to right, from short-term, tenant by tenant intervention, to long-term planning tools. Rows list individual policies.

We arrange these policies in three broad categories, following the categorization given in Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris (2019), and add a fourth, prosperity:

1. Policies that lead to production of affordable housing
2. Policies that help the preservation of affordable housing
3. Policies that help protect tenants
4. Policies that provide income and/or build wealth.

With the exception of Community Benefits Agreements, the policies related to prosperity are not studied further due to the lack of literature related to housing stability and displacement.

In order to give readers a sense of the relative amount of literature available on each policy's effectiveness at preventing displacement, we have created three categories which characterize the extent of coverage for a policy found in the literature as follows:

- **Low** indicates that there were essentially no articles that rigorously examined the policy's effect on displacement, and less than five papers that study the policy at all. There may be descriptive work and/or research examining the policy's effect on other issues, but not displacement or proxies for displacement (as defined below).

- **Medium** indicates that there was at least one paper that rigorously examined the policy's effect on displacement or proxies for displacement, in addition to up to 12 articles describing other elements of the policy.
- **High** indicates that there were multiple papers that rigorously examined the policy's effect on displacement or proxies for displacement, as well as over 12 papers on the policy more generally, which allowed us to come to a clearer determination of when and how the policy is effective at preventing displacement.

While very few studies measure a policy's effect on displacement directly, much more common are the examinations of indicators that are closely related to displacement (such as a policy's effect on rent prices or property values) that we call "proxies for displacement."[8] While these are by no means perfect metrics of displacement pressures caused or prevented by these policies, we included them in our analysis because they are prevalent in the literature and can be reasonably associated with displacement.

It is also important to note that the typical indicators used to measure displacement are inadequate at capturing the full effect of someone experiencing pressure to leave their home. As one example, we know there are well-documented public health effects of eviction as well as displacement (Marcus and Zuk, 2017). Overall this report demonstrates the need for better metrics to contextualize and add nuance to the true effects of displacement.

Additionally, there are practices we did not include in this research, which may be important components of preventing displacement. For example, community organizing may be crucial to preventing displacement. Indeed, multiple studies attribute the success some neighborhoods have seen in avoiding gentrification (such as Fruitvale in Oakland and East Palo Alto) to the "years of organizing and planning" of local residents (Louie, 2016; Crispell et al., 2016). Additionally, some policies, such as fair housing, were excluded from this report due to a complete lack of research on their effectiveness at preventing displacement. This goes to show that the body of literature available on policies that are effective at preventing displacement is lacking and we must put more resources into understanding how all of these policies work together.

Through our research we found that studies consistently advised caution in extrapolating results from one housing market to another. Due to the local nature of housing policy, municipalities are quite different from one another. Politics, housing market strength, population, demographics, history, and geography are just some of the factors that play a role in how policies are designed and implemented. While we may not be able to draw a one-size-fits-all conclusion, trying to understand the relative efficacy of the various policies is still a crucial endeavor to inform California's efforts to prevent displacement.

Last, but potentially most notably, through this research we found a surprising dearth of information about the effects of these policies disaggregated by race. While much of the existing research recognizes the harm that housing policies have historically caused African American communities, very few of them

[8] Other proxies for displacement that are not as frequently measured in the papers we reviewed include evictions, move-outs, move-ins, loss of low-income households, and loss of naturally occurring affordable housing.

look at how contemporary policies do or do not effectively prevent displacement of communities of color. Without explicitly disaggregating policy effectiveness by race, these studies assume that they work equally well for all communities and are at risk of falling into the same pattern of past housing policy. Due to this we have added a section that looks directly for evidence of anti-displacement policies that work especially well or poorly for communities of color and provide suggestions on how to incorporate this issue into any future research.

Next, we discuss each of the 21 policies.

Production Strategies

"A number of policy tools are available to influence the quantity of subsidized affordable housing. These include fiscal strategies to generate resources for development, land use policies to incentivize or prioritize different types of affordable housing, and public investments that can be tied to affordability requirements" (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).

Housing Production

Policy description

The effect that producing new housing has on displacement is highly debated. The bulk of the research on this topic focuses on the effect of market-rate housing production on proxies for displacement such as nearby rents or home prices. Some research, however, has begun to examine the effects of affordable housing development directly on displacement, using data on individual mobility.

The general economic argument made and corroborated by much of the peer-reviewed research is one of simple supply and demand: the more housing available, the lower prices will get (Asquith, Mast, and Reed, 2023; Baum-Snow and Duranton, 2025; Rosenthal, 2014; Been, Ellen, and O'Regan, 2019).

This is shown to happen through two main mechanisms. The first is a long-term process of "filtering," whereby rents for new housing fall over time as units age, decline in quality, and become affordable to people at lower-income levels (Rosenthal, 2014). The second is the shorter-term migration that happens as higher-income people move from lower-rent housing to new market-rate housing, thus theoretically freeing up their previous units for someone at a lower income level. This mechanism has been studied more recently, due to the new availability of richer, address-level data, and is thought to "loosen" the market for middle- and low-income households by providing new market-rate housing (Mast, 2023).

On the other side of this debate, those skeptical of market-rate housing production believe it can be a driver of displacement at a local scale. They argue that filtering is too long-term a process to address the needs of low- and middle-income people today, and that land in high-cost cities is so constrained that market-rate production prevents affordable housing production. Additionally, considering the shorter-term migration that happens, there is a worry that producing more market-rate housing will create "induced demand" (i.e. more higher-income housing attracts more higher-income people to an area) and moving into those areas will cause spillover effects, changing neighborhood amenities and triggering further displacement in an area (Zuk and Chapple, 2016).

While there is little rigorous research that confirms a causal relationship between market-rate housing production and displacement, people in high-cost cities like San Francisco have experienced rising rents and neighborhood changes occurring simultaneously with the introduction of new market-rate housing, leading anti-displacement activists to try to prevent new market-rate development, especially in already gentrifying areas (Mark, 2018). However, the idea that new market-rate housing induces higher-income people to live in San Francisco is hard to detangle from other factors, like the economic success of the area (Egan and Khan, 2015). Moreover, more recent research on the price impacts of market-rate

construction suggests that impacts may differ by housing submarket (Damiano and Frenier, 2026; Pennington, 2021).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

High (market-rate), Medium (affordable)

As stated, the debate regarding the effect of market-rate housing on rents and home prices (proxies for displacement) is lively and ongoing, and there are many academic articles exploring this connection. This literature generally comes out of quantitative research and is frequently published in peer-reviewed journals. There is also a fair amount of gray literature in the form of program evaluations or reports conducted by national and regional organizations.

Less studied, but potentially quite revealing, is the effect of affordable housing production on displacement. There is some gray literature documenting the effects of affordable housing directly on displacement as well as on proxies like rental and home prices.

A growing body of literature examines the impact of upzoning, or changes in zoning laws that allow for greater development intensity, on housing supply and neighborhood change. In theory, allowing more housing to be built should alleviate supply constraints and reduce the cost of housing – thereby reducing displacement and exclusion. However, the experience on the ground has varied. The initial foray in this area was Yonah Freemark's (2020) finding that upzoning policies allowing increased building sizes in Chicago may result in higher land values due to the added value of the land (Freemark, 2020). These findings may not be widely applicable because Freemark did not include rental homes in the analysis, Chicago's housing market may not be representative of other locations, and the study did not measure actual construction. The question of how upzoning affects home and rental values is crucial to understanding its effect on displacement, but there are not many broad upzoning policies in the country to study at the moment, and even fewer that have resulted in new construction.

Summary and evaluation of literature

Overall, the peer-reviewed research into the effects of market-rate housing on rental and home prices at a regional level exhibits a relative consensus that adding new homes generally makes housing in a region more affordable to low- and moderate-income families, and is in fact a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for affordability (Been et al., 2019, 2025). Upzoning may increase housing supply, but its effectiveness in improving affordability depends on the type of upzoning and the specific context. However, research into what effect new housing construction has on nearby buildings and resident displacement is still emerging and highly debated.

Market-Rate Production and Filtering

In a 2014 study, Stuart Rosenthal quantified the rates of income filtering, or how the incomes of people renting units on the private market decreased over time. Rosenthal found that across the country, rental units transition to lower-income households at an average rate of approximately 2.2% per year. This

means that the income of residents in a 50-year-old home would be 60% less than the income of residents of a newly built home. Rosenthal also found, however, that filtering rates had an inverse relationship with rates of house price appreciation; so in areas with higher price growth, such as in the Pacific region of the study, filtering happens more slowly (Rosenthal, 2014). For filtering to occur at all, though, there must be production of new units at the top end of the market, such that older homes become vacated by high-income renters.

Adding to these findings, recent studies show that filtering rates vary widely by geographic area and over time; in particular, downward filtering is becoming less frequent (Liu et al., 2021; Spader, 2025). While downward filtering can be rapid in certain regions, there are others, such as Los Angeles and Washington, DC, which saw upward filtering - meaning housing was going to higher-income people as it aged. These regions are also facing serious affordable housing shortages, so policies which encourage the creation of more housing will assist in easing demand pressures and allow downward filtering to occur (Liu et al., 2021).

While faster filtering rates theoretically means apartments should become more affordable more quickly, in practice some researchers have found that this is not always the case. Zuk and Chapple (2016) report that even though filtering rates are estimated at 1.5% per year for the Bay Area, rents are only declining at about 0.3% per year, leading to the possible conclusion that people are living in units before they can fully afford them and are increasingly rent burdened. They also note that, “while filtering may eventually help lower rents decades later, these units may still not be affordable to low-income households” (Zuk and Chapple, 2016, p. 4).

Additionally, some researchers believe that in rapidly gentrifying areas, filtering won’t work. Dan Immergluck of the GSU Urban Studies Institute explains this may be the case because, “land values and rents rise as the neighborhoods become more desirable and developers bid up land values. So lower-income households must look in other neighborhoods where services and schools are likely to be much weaker. Hence the gentrification process can reconstruct economic segregation” (Badger, 2016).

In their annual reports on the state of rental housing in the US, Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies has discussed filtering as having the potential to be a key method of providing affordable housing. But while in 2015, they estimated filtering as a primary source of additions to the affordable rental stock (JCHS, 2015), in 2019 they were more skeptical, stating, “With most new construction targeting the high end of the market, there has been some potential for excess supply to filter down to lower rent levels. But with rental demand far outpacing additions to supply through 2016, this has not happened” (JCHS, 2019, p. 4). One potential problem with filtering is that by the time rents decrease enough to become affordable to renters at the lower end of the housing market, landlords may have stopped maintaining them, leaving units virtually uninhabitable (Immergluck et al., 2017).

Even researchers that have found filtering to be a viable source of long-term affordable housing supply acknowledge the need for government intervention to ensure housing is affordable to the lowest-income individuals. Rosenthal concludes by acknowledging that market-based housing subsidy programs (such as vouchers) are viable and provide potential to access this affordable stock (Rosenthal, 2014). Been, Ellen, and O’Regan’s 2019 paper on housing supply and affordability recommends that “new development include housing rented or sold at a variety of price points (using subsidies as needed), so that growth is balanced among the various income levels in the community” (Been, Ellen, and O’Regan, 2019, p. 26).

Market-Rate Production and Migration

More recently, research has begun to examine directly shorter-term migration patterns induced by market-rate housing production. One of the first studies to examine this was by the California Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), which found that market-rate housing production was associated with less displacement (Uhler, 2016). In a 2023 study utilizing address-level migration histories, Evan Mast identified 686 new market-rate buildings in central cities across the country, and tracked 52,000 residents back to their previous buildings of residence. Mast repeated this for six rounds to understand how people move when new market-rate housing is introduced. Overall, this study found evidence that when new housing is built, some higher-income households occupying units that are cheaper than they could afford move into the newer, more expensive units, allowing people with lower incomes to move into their original unit. After this happens a few times, Mast estimates that this process could free up housing in low-income areas in less than five years. In its most conservative model, the study finds that 100 new market-rate units end up freeing up about 45 units in below-median areas and 13 units in bottom-quintile areas. Notably, Mast did not examine patterns of neighborhood change in the low-income areas from which households moved, leaving open the possibility that high-income (rather than low-income) households are moving from low-income gentrifying areas to higher-income neighborhoods (Mast, 2023).

While this study does not estimate the effects of this process on rental or home prices, Mast's 2023 paper with Brian Asquith and Davin Reed does. Examining new market-rate buildings in 11 cities across the US between 2013 and 2018, they find that new buildings lower nearby rents by 5-7%, increase in-migration from low-income areas, and slow local rent increases by absorbing many high-income households. Specifically, they find that the share of people from very low-income neighborhoods moving into neighborhoods with these new units is higher, suggesting that the presence of these new units reduces costs in lower segments of the housing market. As in Mast's sole-authored 2023 paper, this article does not control for the possibility that the in-migrants are higher-income residents of gentrifying low-income neighborhoods. They also confirm previous research that new market-rate construction tends to happen in low-income neighborhoods with higher rates of education and income growth over the previous decade, suggesting that the construction is coming after neighborhood changes or gentrification has started. While this research concludes that new market-rate units can decrease rental or home prices in the surrounding neighborhood, the authors caution that the findings are specific to large market-rate apartments in strong market cities and only follow outcomes for three years after building construction; so future research is necessary to expand the findings more broadly (Asquith, Mast, and Reed, 2023).

Recent research on Honolulu provides more evidence of the efficacy of vacancy chains in condominium buildings that include both market-rate and income-restricted units (Tyndall et al., 2025). Using address-based data, this study shows that both forms of new construction spurred vacancies in lower-cost homes and thus increased the availability of both market-rate and affordable housing.

Looking at new housing construction and displacement in San Francisco, Pennington (2021) addresses the issue of the income of in-migrants by examining individual-level mobility patterns by income level (using the proprietary Infutor database). Building new market-rate housing actually reduces rents, displacement to poorer areas, and evictions for residents within a 500-meter radius. At the same time,

the new construction houses relatively wealthier newcomers and attracts more new construction nearby, which may gradually create more exclusion.

Another recent study has also shown that new development decreases rent costs in surrounding buildings. Looking at high-rise building construction in New York City, Xiaodi Li finds that for every 10% increase in housing supply there is a 1% decrease in rents within 500 feet (Li, 2019). This suggests that the supply of new development may have a stronger effect on rent costs than other effects that would raise rents (such as the attraction of new amenities to an area). Like Pennington's study of San Francisco, this study focuses only on New York City, however, and thus these findings may not be applicable to all housing markets (e.g. those without rent control, with lower density, etc.)

Anthony Damiano and Chris Frenier (2026) also recently published a study on the effects of new market-rate construction in Minneapolis on the rents of nearby apartments for five years after building completion. Adding nuance to prior findings on this topic, they found that the effects of the new construction depended on the "submarket" of the nearby buildings (i.e. proximity, price, size). For buildings on the higher end of the housing market, new market-rate construction did not significantly change rent prices. For nearby buildings on the lower end of the housing market, though, the new construction significantly raised rents by an average of 4.4 percent, with even higher spikes for those buildings closest to the new construction. This may be due to the new buildings bringing in new, higher-cost amenities, and signaling a change in the area toward a higher-income population. These findings point to the need for studies on housing production to disaggregate their findings by housing submarket in order to ensure we understand how new market-rate buildings will affect different types of nearby buildings (Damiano and Frenier, 2026).

Two recent studies relying on individual- and household-level mobility data provide direct evidence of the impact of new market-rate construction on both out-migration (displacement) and in-migration (exclusion). The first examines the San Francisco Bay Area, relying on data from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel/Equifax, validated by the consumer reference dataset produced by Data Axle (formerly Infogroup) (Chapple et al., 2022). This study finds that new construction spurs turnover, increasing both out- and in-migration rates across income levels. The increase in in-migration is generally higher than in out-migration, and when out-migration rates exceed in-migration, the difference is small (e.g., elevating out-migration rates from 11% to 13% of households in a particular year). Over the long term, low-income newcomers may struggle to move in. The second study examines the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, finding small effects on probabilities of both in-migration and out-migration, with variation across local market contexts: new supply slightly alleviates displacement pressures in Los Angeles but in the hottest markets fails to spur low- and moderate-income in-migration and exacerbates their out-migration (Chapple and Song, 2025). Moreover, the positive impacts of the new market-rate units decline over time.

Turning specifically to upzoning, there is a growing literature that shows that zoning changes can increase housing production, particularly on underutilized land, but still little research on displacement. Using parcel-level data from Portland, Dong (2021) finds that upzoning and higher-density zoning led to more housing supply, with effects concentrated on vacant and underutilized parcels, but just five percent of upzoned parcels were developed. Two studies, in Auckland and Zurich, that have shown a substantial effect from rezoning on construction (Büchler and Lutz, 2022; Greenaway-McGrevy, 2023), but others have found no to minimal supply effects in Charlottesville (Schragger and New, 2024). An

overview of upzoning across U.S. cities found just a 0.8% supply increase after 3-9 years had passed (Stacy et al., 2023). Thus, production impacts vary by scale and context. Reviewing the rezoning literature, Freemark (2023) concludes that upzoned areas "may or may not experience increased housing construction over the short term," but are more likely to see "small increases over the long term," depending on market strength and the scope of the zoning change.

Broad zoning reforms appear more effective than narrow overlays. In Auckland, New Zealand, the city's upzoning of most of its residential land stimulated construction, while similar reforms in Lower Hutt nearly tripled housing starts, with evidence of regional spillover rather than displacement (Greenaway-McGrevy and Phillips, 2023; Maltman and Greenaway-McGrevy, 2025). However, New Zealand is different context from California.

Just a few studies have linked upzoning to mobility patterns, and only in New York City. Looking at impacts from upzonings from 2004 to 2013, Liao (2023) uses the Infutor dataset and finds that upzoning was associated with in-migration from slightly higher-income neighborhoods and out-migration to different neighborhoods or metropolitan areas. After the upzoning, neighborhood in-movers tend to come from slightly higher-income neighborhoods. Examining upzonings from 2006 to 2014 in combination with Data Axle data, Davis et al. (2026, forthcoming) show that upzoning slightly heightened out-migration for low-income households, with greater impacts occurring when upzonings occur over a more extensive area.

Affordable Housing Production

While the lion's share of the research on housing production and displacement is focused on market-rate housing, Zuk and Chapple's 2016 report focuses on the effect of affordable housing production on displacement (Zuk and Chapple, 2016). Using the same methodology as the LAO report (Uhler, 2016), Zuk and Chapple found that the effect of subsidized housing production on preventing displacement was twice as strong as the effect of market-rate housing production.[9] At a regional level, they confirmed the LAO's findings on market-rate housing, but also found that the effects on preventing displacement diminish as more market-rate housing is built in a subsequent decade. This suggests that market-rate production "may have a catalytic effect on a neighborhood, increasing its attractiveness to upper-income residents, rather than a protective effect of filtering" (Zuk and Chapple, 2016, p. 7). With subsidized housing production, however, they found it has double the protective effect, regardless of when construction happens. Therefore, while the authors agree that both market-rate and subsidized housing can reduce displacement, they note that "for everyone subsidized unit, we would need to produce two or more market-rate units to have the same reduction in displacement pressure" (Zuk and Chapple, 2016). However, the authors did not examine the relative public costs of building market-rate and subsidized units, which is important to understand policy efficiency. Moreover, even if new

[9] It should be noted that neither study looks at the effectiveness of production in keeping current residents in place, instead looking at the stability of low-income households in aggregate. In other words, even when the production of subsidized housing is reducing the loss of low-income households, it may be occupied by new low-income households moving in, rather than existing low-income households.

subsidized construction reduces displacement, it is not clear whether the primary beneficiaries are incumbent residents of the neighborhood or low-income newcomers.

A 2018 study by Kate Pennington in San Francisco found that neither new market-rate or subsidized construction projects had any effect on the likelihood of receiving an eviction notice for nearby neighbors. This finding remained true across all neighborhoods of the city and over time. Pennington does, however, find evidence that close proximity to this new construction "slightly reduces the risk of receiving an eviction notice over time" and suggests that this effect may be bigger for areas adding even more new units (Pennington, 2018, p. 18).

Pennington's subsequent (2021) study that examines the impact of both market-rate and subsidized construction on individual mobility finds no significant short-term impact of affordable housing on either rents or displacement nearby. However, she points out that subsidized housing construction is clearly more effective than market-rate at reducing displacement over the long term, by targeting income groups at risk, preserving their housing, and preserving income diversity over the long term.

The recent California studies of new construction and displacement also examined the impact of subsidized housing. There was no evidence that new subsidized housing construction is effective in preventing displacement of residents of the lowest socio-economic status (less than 30% of area median income), but this may be due to the low number of affordable units constructed (Chapple et al., 2022). A study comparing Los Angeles and San Francisco examined impacts for a broader low-income group (less than 80% of area median income), finding that new subsidized housing mitigates both exclusion and displacement slightly in most markets over the short term, with the impact decreasing over time particularly in the hotter markets (Chapple and Song, 2025). One explanation for the lack of long-term impact is provided by Chapple et al. (2022), who find that new subsidized housing development encourages residents of moderate-middle and middle-high socio-economic status to move into neighborhoods, perhaps because of a perception of neighborhood upgrading.

Subsidized housing in the form of either public housing or housing choice vouchers mitigates the impacts of upzoning on displacement; in the case of the New York City upzonings, the presence of subsidized housing in the neighborhood was associated with lower out-migration rates for low-income households (Davis et al., 2026).

In work attempting to understand the potential for affordable housing (both naturally occurring and subsidized) to create a "filtering up" effect, the National Low Income Housing Coalition published a report in 2016 that showed that 70% of Extremely Low-Income renters (ELI, those earning less than 30% AMI) are severely cost-burdened, living in units only affordable to those at higher income levels. Specifically, they found about 2.7 million ELI renters live in houses affordable for Very Low Income renters (30 - 50% AMI), 3.7 million live in houses affordable to low income renters (50 - 80%), and 1 million live in houses affordable to moderate income households (80 - 120% AMI). Given this, they conclude that adding housing affordable to the lowest income households may result in the loosening of housing markets affordable to higher income individuals—similar to the process described above for market-rate housing production (Emmanuel, 2016).

Need for further research

The research on the effects of market-rate housing production on displacement and proxies for displacement (nearby rental and home prices) is relatively comprehensive and ongoing. However, similar research on the relative effects of subsidized and/or naturally occurring affordable housing production on displacement is much sparser. Future research could use similar methods to those described above to look into specific filtering and migration effects of affordable housing production. As the NLIHC report brought up, filtering may happen in both directions, so looking into upward and downward filtering of affordable housing production is potentially revealing. The effects of filtering, however, should be studied at a demographic level as well in order to understand how housing that is affordable via this mechanism is contributing to economic and racial stratification of neighborhoods, an issue that raises fair housing concerns.

Additionally, there are policies that attempt to induce housing production, such as permit streamlining for new construction, objective design standards, zoning changes that allow for taller or higher density buildings, and mobile home overlay zones. These policies were not included in this literature review as they have not been studied as extensively, but to the extent they are able to lead to increased housing production, research may find similar effects. These policies could be the subject of future research to see how effective they are at producing new housing.

Notably, the majority of research on this topic does not disaggregate the impact of changes in housing by race or ethnicity, or other sociodemographic characteristics such as age or gender. For example, neighborhoods with aging households may experience higher levels of filtering as older people downsize and move to other neighborhoods. Some research has found considerable gentrification of Black neighborhoods and displacement of Black people from gentrifying neighborhoods that were majority-Black (Mitchell et al., 2025). While income levels are the main focus of this research, housing patterns have historically been determined by both income and race, so future work on these topics should look into how market-rate and affordable housing production affects neighborhoods composed of different racial or ethnic groups.

Inclusionary Zoning + Developer Incentives

Policy description

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is a mechanism that local governments use to require or incentivize private developers to build a share of new market-rate developments as affordable housing, or contribute a comparable amount to building affordable housing off-site. Proponents tout inclusionary zoning policies as effective methods to develop mixed-income communities and provide a source of affordable housing not dependent on ongoing government subsidy. As of 2007, nearly one-third of California municipalities had inclusionary programs that were generating about 4,500 affordable units per year (NPH, 2007). Traditional economic models, however, conceptualize inclusionary zoning as a tax on housing development and anticipate these policies raise the price and lower the quantity of housing available in the market. This section also addresses density bonuses, or incentives that allow developers to build more housing units, floor area, or height than zoning would normally permit in exchange for the provision of affordable housing units. While there is both strong support and criticism of inclusionary zoning and density bonuses, research on effectiveness suggests that both the benefits and costs of these policies may be overstated.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Medium

While much has been written about inclusionary zoning policies overall, most of the peer-reviewed literature focuses on its ability to produce affordable housing, not its direct connection to displacement. However, as discussed in this report, affordable housing production can be an important displacement-prevention mechanism, and therefore it is worth examining how effective IZ programs are at generating affordable units as well as how many market-rate units they may make infeasible.

Summary and evaluation of literature

As with many anti-displacement measures, the efficacy of inclusionary zoning programs depends on how the policies are designed in any jurisdiction. First, all IZ policies require market-rate developers to create affordable units as a proportion of their overall development. The percent of affordable units and the depth of income they are targeting can vary greatly across programs, but most inclusionary zoning policies in California require developers set aside 10 - 15 percent of their units as affordable (Mukhija et al., 2010).

In a study of the affordable units created by inclusionary zoning in California between 1999 and 2007, the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) estimated about one-quarter of units served people at the very low income threshold, half at the low income threshold, and about one-fifth at moderate incomes; in other words, people on either low-moderate income extreme were not served well by these units (Mukhija et al., 2010; NPH, 2007). More recent research in New York City found that the city's mandatory inclusionary housing program primarily created low and very-low income units,

instead of extremely low income units, compared to a broader distribution created by fully affordable developments (Litwin, 2024).

Looking at the construction of affordable units, Chapple et al. (2017) found that inclusionary zoning was the most prevalent affordable housing production strategy in the 109 Bay Area counties and municipalities. This same study showed that moderate and above-moderate income communities with IZ between 2007 and 2013 were particularly effective, producing almost three times as many affordable units than those without IZ – about 76 units per 10,000 residents in the above-moderate income communities.

In San Francisco, production of inclusionary zoning units amounted to roughly 2-3% of total housing production over the last 25 years (Schuetz et al., 2009). While the number of units created by IZ policies in California each year is low when compared with the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, cities that have mandatory IZ programs with high enough in-lieu fees produce relatively similar numbers of units (Mukhija et al., 2010). However, it is worth noting that LIHTC likely provides deeper subsidies (units that are more affordable to lower-income households) than IZ policies, with cost going to federal taxpayers rather than local housing consumers.

IZ programs offer some combination of cost-offset strategies to help developers build the affordable units. These can include, but are not limited to density bonuses, expedited permits and approvals, relaxed design standards (including parking and height allowances), fee waivers, additional subsidies for affordable units, and fee restrictions (Mukhija et al., 2010; NPH, 2007). The presence and strength of these incentives have a significant effect on the efficacy of the policies, especially when it comes to density bonuses. In a study of the effect of San Francisco's inclusionary zoning program, Schuetz et al. (2009) found that one of the strongest predictors of the amount of affordable housing produced by these programs was the presence of a density bonus.

Research in Santa Monica, California found that a tiered inclusionary housing program, which is based on project size, location, and type, varied requirements for percent affordable units and income thresholds, was effective in increasing inclusionary housing production by 15% (Nzau & Trillo, 2021). On the other hand, some scholars found inclusionary zoning programs to be ineffective when they are voluntary, instead of mandatory (Hamilton, 2019; Mukhija et al., 2010). Also, the effect of in-lieu fees that developers can pay instead of actually building units depends highly on the level of the fees. While these fees can be combined with other subsidies to create units that serve even deeper levels of affordability, municipalities often do not track the outcomes from those funds, making their impact difficult to assess (Mukhija et al., 2010; NPH, 2007).

Evaluations of density bonus laws in North America indicate that this approach does not guarantee significant on-site affordability. Mah (2025) finds that Toronto's long-running density bonus program generated revenue but produced relatively few affordable units and primarily supported new market-rate condominium development.

Overall, the top producing inclusionary programs have a certain set of requirements and incentives policies in common. While these vary significantly by jurisdiction, according to the NPH report the IZ programs that produce the most units had some combination of these factors:

- Mandated (as opposed to voluntary) inclusionary zoning program
- Minimum size of project that triggers inclusionary program between 5 and 30 units
- Affordable unit percentages from 12.5 to 35 percent
- A tiered inclusionary housing program
- In-lieu fees allowed
- Very-low to low-income households served
- Minimum affordability timeline of 30 years

While inclusionary zoning programs may be effective at producing some affordable units, their ability to reduce displacement is again dependent on local policy. This is borne out in a 2014 geo-spatial analysis of over 11,000 affordable units created by inclusionary zoning policies in Montgomery County, MD and Suffolk County, NY, which found that 97.7% of inclusionary units in Suffolk County (where housing was mostly under local control) were built in only 10% of census tracts, concentrating the location of these units in limited parts of the city (Kontokosta, 2014). By contrast, in Montgomery County (where there is more significant regional oversight of housing), only 56.1% of units were built in 10% of census tracts; moreover, there was no significant variation in the characteristics of tracts with and without inclusionary units, suggesting local control has a significant effect on the number of inclusionary units produced (ibid).

The selective concentration of units built via inclusionary zoning is shown in a study in London by Li & Guo (2020); they found that inclusionary housing units were concentrated in a smaller number of neighborhoods than traditional affordable housing, and that all types of affordable units are more likely to be in disadvantaged neighborhoods than market rate units are. A study in New York City found that mixed-income developments were more evenly distributed across the city than fully affordable ones, but both failed to produce enough units with three or more bedrooms (Litwin, 2024)

In San Francisco, the City Controller's Office published an analysis of a proposed strengthening of the IZ requirements in 2016, finding that the biggest increases would raise the number of affordable units available, but potentially reduce the overall housing produced in the city due to increased construction costs (Egan, 2016). Additionally Evan Mast's study of new market-rate housing production in New York City compares the creation of new units from migration (as described above) to that of IZ programs. It finds the migration process is potentially more efficient at generating new units, although Mast notes that unlike with IZ laws, there is nothing mandating that these units remain affordable in perpetuity (Mast, 2023).

Despite the benefits of inclusionary zoning being potentially overstated, some research suggests that the costs of enacting these policies are relatively insignificant. A study of 65 municipalities in California that adopted inclusionary programs between 1988 and 2005 found that these programs potentially increase housing prices between 2 and 3%; however the effects showed that price increases were higher for higher priced homes, indicating that the prices of inclusionary zoning were more easily passed on to consumers in higher priced areas, as residents may be less sensitive to price changes (Bento et al., 2009). Additionally, in the Baltimore-Washington area, Hamilton (2019) used data on inclusionary zoning, house prices, and building permits, finding that for each additional year of a mandatory inclusionary program, per-square-foot home prices increased by 1.1%, while new housing construction did not decrease (Hamilton, 2019).

Most studies do not find any significant (negative or positive) causal effect of inclusionary programs on the total housing supply (Mukhija et al., 2010; Schuetz et al., 2009); however a recent study found that new market-rate housing construction in Seattle decreased after inclusionary zoning reforms were implemented (Krimmel and Wang 2023), especially the construction of townhomes (Peter et al., 2025).

It is logical that past a certain threshold, inclusionary requirements would make building too expensive and reduce the overall units produced (Egan, 2016). What that threshold is must be elucidated through further study. Additionally, Bento et al. (2009) found that having an IZ program increased a California city's multifamily housing share by about 7 percent, suggesting that these programs incentivize denser housing development. On the other hand, a recent study found possible dampening of new affordable housing construction after the passing of an IZ expansion. Li and Guo (2022) found that developers changed development types to avoid inclusionary requirements: An expansion of inclusionary housing requirements to buildings with 10-14 units led to a reduction in new developments of that form, with an increase in unaffected new developments of 9 or fewer units, dampening the related affordable housing production but not resulting in a net loss of new homes.

A recent analysis of the City of Los Angeles' TOC program used the Terner Housing Policy Simulator, a tool that models the impact of different land-use rules (like parking minimums, zoning, or impact fees) on new housing supply, using a real estate pro forma (Phillips, 2024). This study found that while below market rental units produced by for-profit developers represent a large private subsidy of affordable housing (e.g. a 16 percent IZ requirement would yield an estimated 41,700 ELI units over 10 years), even small increases in rent growth in the unrestricted market could negate the dollar value of these subsidies. Thus, poorly calibrated IZ policies with high requirements can lead to reduced housing production and higher rents and housing prices, possibly leading to displacement. He therefore argues that policymakers should reserve land use reforms for increasing overall housing production to improve affordability in the housing market at large and use public subsidies for below-market-rate homes.

Just one study we found looks explicitly at the impacts of inclusionary zoning on residential mobility, finding that on-site inclusionary housing in San Francisco increased low-income in-migration but did not stem low-income out-migration (Chapple and Song, 2025).

Schuetz and coauthors summarize the overall effect of inclusionary zoning as follows:

> "The ideological debate over IZ has greatly exaggerated both the benefits and the dangers of IZ: any negative effects on housing prices and production have been relatively slight, but only modest amounts of affordable housing have been produced through IZ programmes" (Schuetz et al., 2009).

Inclusionary programs may have the benefit of facilitating mixed-income communities and improving the political conditions for housing approvals, however these effects would need to be the subject of further research.

Need for further research

The above studies identify a need for more empirical research on the effect of inclusionary zoning programs on housing costs; case studies on how the design and implementation of these programs affects production; and how to create affordable housing through IZ programs without exacerbating affordability problems for those who do not get the units (Mukhija et al., 2010; Hamilton, 2019). Additionally, there is a need to study the effectiveness of the various developer incentives offered with IZ programs to understand how they change how much affordable housing is produced.

Again, however, additional research can more directly elucidate IZ's effect on displacement by understanding how these policies affect affordable and market-rate housing production. Comparing how many affordable units IZ programs create annually with how many market-rate units they deter, and linking this to household mobility rates, could be a useful starting point to understanding how these programs play into broader displacement trends. It is crucial to understand if there is a threshold beyond which inclusionary zoning requirements have significant negative effects on a city's overall housing supply. It is also important to understand how well these programs are able to create mixed-income communities and disrupt existing neighborhood stratification by race and economic status.

Impact + Linkage Fees

Policy Description

Impact or linkage fees are a type of exaction imposed on qualifying development activities depending on type of development and specific location. These fees are levied on development projects during the local approval process, justified by the additional effect that new development has on governmental services, such as infrastructure and housing. Jurisdictions earmark revenue from these payments for specific purposes; development fees typically fund infrastructure and services, while linkage fees may be linked to affordable housing. Specifically, jurisdictions may implement linkage fees to protect vulnerable communities from displacement pressures by explicitly supporting housing affordability in hot real estate market environments (Goetz, 1988; Merrill and Lincoln, 1993; Levy, Comey, and Padilla ,2006).

Affordable housing linkage fees operate through a fee structure on qualifying development activities, which are identified through a nexus study that legally justifies this type of exaction. Linkage fees generally apply to commercial and market-rate housing development projects that meet certain criteria (e.g. square footage, type of use). For instance, in 2017, the City of Los Angeles passed an ordinance authorizing an affordable housing linkage fee on qualifying commercial and market-rate residential projects with less than a certain percentage of affordable units. This legislation also led to the creation of an Affordable Housing Impact Fund, a repository for resulting revenue earmarked to support affordable housing preservation, production, and anti-displacement initiatives (Johnson, 2019).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Medium

While there is a sizable amount of literature on impact/linkage fees, the discourse largely centers on their legality, economic impact, and comparisons with related policies (e.g. inclusionary zoning).[10] There is only a moderate amount of literature that explicitly connects impact/linkage fee programs to displacement, though some limited empirical research assessing this relationship exists.

Much of the literature on linkage/impact fees, with or without discussion of displacement, focuses on their legal implications and how they relate to regulatory takings and exactions. These publications provide an historical overview of the strategy and its basis in jurisprudence, but largely do not consider its role in relation to urban displacement (Merrill and Lincoln, 1993). Another body of literature focuses on the economic impact of development fees, which typically raise the cost of housing (and thus potentially displacing residents); however, this literature generally does not examine fees that are linked

[10] It is worth noting that throughout some of the linkage/impact fee literature, the term "displacement" denotes impacts on development activity, rather than on incumbent residents. In other words, relevant planning and economic literature most commonly interrogates the potential "displacement" or loss of private investment resulting from these types of policies, not the impact they may have on displacing vulnerable residents.

to affordable housing development (Dresch and Sheffrin, 1997; Evans-Crowley et al., 2009; Ihlanfeldt and Shaughnessy, 2004).

A recent report focusing on California provides evidence linking rising impact fees to weaker multifamily housing growth, noting that "many cities that had the lowest increases in impact fees had the greatest increases in multifamily housing," while cities with the largest fee increases experienced the weakest growth in multifamily housing stock (Stockinger et al., 2024). This research shows that impact fees disproportionately burden multifamily housing. Most jurisdictions charge higher impact fees per square foot on multifamily units compared to single-family homes, even though multifamily housing has lower infrastructure impacts. The authors conclude that impact fees can be "a tool to stymie growth" when set at levels that make new housing infeasible (Stockinger et al., 2024); in other words, they may contribute to exclusionary displacement. Impact fees on average account for 2.6% of the city revenue but the new homeowners and renters bear the costs in the form of higher home prices and rents. The report also finds that most jurisdictions are not complying with AB 602 disclosure requirements, raising concerns about overcharging new residents (Stockinger et al. 2024).

Concerning displacement of communities, Levy, Comey, and Padilla (2006) discuss the case of Sacramento, which instituted a series of anti-gentrification strategies in the 1980s and 1990s, including a local Housing Trust Fund and an affordable housing impact fee in 1989. This program imposed per-square-foot fees on commercial development to ensure that housing production for the City's low-income workforce kept pace with its economic development. Although the authors point out that nearly $15 million had been collected since 1989, the study does not evaluate how this program mitigated displacement pressures. Similarly, Dreier and Ehrlich (1991) sketch an overview of how linkage fees emerged in Boston, situating the policy within a broader framework of progressive reforms in that city during the reemergence of downtown development. However, akin to other publications, Dreier and Ehrlich (1991) do not attempt to quantify the outcomes beyond the significant revenue generated through the policy; their discussion of displacement centers mostly on past waves of upheaval resulting from urban renewal and the early stages of downtown redevelopment in Boston.

Several other publications explicitly identify linkage fees as a strategy to mitigate gentrification and displacement, but most of these writings mention this approach only in passing. Those publications with an explicit focus on displacement discuss linkage fees as a mechanism to produce or preserve affordable housing, but do not specifically try to quantify or enumerate the benefits (e.g. Keating ,1986). Nevertheless, some cities - such as Boston - with linkage fee programs have issued findings that focus on resultant housing production, accumulation of in-lieu fees for further production, and the overall contribution of linkage fees to the housing stock that directly and indirectly mitigates displacement pressures (Boston Planning and Development Agency, 2018). For instance, in a 2018 press release, Boston's Planning and Development Agency found that since 2014, over $30 million in linkage fee revenue leveraged over $500 million in public funds to support development of 1,268 new affordable housing units and the preservation of an additional 548 existing affordable units (Boston Planning and Development Agency, 2018).

Additionally, pursuant to Los Angeles's Affordable Housing Linkage Fee program, BAE Urban Economics reviewed outcomes from other cities' existing linkage/impact fee programs. According to its study, BAE found that San Francisco's Jobs-Housing Linkage Fee yielded over $56 million since its inception in fiscal

year 1988-89 (BAE and Placeworks, 2016, 97). During fiscal year 2014-15, the linkage fee added an additional $27 million to the local Affordable Housing Fund, which supported the development of over 600 units of affordable and supportive housing during that year (BAE and Placeworks, 2016, 97).

Need for further research

Although several publications discuss impact/linkage fees as a tool for mitigating displacement, few have attempted to quantify their efficacy. Several jurisdictions have established linkage fees relatively recently, however, and potentially offer avenues to assess their outcomes. For instance, Los Angeles's Affordable Housing Linkage Fee was implemented in mid-2018, and was designed explicitly to ensure public oversight. Accordingly, researchers can monitor how revenue in the City's Affordable Housing Impact Fund is earmarked for anti-displacement programs, such as the preservation of affordable housing or neighborhood stabilization programs.

Further, impact/linkage fees are somewhat common in cities with strong real estate markets. Therefore, future research might attempt to measure outcomes across different jurisdictions that have established such programs. Of course, similar to the evaluation of other policies, isolating the independent effect of linkage fees would prove difficult, especially as cities that institute these programs are likely to do so in conjunction with other efforts. Nevertheless, by designing robust metrics, comparisons across jurisdictions that place more or less emphasis on anti-displacement strategies could shed light on policy efficacy, and how these programs prioritize residential stability.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Policy description

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are secondary units or apartments typically added to low-density residential properties (e.g., single-family homes). Also known as granny flats, in-law units, or accessory apartments, these ADUs have the double benefit of acting as an additional source of income for homeowners as well as introducing more housing to less-dense neighborhoods where zoning can prohibit most development. ADUs may be either "attached" units (i.e. those created through converting extra bedrooms or basements into separate living spaces) or "detached" units (i.e. those created through new or converted structures in a backyard such as a detached garage). Since land costs are free and construction costs are lower for these structures, ADUs can be a relatively low-cost way to produce new housing (Woetzel et al., 2016) and a meaningful small-scale option that could help address the national housing supply shortage (Goodman, 2023). Homeowners are interested in constructing ADUs because of the flexibility—and potential rental income stream—they provide, but local zoning requirements can create barriers to ADU construction (Chapple et al., 2017).

Local and state governments in California have battled for decades over who gets to control ADU development (Ramsey-Musolf, 2018). To encourage localities to permit more ADU development, in 2002, the CA state legislature allowed cities to count ADUs toward their low-income and market-rate housing production requirements (Ramsey-Musolf, 2018). To spur demand for these ADU permits, the state stepped in again in 2016 (and again in 2018 and 2019), easing zoning and permitting regulations across the state (Chapple et al., 2017).

These reforms—along with similar ones around the country—have seen some level of success as measured by increased ADU permits and applications, however, studies have yet to determine the extent to which ADUs prevent displacement or are able to serve the lowest-income households (Chapple et al., 2017; Wegmann and Chapple, 2014; Ramsey-Musolf, 2018; Medina, 2018).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Medium

We found almost no literature that covers the effects of ADU development on displacement. However, since ADUs are used as a mechanism for housing production, it is reasonable to assume that the displacement-preventing effects of new housing production (both affordable and market-rate) discussed in this paper, could apply to the production of ADUs.

There is comparatively more literature examining existing ADUs and effective strategies for encouraging their development. This literature, however, does not come to a consensus as to whether ADUs are consistently affordable or closer to market-rate housing. Either way, ADUs likely prevent displacement, but they will be more effective the more affordable they are.

Summary and evaluation of literature

In general, the goal behind encouraging the production of ADUs is to develop more housing in low-density neighborhoods that can serve a variety of renters. Additionally, as a 2014 study of the potential for ADU growth in California's East Bay region points out, ADUs are a way for neighborhoods to meet fair housing goals by adding density to higher-income areas that are typically dominated by single-family homes (Wegmann and Chapple, 2014).

Much of the peer-reviewed and gray literature available on ADUs focuses on their potential to increase the overall housing stock as well as strategies to encourage their development. Recent research shows that California has the potential to add up to 1.5 million new units across the state through the development of ADUs alone (Monkkonen et al., 2020). This potential is especially high in places like Los Angeles and San Francisco where single-family zoning accounts for the vast majority of residential land use and there is significant unmet housing demand (Bennett, Cuff, and Wendel, 2019; Woetzel et al., 2016).

Researchers have found that a number of different measures are successful at encouraging additional ADU development, including relaxing zoning restrictions (such as minimum lot size and parking requirements), reducing development fees (such as permit or utility connection fees), lending products and support systems that meet the needs of small homeowners and builders (Goodman, 2023); and assisting landlords through technical assistance or educational campaigns (Chapple et al., 2017; Brown, Mukhija, and Shoup, 2017). Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver saw increases in ADU permits after similar zoning changes were made (Chapple et al., 2017).

Since California relaxed some of the zoning restrictions on ADUs statewide, the state's four largest metro areas have seen permitting increase dramatically, from about 650 in 2016 to 8,800 in 2019 (Chapple et al, 2020). Research on statewide permitting patterns shows where ADUs are being built and how local conditions shape growth. Marantz et al. (2023) find that ADUs now make up a significant share of new permits in California, especially in high-cost coastal metros. But ADU permits are not evenly distributed; they tend to concentrate in neighborhoods with strong job access, although the distribution varies by county. Pfeiffer (2019) finds that in general, diverse and moderately advantaged communities have the least restrictive approaches to ADU development, while disadvantaged communities of color continue to have the most restrictive approaches. These works suggest that while statewide reforms opened the door for ADU development, local market demand and local zoning variations continue to drive where ADU development actually appears.

While these changes have seemed to work to encourage ADU production, there is less consensus in the literature as to which groups really benefit from these new units. For one, ADUs are increasingly recognized as a tool for aging-in-place and intergenerational stability. Calo (2022) highlights how ADUs support older adults through flexible on-site caregiver housing, opportunities for intergenerational living, and supplemental income for homeowners.

In terms of serving lower income groups, Wegmann and Chapple (2014) found that ADUs in the East Bay were relatively more affordable than multifamily infill developments and served a higher proportion of low income renters. Specifically, the average ADU in Berkeley, CA in 2011 was affordable to a household

earning 62% AMI, with 30% affordable to very low-income households and 49% affordable to low income households (Chapple et al., 2012). However the same research showed no ADUs were affordable to extremely low-income households, leading researchers to conclude that, "bolstering the stock of units in the very low-income and low-income affordability categories with minimal expenditures of public funds, could therefore help to free up such scarce (and dwindling) monies for the subsidization of the lowest-income affordable developments" (Chapple et al., 2012, p. 12). In Portland, OR, researchers found that about 20% of ADUs rented for at less than market rates in 2014 (Brown and Palmeri, 2014). New evidence on investor ownership of ADUs in Austin suggests that this trend has not yet impacted affordability: on the open rental market, owner-occupied and investor-owned ADUs are not listed for different amounts, controlling for intervening factors (Davis, 2024).

As stated above, there has been no research into the direct effect of ADU development on displacement, but recent studies have examined its impact on the adjacent property values finding it small, localized, and highly dependent on context. In Los Angeles, new ADUs (a 0.5% increase) leads to a 3% decrease in property prices within 300 meters, particularly in lower-rent areas (Tanrisever, 2025). In Vancouver, laneway homes slightly reduce the value of higher-priced nearby properties, with no measurable effects on median or lower-value homes (Davidoff et al., 2022). These impacts are limited in magnitude and geography, reinforcing that ADUs are one of the least disruptive forms of infill.
In Ogden, Utah, Gnagey et al. (2023) find no significant changes in surrounding property values after the city legalized ADUs for rental purposes. Their findings suggest that legalization can expand rental options and stabilize homeowner finances without harming neighborhood conditions.

The recent surge of production in California has taken place across both high-income and low-income neighborhoods: although the majority of production across the state takes place in neighborhoods with high home values, Los Angeles and Orange County gain most ADUs in low-resource areas (Chapple et al., 2020). Given these findings, there is evidence that ADUs can contribute to the naturally-occurring affordable housing stock. However, some caution that very few localities actually require ADUs to remain affordable. A 2018 survey of 57 CA cities found that while nearly half of the cities were counting planned ADUs toward their low-income housing production goals, none of them had mechanisms requiring those units to be affordable for any period of time (Ramsey-Musolf, 2018). The survey of California jurisdictions conducted by Chapple et al. (2020) found that just 6% had created tools to impose deed restrictions on rents in exchange for public subsidies.

Some localities in California, however, are starting to use ADUs to serve low-income renters, demonstrating their potential to meaningfully contribute to the affordable housing available in the state. The county of Santa Cruz has launched a pilot program offering loans of up to $40,000 for ADU development that will be forgiven if homeowners agree to maintain the units as affordable to low-income households for at least 20 years (County of Santa Cruz Planning Department, 2018). Los Angeles is piloting the use of ADUs as housing for individuals emerging from homelessness, offering to help pay building costs (up to $30,000) and identifying tenants who were formerly homeless and who have access to a rental assistance program such as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (Medina, 2018). While these programs are still new, they show how ADUs could be created to help address California's affordable housing needs.

Thus, if we simply consider ADUs as additional housing units, many providing space for low-income family members, their effect on displacement is likely preventative. Still, until we know more about what income levels ADUs serve in the long-term, it is difficult to estimate exactly how much they help prevent displacement. However, since areas that are zoned for single-family housing are not likely to add density in any other way, ADUs are a promising mechanism for infill development and adding to the overall housing stock in California.

Need for future research

In order to more fully understand how ADUs prevent displacement, we need more clarity on the demographics (e.g. income level, race/ethnicity, family structure, etc.) of people living in these units and to understand where residents are moving from. Additionally, since cities have varying ADU regulations across the state, we could examine and compare how the regulations of different cities are correlated with displacement pressures in the area.

Housing Overlay Zones

Policy Description

A tool that may impact supply directly is housing overlay zones, land use mechanisms that supplement base zoning regulations within particular geographic areas. Although they are often used to maintain distinctive features of the built environment (e.g. historic preservation, natural resource protection), housing overlay zones have also been implemented to promote affordable housing development that is appropriately tailored to local conditions (East Bay Housing Organizations 2014). In addition to offering versatility for community planning, overlay zones are a means to stimulate affordable housing development within areas where minimal such housing exists in exchange for higher density projects (Cambridge Community Development Department n.d.).

Housing overlay zones essentially operate as geographically specific density bonuses by offering incentives, relaxed development standards, and streamlining permits for projects providing a certain amount of below market housing. These minimums can vary between 25% and 100% of the proposed project (Public Advocates and East Bay Housing Organizations, 2010). Further, overlay zones offer a key advantage to affordable housing developers; because of the substantial capital necessary for pursuing housing projects, affordable developers often cannot compete with the resources of market-rate developers. Therefore, by imposing below market requirements to increase density in certain areas, affordable housing developers gain a critical upper hand relative to well-resourced, market-rate counterparts (Cambridge Community Development Department n.d.). In AB 73, California recently adopted a form of housing overlay zone, the Housing Sustainability District, a designation that mandates affordability on housing sites near public transportation and allows for district-wide environmental review.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Low

Although housing overlay zones have existed in California jurisdictions since at least the early 2000s, displacement impacts remain indirect and understudied. Existing research infers displacement impacts through changes in housing supply and regulatory constraints rather than directly measuring displacement outcomes.

Some limited literature on housing overlay zones has been published by housing advocates that describe their benefits in fostering affordability in high-cost regions. For instance, in a white paper on Public Benefit Zoning (PBZ), East Bay Housing Organizations describes housing overlay zones as an alternative to PBZ (another form of land value recapture resulting from upzoning) (East Bay Housing Organizations 2014). EBHO discusses overlay zones as one among several local land use planning tools that can minimize displacement that might result should high-density zoning result in construction, particularly in lower income communities proximate to transportation and employment hubs that are particularly

sensitive to the increases in land value that come with upzoning (East Bay Housing Organizations 2014). However, this analysis primarily focuses on the economics of incentive and value capture programs rather than their efficacy in reducing displacement.

Similarly, Public Advocates and East Bay Housing Organizations describe the opt-in incentives that housing overlay zones offer without sacrificing local planning efforts. For instance, in contrast to California's state density bonus law - in which qualifying developments receive an increase in units and incentives established by the legislature - housing overlay zones are designed through *local* planning processes that define the affordability terms and incentives (East Bay Housing Organizations, 2014: 7). Moreover, these organizations emphasize how attractive incentives that reduce development costs in exchange for affordability requirements mutually benefit developers and municipalities (Public Advocates and East Bay Housing Organizations 2010). However, this discussion does not explicitly describe how overlay zones minimize displacement.

However, studies also show that overlay zones can also constrain housing production. Research on historic district overlays in Los Angeles found that these regulations prevented new multifamily development and slowed redevelopment, even when framed around preservation goals (Mawhorter and Kinahan, 2025).

Need for further research

Similar to other policies, research on the anti-displacement efficacy of housing overlay zones is very limited, at least in the U.S. context. Future studies could examine how municipalities, and specific overlay zones within them, have promoted residential stability through such policies. In particular, such a policy may have a significant impact within jurisdictions where redevelopment has been targeted around certain amenities (e.g. transportation hubs). In areas where overlay zones have been implemented, researchers could investigate how neighborhood composition has changed relative to the development activity triggered under these ordinances.

Land Value Recapture

Policy description

Land value recapture (LVR) describes a set of policies that aim to identify increases in land value resulting from public sector actions (such as rezoning or large infrastructure investments), and return that value to the public sector to use for further public projects. For example, when a government agency changes zoning rules to allow for more density or plans for new transportation infrastructure, the value of the land associated with or nearby those changes often increases. This, then, creates a windfall profit for land owners, despite having no part in generating the increased property value: "Housing scarcity delivers unearned wealth to people who own housing, and it imposes unwarranted burdens on people who don't." (Manville et al., 2017). LVR attempts to impose fees or taxes on this "unearned" increase in value to return that revenue to the public sector so it can finance additional public projects, such as affordable housing or more transportation infrastructure (Calavita and Wolfe, 2014). While LVR policies may not directly prevent displacement, they can contribute to funding that municipal governments can use for public subsidies or infrastructure to provide housing.

Policy tools that can be used for value capture include land value taxes, tax increment financing, special assessments, transportation utility fees, development impact fees, negotiated exactions, joint developments, and air rights (Johns, 2009). Some value capture mechanisms are only triggered by development activity; thus land owners may experience important land value increases without having to pay taxation, if these increases are not related to new developments. One prominent example in California is the Community Benefits District in San Francisco, which provides additional density to new development in exchange for an array of benefits, including funding for affordable housing (Calavita and Wolfe, 2014; Chapple, 2014).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Low

While LVR policies have been in place across the country for decades, there is little to no research on their effectiveness in preventing displacement. The vast majority of the earlier literature that exists about LVR is primarily descriptive, outlining how policies function and how they may be implemented. More recent studies, some from the international context, add some empirical evidence on how LVR can be employed more effectively. Research on LVR comes often from the transportation planning field, which describes it as a promising way to finance current and future transportation infrastructure.

In practice, LVR is used to invest in both transportation and housing infrastructure and has been presented as an option for funding affordable housing. In Los Angeles, LVR was seen as a potential alternative to linkage fees, which essentially tax developers for building new housing and potentially depress housing production overall. Taxing land instead of development raises revenue that can be put toward building affordable housing, without discouraging the production of market rate housing, however there may be significant legal challenges to enacting such policies (Manville et al., 2017).

Recent empirical research examining factors that contribute to effective value capture finds that strong public leadership is important. In South Korea, government-led land accumulation and development captured a meaningful share of the rent gap created in peri-urban areas. The study found that value capture works better when the public sector plays a strong role in land control (Kim, 2023). In England, a different international context, Lord et al. (2022) found that LVR outcomes depend heavily on local market strength.

Implementation capacity has emerged as a central determinant of whether LVR can support equitable development. Siemiatycki, Fagan, and Arku (2022) find that value capture tied to transit-oriented communities depends on strong intergovernmental coordination and predictable administrative processes, with clear and consistent approval pathways that allow agreements to move forward without unnecessary uncertainty or delay.

More recent research also shifts the conversation away from seeing LVR as a neutral financing tool and toward recognizing that, without redistribution, it can deepen existing inequality. In Spain, value capture mechanisms often boost the fiscal position of already advantaged municipalities while offering limited support to lower-income areas (Tubío-Sánchez et al., 2026).

Some studies have examined land value gains generated from new transit infrastructure, finding that such gains may occur early in anticipation of the opening of a line or station, which strengthens the case for proactive LVR and anti-displacement strategies. Peng, Knaap, and Finio (2024) show that land value increases and displacement pressures start long before transit service begins. Examining rents near future Purple Line stations in Maryland, they find that land values increased before the rail line was operational, with particularly strong effects for two-bedroom units.

In summary, while some more empirical studies on LVR have appeared in the last few years, there has been no study on whether these policies keep people from being displaced, even though LVR has been used across the country for decades.

Need for further research

To move forward with an understanding of whether LVR policies are effective at preventing displacement, research should focus on areas that have implemented these policies, attempt to track how much revenue they have generated, and uncover if any additional affordable housing has resulted from that revenue. The end goal should be to understand if LVR can be leveraged as an effective tool to increase affordable housing and prevent displacement, and also who gains access to this housing.

Additionally, it would be useful to understand the effects of these policies on landowners and developers. Given that the idea behind LVR is to tax “unearned” increases in wealth, it would be important to explore whether such policies change the willingness of landowners to invest in areas with

LVR policies, whether it penalizes existing homeowners, and how that changes the housing development landscape of an area.

Preservation Strategies

"Many built-out neighborhoods experiencing displacement pressures may have little room for new development. Furthermore, the cost of new development in strong housing markets, where the cost of land is very high, may make the production of new subsidized housing prohibitively expensive. Therefore, strategies for preserving affordable rental units in older buildings may be more cost-effective and feasible for counteracting displacement forces in such communities. By ensuring that this housing stock is permanently affordable, policies essentially remove it from upper-income markets, pushing these households into costlier newer construction" (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).

Unsubsidized Affordable Housing

Policy description

Unsubsidized affordable housing (sometimes called naturally occurring affordable housing, or NOAH) is defined as rental units offered by the private market that are affordable outside of any subsidy or regulatory scheme. These units may be affordable for a number of reasons (including the strength of the housing market, the quality of the unit, the age of the building, or the quantity of housing in an area), but they are not protected by any program, so changes in the market put them at risk of becoming unaffordable. Recent evidence from California suggests that sale of these properties is associated with heightened out-migration for tenants; specifically, a sale to a professional investor increases the probability that a tenant will move by about 13% to 75% (Song and Reid, 2026).

Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies estimates that only around 25% of income-eligible households receive federal subsidy (such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits or Section 8 vouchers), which means that a significant majority of low-income Americans are living in unsubsidized units (JCHS, 2020). But such units are not equally distributed across the metropolitan landscapes. For example, research on the four largest CBSAs in Florida finds that newly-generated NOAH are disproportionately located in suburban as opposed to urban neighborhoods (Kang and Jeon, 2021).

Due to the cost and length of time it can take to develop new affordable housing, many areas are exploring the possibility of preserving this unsubsidized housing stock to ensure long-term affordability, typically through the acquisition of buildings by the public or nonprofit sector.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Medium

While descriptions of unsubsidized affordable housing programs are widely available, there is very little research on the effectiveness of programs using this strategy to prevent displacement.

Summary and evaluation of literature

Housing affordability is commonly defined as rent or mortgage payment comprising less than 30% of a person's income. However, each program attempting to preserve the unsubsidized affordable housing stock has a different idea of what population it may actually work for. In a white paper on the potential opportunities to preserve these units in the Twin Cities, the Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative looks for units that are affordable to very low-income households—those at 50% of Area Median Income (Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative, 2013). Alternatively, some programs argue that the cost of acquiring and rehabilitating buildings may make it necessary to produce affordable housing in "middle market" areas (those having neither the highest, nor the lowest housing costs and quality), and target incomes between 60 - 120% AMI (Goldstein et al., 2019). Some programs may drop the lowest income brackets altogether, knowing that even if a market rate unit is "affordable" it will likely not be for someone below 30% AMI (Bhatia and Keller, 2018).

Even if programs agree on one definition of unsubsidized affordable housing, there are a variety of criteria they use to decide which units to prioritize. Considerations of estimated cost, gentrification potential, proximity to transit, property size, property age, distance from hazards, and land use suitable for multi-family development are some potential factors in shaping an affordable housing preservation program (LA County Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund, 2020; Abdelgany, 2016).

Many programs that aim to preserve unsubsidized affordable housing do so via acquisition and rehabilitation, while others employ "lighter touch" interventions such as financial incentives for landlords to make affordability commitments, technical assistance for doing so, efforts to reduce their operating costs, etc. (Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative, 2013). Another form interventions increasingly take is simply providing data: for example, the Own-It! (Owners Warning Notification and Information for Tenants) tool in Los Angeles (www.ownit.la) identifies at-risk properties with the aim of helping tenants and communities organize.

A series of papers focusing on the preservation of affordable housing primarily in Washington, DC, (Howell 2016, 2017, 2019) but also in Chicago, IL and Austin, TX (Howell, Mueller, and Wilson 2019), examine the importance of interaction among different stakeholders—government entities, affordable housing advocates, and grassroots organizations—in facilitating the preservation and preventing displacement of low-income households. These studies emphasize that effective strategies require the collaboration of multiple city- and state agencies, deep knowledge of local contexts, and availability of flexible policies and funding sources.

Some more recent studies also examine how neighborhoods can successfully preserve their affordable housing stock. A study of Albany Park in Chicago reveals several lessons, including the importance of the deep knowledge about people and places held by community organizations; this includes how amenable building owners might be to working with affordable housing developers, and knowing about tenants and landlords in order to be able to intervene to prevent the loss of affordable housing (Martin et al., 2024). The authors describe how affordable housing policies, such as Preservation of Existing Affordable Rentals, emerged from long-term organizing and coalitional work led by a neighborhood organization. Similarly, Velasco and Ferrara (2025) describe the importance of organizations providing community data sources in the cases of Chicago and Denver to support affordable housing preservation.

Need for further research

Ultimately, many of these programs are relatively recent and not much research exists about their effectiveness in preventing displacement. Potential questions for further research include: What population is most effectively served by unsubsidized affordable housing preservation? What are the characteristics of this stock that are preventing them from becoming market-rate? What strategies are most appropriate (acquisition vs. light touch vs. information tool)? How effective is this strategy at keeping tenants in units (e.g. length of stay, amount of money invested per unit, etc.)? It would also be important to know where the unsubsidized affordable housing stock is throughout California and the quality of those buildings, as housing rehabilitation programs may be key to their preservation.

While the intricacies of local governments and politics can make it difficult to come to a "one-size fits-all" answer to any of these questions, this research is necessary in California to know whether localities should be investing time and resources into preserving the existing stock of unsubsidized affordable housing.

Subsidized Housing Preservation

Policy description

Preservation of "at-risk" subsidized housing generally refers to efforts at federal, state, and local levels to maintain the affordability of housing units constructed through government subsidy. These subsidized units are leased or sold to income-eligible households for a stipulated length of time, after which they can be redeveloped or otherwise converted to market-rate and lost from the deed-restricted affordable housing stock. Such units are considered to be "at-risk" of loss from the affordable housing stock based on the number of years of remaining restricted affordability, the type of entity managing a project (e.g. for-profit vs. non-profit owners), among other factors limiting the potential for conversion to market-rate (California Housing Partnership Corporation, 2018). In effect, preservation efforts seek to prevent displacement and foster residential stability of households inhabiting these restricted units through a variety of financial and non-financial incentives.

Housing preservation initiatives are typically developed and administered by municipal housing departments or other local organizations that monitor deed-restricted affordable housing stock. However, state and federal agencies support local preservation efforts by providing strategies and resources essential to extending affordability. For instance, at the federal level, the National Housing Preservation Database manages an exhaustive inventory of units "at-risk" of conversion to market-rate, and the California Housing Partnership Corporation offers localities throughout the state a variety of strategies to protect its deed-restricted stock (California Housing Partnership Corporation, 2018; National Housing Preservation Database, 2017).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Low

Housing subsidy programs are highly diffuse — administered at federal, state, and local levels — and it is therefore difficult to thoroughly monitor resulting displacement from formerly affordable properties. Nevertheless, there are a handful of studies that attempt to measure the extent to which properties subsidized through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and other large-scale funding sources remain affordable beyond their required minimum terms. While these studies do not offer a direct measure of displacement, the loss of the affordable housing stock to market-rate conversion or redevelopment acts as an indirect proxy for displacement.

Summary and evaluation of literature

At the federal level, HUD commissioned a report that examines the outcomes of projects funded through LIHTC beyond the initial 15-year compliance period to which all such properties are subject under statute (though this period has since been extended to 30 years, and states such as California mandate 55 year affordability terms). In this report, Abt Associates found that LIHTC properties overwhelmingly remained affordable beyond the compliance period, with tax-credit beneficiaries selling

their shares of properties to the mission-driven affordable housing developers who have overseen development, operations, and management of the subject property (Khadduri et al., 2012). However, there are exceptions to this finding that do pose a risk to residential stability, such as continued financial feasibility (and therefore habitability of the property) and, particularly relevant in California, the market-rate conversion or redevelopment of properties in strong real estate markets (Khadduri et al., 2012).

Jurisdictions throughout the country have also spearheaded programs focused on preserving at-risk affordable housing that would prevent displacement of low-income households. For instance, the Housing and Community Investment Department of Los Angeles released a transmittal on a variety of strategies executed to preserve, rehabilitate, and acquire at-risk housing (Campos and Lott, 2018). These strategies include flexible funding programs that offer communities and mission-driven organizations the opportunity to preserve existing housing stock that may be losing affordability restrictions or require rehabilitation to maintain habitability. Additionally, municipal governments such as the City of Los Angeles have explored covenant extensions and "buy-downs" in which properties facing expiration essentially receive additional rental income from the city to extend affordability and stave off displacement (Campos and Lott, 2018).

Other cities have implemented programs that attempt to leverage sales involving properties with subsidized units to maintain their affordability. For instance, according to the City of LA's transmittal, Seattle adopted a Notice of Intent to Sell Ordinance. Under this program, the City effectively publicizes information on occupied properties containing affordable units with the objective of protecting tenants and preserving affordability (Campos and Lott, 2018; City of Seattle, 2020). However, despite the several strategies explored, the City's report does not present research on the outcomes of preservation programs such as these in preventing displacement.

In her book on affordable housing preservation in Washington, DC, Howell (2021) describes eight lessons on developing policy that preserves communities: knowledge about the local context, importance of a data-driven approach, organizing convenings, prioritizing resources for preservation, creating state and local preservation funding, presence of a broad activist movement, engagement from the start, and understanding that preservation is a long game.

Need for further research

There is little research on the direct effects that subsidized housing preservation programs may have on displacement after contracts expire and buildings are converted to market rate; we know little about where tenants go, and how cost-effective it would be to maintain these contracts over time. Since prior studies were concerned with the external validity of their findings, researchers in California should attempt to use California-specific data to understand these trends. Additionally, it would be useful to disaggregate the effects for various racial and socioeconomic groups and attempt to measure differences in strong versus weak housing markets.

Housing Rehabilitation

Policy description

Housing rehabilitation is broadly defined as any effort to upgrade seriously deteriorated housing units (Hays, 1982). While private property owners and local nonprofit organizations engage in housing rehabilitation on a small scale all the time to keep units livable, larger-scale efforts funded by the public sector are much more limited. Currently, more than 1 million low-income people live in public housing, yet the program still struggles with an aging housing stock and significant capital needs (Gerken et al., 2019). Given the federal disinvestment in public housing starting in the 1980s, many public housing communities went without significant repairs for decades. Therefore, housing rehabilitation is necessary to improve the living conditions in both public and private housing as a means to avoid displacement.

Early federal responses to housing deterioration emphasized completely clearing dilapidated housing, often using the cleared land for non-housing uses that seemed beneficial for the community. In the 1970s, the Housing and Community Development Acts encouraged local communities to make housing rehabilitation part of their community development efforts, as an alternative policy strategy (Hays, 1982). In 1992, following a federal report that 86,000 public housing units were "severely distressed" with families living in extreme poverty, the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program (HOPE VI) was created. As one of the biggest infusions of public sector resources into public housing in decades, HOPE VI attempted to rehabilitate the most distressed public housing (Zielenbach, 2003). More recently, the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) and Choice Neighborhoods programs were developed to improve upon past attempts at rehabilitating public housing, with a focus on ensuring that residents can remain in place or return post-rehabilitation.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Medium

Housing rehabilitation programs have taken many forms over the past few decades, and while they are not always focused on reducing displacement, the rehabilitation process inherently leads to some level of displacement (short- or long-term). Therefore, there is a fair amount of both academic and gray literature discussing these programs, which often touch on whether they led to displacement or suggest that future research should look into their displacing effects. In June 2019, HUD released the first major evaluation of the RAD program, but there is no major publication that focuses solely on understanding the displacement effects of current, public housing rehabilitation programs.

Summary and evaluation of literature

Rehabilitation through Community Development

Early housing rehabilitation programs were funded on a per-project basis or via block grants for community development, meaning their implementation was much more localized. In a study of housing rehabilitation programs from 1980, R. Allen Hays estimated that nearly eight million units were in need of "assisted rehabilitation," while only around 100,000 were being rehabilitated each year. Hays attributed this gap to the complexity of the rehabilitation process and the overall lack of resources committed to them. Subsidies to landlords were often not deep enough to pay for full rehabilitation costs, which potentially resulted in increasing rents for tenants (Hays, 1982).

In another study of these programs in Cleveland, researchers found that the grants that did go out did not seem to change tenants' situations much at all. "Expected signs of population displacement, property tax inflation, housing appreciation and real estate turnover were not always distinguishable from normal patterns" (Margulis and Sheets, 1985). Instead of pointing to a lack of resources, however, Margulis and Sheets blamed real estate market disinvestment, housing blight, and neighborhood decline on "deeper economic malaise" and claimed jobs could do more to improve neighborhoods than community development (Margulis and Sheets, 1985).

Demolition and Rehabilitation through HOPE VI

HOPE VI brought an influx of resources into public housing rehabilitation and was initially intended to fund the public housing projects or Public Housing Authorities most in need. As the program went on, however, population priorities and unit-replacement requirements changed. HOPE VI projects increasingly funded mixed-income communities and no longer required one-to-one unit replacement. This resulted in a net loss in housing units designated for very-low income individuals and families and the significant displacement of those families (Zielenbach, 2003).

Overall, HOPE VI funded the demolition of nearly 100,000 public housing units in favor of mixed-income developments resulting in significant displacement (Keene and Geronimus, 2011). While residents were, on average, moved to neighborhoods with lower poverty rates than those they left behind, the majority were moved to other public housing sites (Kingsley et al., 2003). It is estimated that only 11.4% returned to their original homes (NHLP, 2002), despite the fact that most residents leaving HOPE VI sites wanted to return when projects were completed, as a study had found (Popkin et al., 2004). Overall, displaced residents experienced few improvements to their living conditions and economic realities, while also losing their geographically-rooted social ties (Keene and Geronimus, 2011). In a book studying the effects of the HOPE VI program, Edward Goetz examined what happened to residents whose communities were demolished, unfortunately finding that, "in some areas, residents are as a whole arguably worse off than before" (Goetz, 2013, p 150).

Rehabilitation through RAD + Choice Neighborhoods

The Choice Neighborhoods program succeeded HOPE VI in 2010 and reinstated the requirement to replace demolished units on a one-for-one basis. However, in 2010 Choice Neighborhoods could only fund about 900 units annually, and it was estimated that the capital-needs backlog for housing rehabilitation was $25.6 billion. The Rental Assistance Demonstration program was introduced as a way to bring outside funding to fill this gap. Through RAD, public housing is essentially transferred to public, nonprofit, and sometimes private organizations to rehabilitate and operate the sites (Hanlon, 2017). As of 2019, HUD had authorized around 200,000 units (around 17% of the total public housing stock) for the program and converted just over 100,000 (Gerken et al., 2019).

To address the issues of displacement that occurred under HOPE VI, RAD regulations often prohibit permanent involuntary displacement and require that tenants who must temporarily relocate are guaranteed the right to return without any rescreening (Hanlon, 2017). In the first major evaluation of the program, research commissioned by HUD found more than 4 in 5 residents were satisfied with their housing after RAD conversion (Gerken et al., 2019). Similarly, in interviews with residents of RAD sites in California's Central Valley, researchers found notable, and mostly positive, results associated with RAD conversions, especially regarding improved amenities, safety, and resident resources (Hernández et al., 2019).

Regarding displacement, the initial evaluation showed that the majority of residents in public housing converted through RAD were able to stay in their units. About one-third of residents had to move during the RAD process, and only 2.3% did not return to their original unit or another subsidized housing unit. Maybe for this reason, an evaluation of RAD that took place between 2013 and 2018 on short-term outcomes for public housing tenants found that their experiences were positive or neutral, with most tenants reporting they were generally satisfied with their public housing authority and not having to relocate because of the conversion (Hayes et al., 2021). There remain significant concerns, however, that transferring ownership of public housing to outside organizations that are susceptible to market forces could mean residents are more at risk of being displaced because of foreclosure, bankruptcy, etc. (Schwartz, 2017).

Indeed, a recent study by Lowell and Smith (2023), using difference-in-difference analyses of 1,141 neighborhoods across the US, found that neighborhoods with RAD had demographic and housing market changes associated with gentrification: they found larger gains in middle-class residents, larger losses of very low-income residents, and larger increases in rental housing costs (with the greatest increases in areas with extensive redevelopment).

Need for further research

Given RAD is the major public housing rehabilitation program in the country today, there is a real need for research to focus on the voluntary versus involuntary displacement that can happen throughout the conversion process. Research could monitor the experience of residents after the rehabilitation to understand if the safeguards built into the program are sufficient to prevent displacement in the event of mortgage foreclosures (Schwartz, 2017).

Additionally, since residents have the option to seek housing on the private market with federal vouchers, it is necessary to understand how communities change during RAD conversions and where they go. These changes have an impact on social networks that can improve health outcomes. Therefore bringing a health equity perspective into research around housing rehabilitation can reveal insights into the community-level health outcomes from a RAD conversion (Keene and Geronimus, 2011).

Another potential focus of future research is rehabilitation programs. Little is known about whether and how these types of investments incorporate investments in weatherization, energy efficiency, and/or electrification, and then how these may contribute directly or indirectly to displacement.

Condo Conversion Restrictions

Policy description

Condominium (or condo) conversion typically refers to the process of taking multi-unit rental housing that is owned by one entity, breaking it up by individual units, and selling those to separate owners as condos. As referenced in the discussion of rent control policies, owners of rental property may choose to convert their units to condos as a reaction to laws perceived to reduce their potential profit from renting.

In response to condo conversions, some cities have placed restrictions on how many units may go through this process each year. In San Francisco, for example, there was a backlog of two thousand requests to convert, so in 2013 the City Council placed a ten-year moratorium on condo conversions in exchange for permitting those already in the backlog (Barmann, 2013).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Medium

Some empirical evidence has started appearing on the impact of condominium conversion on gentrification. While descriptive research exists on first-right-to-purchase condo policies, there is not much literature directly examining how they affect displacement. The exception is Carolyn Gallaher's 2016 book on Washington DC's response to condo conversions and the efficacy of TOPA as a means of preventing displacement. According to Gallaher, "Scholars complain...that condo conversion reduces the rental housing stock on which the poor and working class depend" (Gallaher, 2016, 2).

Summary and evaluation of literature

Two recent studies, one from Toronto, the other from San Francisco, find a link between condo conversion and gentrification. More specifically, Grisdale and Walks (2022) find that condominium development has played a significant role in restructuring Toronto's rental market and advancing gentrification. Similarly, Kennedy and Wheeler (2023), researching the lottery process regulating condominium conversions in San Francisco, found that such conversions led to increases in the prices of adjacent buildings, increased home values and rental prices, as well as demographic changes (increase of higher income residents).

On the other hand, research on condominium conversion ordinances in the 100 largest cities in the US found little evidence that condominium development led to gentrification, and instead attributed correlations between socioeconomic status and condo development to reverse causality, namely finding that condominium developers choose to convert in areas that already have concentrations of wealthier residents (Boustan et al., 2023).

While condominium conversions can directly displace existing tenants, a new working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research challenges the idea that the presence of condominiums in general causes displacement by encouraging wealthier residents to move into urban centers. In what they call the first empirical analysis of the effect condominiums have on urban space, Boustan et al. (2019) analyzed the relationship between the density of condos in central cities across the US and the demographic makeup of those cities. Examining a range of local policies that either allow or restrict condo production and conversion in these cities, they found that while restrictive policies did in fact reduce the number of condos in an area (as intended), there was no relationship between the number of condo units and the residents' demographics in that area (Boustan et al., 2019). As they explain, this finding provides more evidence to the idea that, "the primary factors behind gentrification reflect changes in the demand for urban living rather than housing supply" (Boustan et al., 2019).

Need for further research

The introduction of the Boustan et al. (2019; 2023) papers challenge the idea that building new condominiums can drive displacement through induced demand; however they do not address the question of whether restrictions on condo conversions are preventing direct displacement by stopping the eviction of existing tenants when buildings are sold. While these condo conversions can restrict the housing market and displace lower-income tenants, the use of laws like TOPA (discussed further below) turns that process on its head, instead using it to protect at least some of the existing tenants. Future research could examine San Francisco's ten-year moratorium on condo conversions to see how resident mobility has changed since its passing.

Community Control of Land

Policy description

The motivation behind policies that give communities control over the land on which they live is straightforward: housing as an investment vehicle leads to speculation, increasing rent costs, and displacement of those who cannot pay. These policies attempt to provide an alternative by transforming tenants into collective owners with control of the land they live on. Instead of being bound by the profit motivations of individual or corporate landlords, these tenants trade profit maximization for the guarantee that they will be able to afford their homes indefinitely. While there are many specific policies that fall under this umbrella, they include similar components that differentiate community control from other forms of cooperative ownership like condominiums: land owned collectively by residents or a non-profit organization, long-term leases of the structures on the land to residents, and resale requirements to ensure rents remain affordable in perpetuity (Green and Hanna, 2018).

In a 2018 report for the Democracy Collaborative, Green and Hanna describe the following policies under the umbrella of community control, some of which we discuss elsewhere in this report:

- *Community Land Trusts*: Multi-stakeholder organizations that own land for the permanent benefit of the community, selling and renting homes with various resale restrictions in order to maintain long-term affordability.
- *Resident Owned Communities*: Member-run cooperative organizations that own the land in manufactured housing communities, protecting against displacement, poor conditions, and exploitative management practices.
- *Limited Equity Cooperatives*: Member-run cooperative organizations that limit the equity homeowners can accumulate, thus preserving long-term affordability.
- *Land Banks*: Publicly owned or nonprofit entities that allow local governments to acquire abandoned or tax delinquent properties and prepare them for productive uses.

Community land trusts (CLTs) are one of the more direct policies that allow communities to retain control over the land they live in. The first CLT was an agricultural land trust in Georgia, started in 1968 to prevent black farmers from being forced off their land (Louie, 2016). While CLTs can be complicated to set up and maintain, there are over 225 of them in the US today (Grounded Solutions Network, 2020). According to the California Community Land Trust Network, there are over 15 CLTs statewide, most of which are in Northern California (CCLTN, 2020). In 2022, Zepeda et al. published a guide for local governments in California wanting to support Community Land Trusts; at the time of the publication, CLTs in California had over 1,500 units of housing with 3,500 residents.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Medium

We found limited literature on the effectiveness of community land trusts in reducing displacement. While there are papers and reports (mostly gray literature) describing individual communities that have enacted policies like CLTs and examining their effects, there has been little, if any, research on their larger relationship to displacement.

Summary and evaluation of literature

The most prominent and well-studied example of a CLT is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in Boston, which had notable stabilizing effects on the residents of the neighborhood. DSNI is a CLT that covers 225 permanently affordable housing units, commercial and nonprofit space, as well as community amenities like a playground, urban farm, and more. Because of the CLT's presence in the neighborhood, its residents were less hard hit by the Great Recession of 2007-2009 (Louie, 2016). DSNI, which owned the land and leased out the housing to the residents, had ensured that no subprime mortgages were sold in the neighborhood; therefore, foreclosures during that time were minimal. Compared to a similar sized area nearby that had 85 foreclosures in 2008 and 2009, DSNI only had one (Louie, 2016).

The neighborhood was also included in a study of big-city neighborhoods that were seeing higher capital investment in residential real estate as well as increasing numbers of low- and moderate-income people (Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood was also included in this list). Citing years of community organizing and investment in policies like CLTs, the report states, "In these just-right neighborhoods, value recapture mechanisms (e.g., community land trusts and mutual housing associations) might allow us to harness a wave of reinvestment to benefit urban residents instead of displacing them" (Wyly et al., 2000, p. 2).

A more contemporary example, The Buy Back the Block program in Baltimore, MD, provides financial assistance to help renters remain in their communities and become first-time homeowners (The New School Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, 2024). Renters earning up to 120 AMI are eligible for the program. Since the program started in March 2023, there were nearly 2,0002000 applicants, with 155 of them approved as eligible buyers. Eight individuals, so far, successfully closed on their homes. and one of the eight was able to convert their rental housing choice voucher to homeownership assistance. An evaluation of this program is in process.

The few empirical studies on CLTs find that they stabilize neighborhoods. Research on property acquisitions from 15 CLTs across the U.S. from 2000-2016 found that CLT acquisitions stabilized or increased nearby home prices, even as broader neighborhood prices declined, (slowing down a decline in prices compared to the control group) (Ali and Raviola, 2025). Using data from Data Axle on household relocations, the authors found no detectable effect on residential displacement, overall or by demographic characteristics. They argued that CLTs can play a role in stabilizing or revitalizing neighborhoods with declining property values, underlining that CLTs have historically been a tool to promote homeownership and improve the quality of housing in areas with declining home values.

Research on two case studies in North Carolina found that a local mission-driven land bank has been successful in supporting the stabilization of affordable housing options in one of the neighborhoods

(Norman, 2025). In another study, Graziana (2021) described four cases where CLTs have collaborated with land banks to stabilize neighborhoods. In examining similar case studies of CLTs collaborating with land banks, Lowe et al. (2022) describe key lessons for CLT-land bank collaboration, including the importance of support from elected officials, local advocates and citywide or regional organizations promoting affordable housing. They suggest that publicly subsidizing land bank operations may better facilitate CLT expansion. They find that CLT-land bank collaborations need funding and political support in order to successfully address affordable housing challenges as opposed to selling land bank property at market rates to the highest bidder.

CLTs have been found to serve more moderate-income than lower-income households, which may limit their ability to prevent displacement of the communities most at risk of displacement by market pressures. In a 2011 survey of CLTs by Grounded Solutions Network, an organization that promotes affordable housing via policies like those discussed here, researchers found that 55% of CLTs served households at 80% AMI, another 30% served households at 120% AMI, and none served those below 50% AMI (Thaden, 2012).

These findings are confirmed internationally in studies of limited equity cooperatives in both Denmark and Uruguay. Research into these communities found that they do in fact provide owners with more direct control over their homes, but who is an owner is often determined by social and cultural capital (e.g., social networks, educational resources, values and attitudes, etc.). This can leave out groups in need. As the researchers explain: “those who have fallen through the cracks...have largely been vulnerable and marginalized social groups that are not endowed with the minimum economic, social and cultural capital required for membership in a cooperative housing project” (Vidal, 2019, p. 174).

Another study of CLTs in rural England found that residents who hold social and/or functional attachments to place are often prioritized, which may potentially deny housing opportunities to those without such attachments (Moore, 2021).

These above studies collectively point to the potential for policies that give communities control of land to reduce displacement through their protective affordability requirements and long-term commitment. While these policies have not yet been broadly replicated and do not currently cover people at all income levels, they have the potential to work in concert with other anti-displacement strategies to preserve affordable housing and reduce displacement (Jackson, 2017).

Need for future research

Due to their potential role in reducing displacement, more research should be conducted on community land trusts. Particularly important would be to better understand the extent to which these policies do or do not serve the most vulnerable communities (including those with high proportions of people of color and/or the lowest incomes), and how they could be expanded or geared toward serving those most at risk of being displaced. Other questions that require further investigation include: Are there local or state policies that facilitate or inhibit the establishment of CLTs? How might governments link public land disposition policies to CLT formation?

Additionally, given that community land trusts (and similar policies) can effectively remove housing from the market, it would be important to analyze the second-order effects of their implementation to understand what happens to rents and displacement pressures for those living near such protected housing.

Short-Term Rental (STR) Restrictions

Policy description

Short-term rentals are housing units, or portions of housing units, rented out for a short period of time, less than a regular tenancy (often defined as less than 30 days at a time). Common platforms include Airbnb, founded in 2008, and Vrbo. These rentals can take different forms, including hosted partial-home short-term rentals, where a homeowner rents a portion of their home, un-hosted owner-occupied short-term rentals, where a homeowner rents their home while away, and dedicated or investor-owned rentals, where homes are used primarily or exclusively as STRs, often with professional management companies that manage more than one STR listing (Local Housing Solutions, 2025). These rentals are prevalent in places across the country, and have been shown to increase rents by reducing the long-rental housing stock, increasing rents in neighborhoods and cities across the nation and globe (Barron et al. 2018; Aranda-Cuéllar et al., 2025; Adamiak and Marjavaara 2024; Franco and Santos, 2021), although these effects can vary by neighborhood, particularly affecting parts of cities more appealing to tourists (Bibler et al., 2022 Wachsmuth and Weisler, 2018).

Research has found that STRs can directly lead to the displacement of longer-term households for tourists, fueled further by remote working arrangements (Adamiak and Marjavaara, 2024; Ledraa and Alarabi, 2024; Colomb and Gallent 2022). Other impacts to regular residents include noise disturbances and increases in crime (Local Housing Solutions, 2025; Eskandari-Qajar and Orsi, 2016). STRs can also lead to a reduction in tax revenue for jurisdictions from the hospitality industry (Bivens, 2019). Some advocates describe that STRs can support homeowners to stay in their homes through providing supplementary income, and can spread tourist revenue to parts of the city with fewer hotels (Calder-Wang, 2021; Bivens, 2019). Research has found that these benefits sometimes disproportionately benefit higher-wealth households (Bivens, 2019), and critics point out that Airbnb's revenue is often generated largely from whole-unit STRs without onsite hosts (Samaan, 2015, in Lee, 2016).

In response to impacts of STRs on the local market, as well as impacts on the hospitality industry, some jurisdictions have implemented restrictions on STR units. These restrictions can take many forms, ranging from monitoring and registration to fees and taxes to outright prohibitions, as well as limitations of different forms, such as limitations on the number of units in an area, limitations on owner types (e.g. limiting to rentals where the owner lives onsite or limiting the number of units an individual owner can rent out), and limitations on the number of nights a property can be used as a STR (Local Housing Solutions 2025). Such regulations have been plagued with difficulty in enforcement (White and Thor 2024). There has also been pushback to such regulations, with lobbying by the STR industry and the argument that they impinge on property owner rights (Crowe, 2021; Ferreri and Sanyal, 2018).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Research shows that STR regulations can reduce STRs' impacts, namely increases on residential rents and reductions in the long-term rental housing supply. There is a significant amount of peer-reviewed literature examining the impacts of STR regulations on housing supply and rents. There is variation in the

extent of these impacts, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the variation of forms of regulation, enforcement, and contexts. While effects vary, the direction of impacts has almost always shown that regulations can reduce rents and home prices. Some jurisdictions have chosen to dedicate funds from taxes on STRs towards affordable housing.

Summary and evaluation of literature

STR regulations often have the primary goal of reducing the negative impacts of STRs on the rental market, primarily the conversion of long-term rental units to STRs (Wachsmuth and Weisler, 2018). Regulations aim to reduce this pressure on the rental market, in addition to other goals, including reducing disturbances to building and neighborhood residents (Eskandari-Qajar and Orsi, 2016). As with many anti-displacement measures, the efficacy of STR regulations depends on design and enforcement, as well as local housing conditions. In very high-cost areas, the impacts of STR regulations may not be clearly evidenced. A common critique is lack of enforcement. Another concern, with limited information available, is the possible displacement of homeowners due to loss of income sources from STR regulations.

Studies of cities across the world have shown the benefits of STR regulations on reducing pressures on the housing market. A cap on the number of properties a host can manage in New York City, San Francisco, and Portland was found to reduce rents and home values by about 3%, which was attributed to increased supply in local residential markets (Chen et al., 2022). A simulation in Amsterdam found that stronger regulation supported the retention of lower income residents in the city center, and that prohibiting the tourist market restrains increases in house prices (Overwater and Yorke-Smith, 2022). In Los Angeles, STR ordinances were found to have reduced listings by 50% and rents and housing prices by 2%, with a large effect of STRs on property values (e.g. 15%) in areas attractive to tourists (Koster et al., 2021). A comparison of sixteen European cities' regulations found that regulations can be effective in reducing the pressure of STRs on the rental market and can reduce the professionalization of STRs (the percentage of hosts managing multiple listing and the ratio of entire apartment listings to shared rooms) (Bei and Celata, 2023).

Research has highlighted different impacts depending on the form of STR regulation, but overall the most important factor is enforcement, which can be difficult without data sharing from STR platforms. Since impacts are at the neighborhood level, it may make sense for regulations to be considered at that level as well (Garay-Tamajón et al., 2022). However, cases show that specific zonal restrictions can lead to the growth of STRs in other parts of the city (van Holm 2020). Other cases found that attempts to reduce the spatial concentration of STRs may not have significant effects, and seems less effective unless there is a complete ban in touristified neighborhoods (Bei and Celata, 2023). Reductions in the number of new listings post-regulation can bounce back in a short period of time (Zou et al., 2024).

Research on regulations in sixteen European cities found that stringency and the cooperation of booking platforms is more important than the specific policy mix involved (Bei and Celata, 2023). Regulations are sometimes blatantly defied: A recent analysis in Berlin found that approximately four out of five Airbnb listings remained illegal (Wurnig and Reich, 2020, in Crowe, 2021). Without enforcement methods, STR listings may proliferate even with regulations (Brotman, 2021). Research focusing on Barcelona's zonal restrictions and Paris' temporal restrictions found that Barcelona was more successful in reducing STRs

in the city center due to capacity for enforcement, indicating that effectiveness is tied to enforcement (Bei 2025). Another finding is that time restrictions like those implemented in Paris are difficult to enforce (Bei 2025). Gaining cooperation of booking platforms for data sharing and blocking of listings is crucial to guarantee enforcement and reduce the pressure of STRs on the rental market (Bei and Celata, 2023). In the case of Chicago, the effect of regulations was only significant after the city started receiving detailed data from STR platforms (Jin et al., 2024). Enforcement can be difficult: Platforms are not necessarily transparent about their data even when explicit agreements are in place (Cox and Haar, 2020).

Some research has found that STR regulations may do more harm than good. Research in Sydney found that their STR laws were associated with an increase in rents, which they explain is due to laws restricting the number of days a short-term rental can be booked for, leading to more units leaving the long-term rental market for the short-term market (Roudnitski and Sarkar, 2025). The authors therefore advocate for alternative restrictions, and a careful examination of possible repercussions for affordable long-term rental housing (Roudnitski and Sarkar, 2025). Another study in the same region found that a 180-day cap led to a short-term reduction in STR listings, with no long-term effects on the rental market (Zou et al., 2024). A structural model in the US found that imposing a tax is better than limiting the number of days a property can be listed, and proposes a convex tax that imposes a higher tax on expensive units to reduce cannibalization of the rental supply while supporting additional income for lower-income hosts (Li et al., 2022).

Limited research has examined the possible displacement effects of STR regulations due to reduced homeowner incomes. Research in San Francisco and Chicago found that STR registration requirements led to a decrease in availability of STRs and a reduction in home prices in the most STR-dense areas, but that notice transfers (deed transfers preceded by nonpayment-related notices) and foreclosure-related events in the same areas increased significantly (more than 40%) (Bibler et al., 2021). This shows the tension in supporting the rental market given that additional income from STRs can support some homeowners remaining in their homes.

Future research

Given the importance of enforcement strategies in the effectiveness of STR regulations, future research on implementing such strategies would be helpful, particularly with regard to enforcing data sharing and transparency by STR platforms. In addition, future research examining the impacts of STR regulations on homeowner incomes, and effects on lower-income homeowners in particular, would be helpful to examine possible negative impacts that may accompany benefits for low-income renters.

Tenant Protection Strategies

"As rents in...neighborhoods rise, advocates often point to the need for tenant protections, rent regulation, and other strategies to ensure that existing residents are able to stay in the changing neighborhood" (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).

Rent Control

Policy description

Rent regulations (including rent control) have been utilized as a mechanism to stabilize housing costs for decades. After both world wars, facing a lack of housing for those returning home, cities across the country implemented different forms of rent regulation with the goal of fighting skyrocketing housing costs (Pastor et al., 2018). While specific rent regulation policies vary across time and geographic context, rent control today refers to a set of policies restricting the amount landlords can raise rent in a given year. Such policies are frequently accompanied by provisions that exempt new construction from rent control and bring rents to market rate once tenants move out.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

High

Given their long history, rent control policies have been under much academic scrutiny, and there exists a large body of peer-reviewed writing available about their effectiveness in reducing displacement. However, the majority of these studies do not measure displacement directly, instead using proxy measures such as housing costs or rent prices to estimate the effect on existing tenants.

Summary and evaluation of literature

In a literature review of recent research on the effects of rent regulation, Manuel Pastor and co-authors describe rent regulations as an "anti-displacement tool" that successfully keeps tenants in their homes longer, writing, "in San Francisco, rent stabilization has allowed long-term, lower-income residents to stay in their homes rather than being pushed out to far-flung suburbs" (Pastor et al., 2018, 21).

The conclusion that rent regulations are effective at stabilizing neighborhoods and preventing displacement is commonplace in the research overall. In the aforementioned study of rent control in San Francisco, Rebecca Diamond and co-authors examined the introduction of the 1994 ordinance that suddenly applied the existing policy to a new set of units. Using this unanticipated change in the law, they were able to examine the migration patterns of tenants in small multi-family apartment buildings built before 1980 (protected by rent control) as compared with those built in 1980 or after (not protected by rent control). Their findings suggest that rent control limited the displacement of tenants and allowed them longer tenure in their units, having an especially strong effect among minority and elderly communities (Diamond et al., 2018). Overall, the authors estimated that tenants in rent-

controlled units were 10 to 20 percent more likely to remain at their original address and are more likely to remain in San Francisco, in general. However, they also found that the policy led to removal of units from the rental market, through condo conversions. They concluded that the policy protected current tenants while potentially harming lower-income residents who did not currently occupy a rent-controlled unit.

Another study of rent decontrol in Cambridge, MA, looked at the unexpected removal of rent control in Massachusetts in 1995 (Autor et al., 2014). Researchers found that property values increased by 16 percent, on average, for units that were no longer subject to rent regulations. This increase in property values does not directly predict displacement, but ostensibly led to the displacement of some tenants who had been protected by rent control.

Using the same policy change as Autor et al. (2014), Sims (2007) examined the effect of the 1995 end of rent control in Massachusetts on the quantity and quality of rental units in Boston. Overall, this study found that units subject to rent control were 6 to 7 percentage points more likely to become rental units after rent control was removed, suggesting that landlords had been keeping thousands of units off the market (as ownership units) due to these regulations. This study also found that removing rent control shortened renter stays in a property by about 1.84 years (Sims, 2007).

Research using New York City Housing Vacancy Survey data examined rent stabilization as an affordability policy and found that rent-stabilized tenants experienced rent savings and reduced rent burden compared to similar unregulated tenants (Zapatka and de Castro Galvão 2023). The authors describe rent stabilization as "one important affordability tool" and argue it should be paired with policies that stimulate new housing construction. A different analysis of New York City's rent stabilization found that stabilized tenants paid substantially lower rents than market-rate tenants, but that benefits were initially unevenly distributed, with white tenants receiving larger average rent discounts than Black, Hispanic, and Asian tenants—a gap that however has closed over time (Chen et al. 2023).

Studies of rent regulation in Catalonia, Spain found modest rent reductions with limited short-term supply effects. Earlier research found rent reductions of approximately 4-6% with no evidence of declining rental supply, while a later differences-in-differences study evaluating Catalonia's 2023 Housing Law, which introduced rent regulation in designated high-demand areas, found only small and statistically insignificant rent declines compared to other regions, pointing to the larger role of housing supply and macroeconomic conditions (Jofre-Monseny et al., 2023; Pinto Hernández et al., 2025).

While rent control is effective at keeping people who live in regulated units in place, these studies find mixed results on the effects of the policy on the rental market overall. Since rent control policies generally contain exemptions for newer units, they have not been found to affect the rate of new building construction (Pastor et al., 2018). On the other hand, these studies also find that owners of units subjected to rent control are likely incentivized to pull them off the rental market and convert them to for-sale units, renovate them to the point at which they are no longer covered by rent control, or let their properties deteriorate in minor ways (Diamond et al., 2018; Sims, 2007; Asquith, 2019). In a paper examining landlord behavior under rent control in San Francisco, Asquith (2019) finds that when faced with large demand increases in the housing market, "an increasing number of landlords choose to withdraw some or all of their units from the market, even at the cost of leaving them vacant" (so that

rents can eventually be raised to market rate) (Asquith, 2019, p 42). Similarly, a very recent study examining rent control and housing supply across US metro areas found that more restrictive rent control policies were associated with a reduction in total rental units, alongside an increase in units affordable to extremely low-income households, highlighting tradeoffs across different segments of the rental market (Stacy et al., 2025).

Recent empirical studies have also found linkages between rent-controlled units and residential mobility and evictions. A study of the relationship between rent stabilization and residential mobility in the San Francisco Bay Area found that it was effective at reducing out-migration rates for lower-income households; however, neighborhoods with a higher share of rent-controlled units also are exclusionary, reducing in-migration by low-income residents (Chapple et al., 2022). A study of eviction filings in San Francisco found that tenants in rent-controlled units were more likely to face eviction filings than tenants in non-controlled units, which the authors attributed to vacancy de-control and state eviction law rather than rent control itself (Gardner and Asquith, 2025). Related work on rational eviction finds that vacancy de-control provisions can increase incentives for landlords to evict tenants in order to reset rents, weakening the anti-displacement effects of rent control (Geddes and Holz, 2025). Research on landlord behavior in Los Angeles found that tenants in rent-controlled buildings and gentrifying neighborhoods were significantly more likely to experience illegal eviction practices. The authors conclude that landlords may respond "in illegal ways when frictions in the market make it difficult to simply increase rents" (Angst et al., 2025).

International evidence suggests that rent control can reshape investment and tenure patterns over time. Research from Germany finds that rent regulation reduces returns on controlled units and increases incentives to invest in unregulated new construction, suggesting a shift in investment patterns rather than full market exit (Baye and Dinger, 2025).

Other studies find that tenant protection policies are associated with long-term declines in private rental housing (Kholodilin and Kohl, 2023). Thus, research on the distributional effects of rent control indicates that affordability gains for current tenants may occur alongside longer-term constraints on housing supply (Favilukis, Mabille, and Van Nieuwerburgh, 2022).

Additionally, there is uncertainty around the effect of the presence of rent control policies on non-regulated units. While it seems that the rent and property values of surrounding, non-regulated units may also remain lower with rent control (Sims, 2007; Autor et al., 2014), the effect is limited and there is uncertainty as to whether this applies in all contexts (Pastor et al., 2018). While Diamond et al. (2018) attribute a 15 percent decline in the supply of rental units and 5 percent increase in rent prices to San Francisco's rent control policies, they do not discuss what would have happened to rental units in such a strong housing market without those policies. Given the above findings from Autor et al. (2014), it is possible that the removal of rent control would lead to an even further increase in property values and rent prices, potentially driving even more displacement in the area (Pastor et al., 2018).

While the nuances of the second-order effects of rent regulations are being debated, the literature seems to agree that rent regulations are an effective anti-displacement tool for those living in regulated units. "Such housing stability reduces evictions (forced mobility) and can provide important societal

benefits" (Pastor et al., 2018, 21). However, Pastor et al. are careful to warn that these policies are not a "silver bullet" and must be part of a slate of anti-displacement policies (such as preventing landlords from removing units from the rental market, or "Just Cause" eviction regulations) to be effective in the long-term. Research in Silicon Valley showed that the nuances of rent control (what cap exists, how many buildings are included, etc.) can make a significant difference. In San Jose, for example, where there has been some version of rent control in place since 1979, the cap on annual rent increases was set at 8 percent. While other cities with rent regulations in the area saw lower tenant outmigration than nearby cities without regulations, San Jose witnessed no difference, potentially demonstrating that the 8 percent cap was too high to have an effect (Jeon et al., 2019). Vacancy decontrol is another nuance that can dramatically diminish the effectiveness of rent control, since it ensures that rent-stabilized units repeatedly return to market-rate upon turnover (Kelekian and Barton, 2010).

Need for further research

Despite the relative abundance of research on rent control policies, researchers recommend that a deeper understanding is needed. Suggestions for further research include: analyzing exactly who benefits and who doesn't from these policies (Sims, 2007), how differences in rent regulation policies and local context change their outcomes (Jeon et al., 2019; Rajasekaran et al., 2019), the effect of these regulations on small "mom-and-pop" landlords (Pastor et al., 2018), the effects on housing costs and evictions (Rajasekaran et al., 2019), and the impact of rent control on the health and wellness of tenants (Pastor et al., 2018).

Additionally, more research is necessary to truly understand rent control's effectiveness at preventing displacement as none of the above studies look directly at displacement pressures comparing areas with and without rent control. It would be useful to understand the effect rent control has on the mobility of residents who live in controlled units (e.g. whether or not they are consuming "too much" or "too little" housing due to a desire not to leave a regulated unit, or living in a location they would want to move away from), to determine the extent to which it creates exclusionary displacement. In a similar vein, we should examine who is moving into controlled units, where, and how, in order to understand longer-term patterns of neighborhood integration and segregation (Rajasekaran et al., 2019).

"Just Cause" Evictions

Policy Description

"Just Cause" eviction protections forbid property owners from evicting tenants except under certain specified circumstances, such as nonpayment of rent, violation of lease terms, or permanent removal of a dwelling from the rental market. In jurisdictions without such restrictions, tenants may be served with notices to vacate without cause—termed "no fault" evictions— that legally compel tenants to surrender their dwelling to the property owner within a certain period of time. "Just Cause" protections therefore generally shield tenants from arbitrary or "no-fault" evictions that may occur for reasons including economic incentives in a warming rental market, retaliation against tenants, or other instances in which tenants are not at-fault (Cuéllar, 2020).

The coverage of "Just Cause" ordinances varies by jurisdiction: they may apply their protections universally or only to a subset of the housing stock (e.g., structures built prior to 1980). Relatedly, "Just Cause" protections may either exist as standalone policies to prevent residential instability or in conjunction with rent-stabilization ordinances to bypass limitations on rent increases for incumbent tenants. Moreover, "Just Cause" ordinances may also operate in concert with condominium conversion laws or regulations on removing units from the rental market. For example, in Los Angeles, "Just Cause" protections include rent-stabilized housing stock being removed from the rental market, and property owners are required to provide relocation assistance to affected tenants as part of this ordinance (All-in Cities, n.d.).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Low

"Just Cause" eviction ordinances, similar to "Right to Counsel" protections, lend themselves to a relatively direct metric of displacement prevention and residential stability. "Just Cause" eviction protections are often featured in discussions of displacement, though limited research exists on how these programs mitigate displacement.

Among the limited research on the efficacy of "Just Cause" is a natural experiment that examined the incidence of eviction in California cities with and without these protections. The analysis selected four cities with recently passed "Just Cause" protections, compared evictions and eviction filings before and after their implementation, and compared these results to those of cities with similar characteristics but not similar protections (Cuéllar, 2020). This study found that cities with "Just Cause" protections saw the incidence of evictions and eviction filings decline after their passage and compared to their counterparts without such protections in place (Cuéllar, 2020). Although this finding only considers formal processes of eviction—rather than informal channels not reflected in legal filings—the data demonstrate how "Just Cause" protections may mitigate formal displacement pressures.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, a study of "Just Cause" protections provided evidence that these ordinances lower out-migration rates, particularly for lower-income residents (Chapple et al., 2022).

Another study examined how proposed “Just Cause” legislation in Boston would stem the tide of gentrification-fueled displacement and their associated harms. This study was framed as a health impact analysis to assess how “Just Cause” protections could influence the health of residents experiencing residential instability (Blanco, 2016). In other words, this study sought to assess how “Just Cause” protections could improve community health outcomes by promoting residential stability and its associated lifelines (e.g. social support networks) (Blanco, 2016). The report demonstrates how the eviction is associated with short- and long-term health issues; for instance, persons experiencing eviction reported decline in mental health and well-being as a result of stress and trauma, and evicted households are often forced to relocate to substandard, hazardous dwellings that harm physical health (Blanco 2016). In effect, “Just Cause” evictions protections, according to this study, would mitigate stressors and harms associated with residential instability.

A recent study by McCarthy (2022) describes the importance of adapting just cause eviction policies to local contexts; for example, in the case of Hudson, NY, not allowing the selling of units as a “Just Cause” in order to discourage flipping. He proposes affirming a right to renewal in order to shift the concept of good cause to a guarantee of rights.

Need for further research

Future research should emulate and build upon the analysis presented by Cuéllar (2020), who investigates the change in eviction rates and filings across cities that have implemented “Just Cause” protections.

However, to build on such an analysis and address its limitations, future research should examine trends in residential stability and tenure across jurisdictions that have or lack “Just Cause” protections. Indeed, by itself, “Just Cause” leaves open the possibility for other sources of displacement, such as rent increases and tenant harassment. By considering policies to support residential stability that complement “Just Cause” evictions, researchers can better estimate the impact of “Just Cause” policies. Moreover, recent legislation in California—Assembly Bill 1482—offers an additional lens through which “Just Cause” protections can support residential stability; this law includes “Just Cause” protections for certain renters and units, while also limiting annual rent increases. Future research can explore how this legislation has mitigated displacement pressures throughout California.

Tenant Right to Counsel

Policy Description

Tenant right to counsel confers renter households access to legal representation in eviction, or unlawful detainer trials. Such a policy extends the constitutional right to an attorney, required in criminal procedures, to tenants in eviction trials, which are civil procedures. Scholars and advocates have noted the imbalance of representation for decades and the devastating consequences for renter households (Scherer, 1988). In the face of an ever diminishing supply of affordable housing, a tenant right to counsel has the potential to mitigate displacement pressures.

Until recently, tenants named in eviction filings could rely only on under-resourced programs that provide legal counsel or volunteer attorneys (Scherer 1988). Over the past few years, however, jurisdictions throughout the country have introduced programs offering tenants access to attorneys as they navigate eviction cases. Notably, cities differ in whether they operate within a means-tested framework, whereby only low-income tenants qualify for assistance, or through a guaranteed right for renters of all income levels, as with criminal proceedings. For example, New York City offers legal representation to renters with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line, whereas San Francisco's program extends to all renters, regardless of income. Overall, right to counsel policies represent a significant shift in the context of urban displacement by dramatically expanding access to legal representation for the most vulnerable renter populations.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

High

Because of the relative recency of right to counsel implementation, there is a somewhat limited amount of literature that explicitly measures how such policies mitigate displacement. For instance, New York, San Francisco, and Newark have all enacted right to counsel laws, but only a handful of evaluations have been conducted (Mironova 2019; Fracassa 2020). Of course, in contrast to most other policies considered in this report, right to counsel provides a direct metric to evaluate incidence of displacement—whether unlawful detainer actions were filed, and the outcome of those filings. Accordingly, existing studies offer preliminary insight into how this type of policy can reduce displacement pressures.

Much of the literature on right to counsel—empirical or otherwise— has originated in law schools and public interest legal clinics engaged in pilot programs for tenant representation in housing court. For example, Stanford University's Justice & Diversity Center established a one-year pilot program offering pro-bono legal services to tenants with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level (John and Terry Levin Center, 2014). The results of this pilot program—the initial step toward San Francisco's implementation of a codified right to counsel—revealed that out of 692 tenants provided with legal representation, 187 were able to remain in their dwellings (John and Terry Levin Center, 2014; 17). However, this analysis was largely exploratory and therefore offers notable but limited findings in how tenants with representation fared relative to those without representation, beyond citing the imbalance

between landlords and tenants described above. Around the same time, the Boston Bar Association rolled out randomized controlled trials in a handful of cities in Massachusetts, in which a treatment group received legal representation. The results revealed that tenants receiving legal representation were twice as likely to remain in their homes than those without representation (Boston Bar Association, 2012). This pilot's experimental research design provides a slightly more robust measure of how right to counsel minimizes displacement.

More recently, San Francisco has issued findings related to the city's right to counsel law that was approved by voters in 2018. The San Francisco Chronicle reported in February 2020 that over the course of six months in 2019, the Right to Counsel program helped approximately 730 residents remain in their homes (Fracassa, 2020). During this span, over 1,600 households sought legal representation through the program, with more than 1,000 receiving full representation and more than 500 households receiving supplemental legal support. In a related press release, Supervisor Dean Preston highlighted that the City's eviction filings had declined by 10%, and that two out of three tenants receiving full-scope representation retained possession of their dwelling unit (Fracassa, 2020). Additionally, these findings revealed that four out of five African Americans receiving legal representation in an unlawful detainer action remained in their home, preventing further displacement of African American San Franciscans (Fracassa, 2020). While preliminary and not independently examined, these early findings point to the profound impact of right to counsel as a potential anti-displacement tool.

Another recent high-profile implementation of right to counsel was in New York City, which enacted its policy in late 2017. As part of its law, the City has rolled out the program to approximately 20 zip codes, with remaining implementation to all 200 zip codes by 2022. To evaluate its efficacy in mitigating eviction, the Community Service Society of New York compared eviction filing records in 2017, before the law was implemented, to its first year of operation in 2018. More specifically, this analysis compared filings in those first wave zip codes with demographically comparable zip codes where the law will be implemented in the coming years. Based on data from the City's Office of Civil Justice, over 22,000 residents benefitted from representation, of whom 84% were allowed to remain in their home (Mironova, 2019). The analysis further found that evictions in pilot zip codes declined by 11% between 2017 and 2018 (from 4,563 to 4,051), compared to just 2% for non-piloted zip codes (from 13,219 to 12,932) (Mironova 2019). Although this report only compares data between 2017 and 2018, the results highlight the immediate impact that such a policy has on reducing displacement pressures.

Ross (2022) uses the case of Los Angeles to describe the importance of dedicated resources to support legislation that protects tenants. Without funding for enforcement or for legal fees, no landlord was found guilty of violating an anti-tenant-harassment ordinance a year after it had passed, despite more than 2,330 harassment complaints during that time period.

In addition to help preventing displacement, right to counsel policies have positive effects on tenants' physical and mental health, as shown by Von Geldern (2025), who used semi-structured interviews and a quantitative analysis of case outcomes in Washington State.

Teresa et al. (2025) evaluate the impacts of the Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot program, an upstream approach offering flexible funding for a range of issues, including rent arrears as well as transportation, utility, and medical bills. While the program assisted tenants, they concluded that such programs are limited in their effectiveness without robust policy supports like rental assistance.

Examining the success of such programs, Benfer et al. (2025) describe the passage and implementation of state and local tenant right to counsel policies in five states, 17 cities, and one county that enacted legislation between 2017 and 2024. They evaluated 23 of these jurisdictions, finding that over half of the programs limited who is eligible for legal representation on the basis of income or other characteristics. They argued that successful programs need proper funding as well as education and outreach, and that the right to counsel can change courthouse culture as well as support for tenant protections in other areas and connections to other tenant services. They also found a range of purposes for such legislation across jurisdictions, including health, justice, or rights-based justifications.

Overall, tenant right to counsel programs receive high marks from scholars. Armstrong (2024) describes the success of passing renters' right to counsel legislation in jurisdictions across the country. Based on interviews with six tenants in Newark, NJ, and Hartford, CT, Franzese and Thomas (2022) describe the importance of the right to counsel in landlord-tenant proceedings. And Pruitt and Newman (2020) emphasize the urgent need for free, high-quality legal aid for rural Californians, describing the dearth of attorneys and high prevalence of evictions in rural places in the state.

Need for further research

Right to counsel programs stand among only a handful of policies that allow for clear measurement of displacement. With a cluster of right to counsel programs emerging, scholars and advocates will continue to receive fresh data to examine the efficacy of these programs and how tenant legal representation may stem the tide of displacement.

To further strengthen the analysis, future research should examine the broader economic and demographic trends within which right to counsel interventions are unfolding. In other words, most of the existing studies on right to counsel analyze the policy independent of the local dynamics that have contributed to the loss of incumbent residents. Therefore, research could be improved by examining the underlying circumstances that may be fueling displacement, which would offer a more exhaustive understanding of residential instability beyond formal eviction proceedings. Further research might also try to identify the basis for the eviction (e.g., non-payment of rent, failure to comply with the lease terms, notice to vacate, or another basis). This would help identify whether right to counsel is most effective in a specific type of eviction or is effective across the board for all tenants facing eviction.

Rental Assistance Programs

Policy Description

Rental assistance programs—distinct from tenant-based or project-based rental assistance—are initiatives offering low-income tenants emergency funds to pay rent and stave off eviction pressures during moments of economic hardship. Whereas tenant-based or project-based rental assistance (e.g. Section 8) is the primary means of rental assistance at the federal level, state and local governments have implemented additional short-term rental assistance programs to supplement renter household income to avoid mass evictions and displacement.

Rental assistance programs take a variety of forms, and may exist permanently or on an *ad hoc* basis during moments of heightened risk of residential instability. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, states and localities have spearheaded emergency programs that provide assistance to renter households with lost income as a result of mass economic closures (Greene and Batko, 2020). Through general revenue, housing trust funds, and philanthropic contributions, state and local governments are overseeing rental assistance programs for qualifying households that can demonstrate their economic hardship (Greene and Batko, 2020). These policies are not limited to economic downturns, and have been used to support renters who have experienced sudden rent increases. For instance, in late 2019, prior to the implementation of a state law that capped annual rent increases, tenants in Los Angeles saw their rents spike as landlords attempted to bypass the impending restrictions on future rent adjustments. As a result, the LA City Council established an emergency renters fund to prevent mass displacement as tenants absorbed substantial increases to their housing costs (Chandler, 2019). At present, some 35 states and the District of Columbia fund their own rental assistance programs (Castaldi and Patel, 2025).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Medium

Although limited research exists on the efficacy of rental assistance programs, some research on eviction prevention does address rental assistance funds as a stopgap displacement remedy. For instance, a recent student capstone project conducted a comparison of cities having some combination of eviction prevention programs that include emergency assistance, administered by either local governments or charitable organizations. It examined the localities of Jacksonville, Florida, Hennepin County, Minnesota, Seattle-Tacoma-Everett, Washington, and San Antonio, Texas, which have programs offering emergency grants to households at risk of eviction (Aghayev, Feng, and Wiens, 2017). This report shared survey findings suggesting that familiarity with these programs was highly limited, with ⅔ of respondents in eviction court reporting that they did not apply or were unaware of rental assistance programs (Aghayev, Feng, and Wiens, 2017). Additionally, the researchers found that the process of confirming program eligibility greatly undermines its efficacy, as this processing period lasts longer than the eviction process itself (Aghayev, Feng, and Wiens, 2017). A randomly assigned experiment on rental assistance for homeless families found significant positive impacts for households offered a voucher or a

subsidy, with benefits extending beyond housing stability to wellbeing and school attendance benefits for children, among other impacts (HUD Family Options Study, 2020).

Programs can provide payments directly to landlords or to tenants. A recent study examining PHLHousing+, a new rental assistance program in Philadelphia using direct-to-tenant payments, found that the program reduced administrative burdens on households. In order to speed up the process, tenants received debit cards with the payment, housing quality inspections were eliminated and payments were calculated using small area fair market rents (Reina et al., 2024).

Another recent longitudinal study in New Haven, CT found that receiving rental assistance was associated with a lower likelihood of housing instability. Recipients tended to live in low quality housing, in places with housing unaffordability, and had a lack of autonomy related to housing (Schapiro et al., 2022).

Research in Canada on a new Canada Housing Benefit rental assistance program, that provides payments directly to tenants instead of to landlords, found that both systems continued to have tenants living in unaffordable, poor-quality housing, and that the new system left tenants worse off than the prior rent subsidy system (Leviten-Reid et al., 2025).

A retrospective review of research on rental assistance offered five strategies to improve such programs: 1) expand the types of rental assistance offered (e.g. direct rental assistance, emergency vouchers, etc.); 2) improve the voucher program by reducing administrative costs and leverage lessons from mobility programs to improve locational attainment; 3) leverage rental assistance to increase housing supply; 4) develop tools other than rental assistance to support tenants, such as security deposit programs and lines of credit; and 5) develop other federal and local policies to address housing quality, housing supply and affordability, and tenant protections (Reina et al., 2025).

Other work has explored how policies could be instrumental in reducing residential instability by preventing eviction. For instance, most recently, Matthew Desmond's extensive research on eviction has revealed how relatively small sums of unpaid rent account for a large share of filings against tenants. In fact, Desmond's findings suggest that in the eviction courts of over 20 states, a significant share of renters are being evicted for less than $600, or otherwise less than a single month's rent (Badger, 2019). Similarly, in a study conducted in King County, Washington, researchers found that over half of the tenants experiencing eviction owed less than half a month's rent (Raghuveer, 2018). Increasing eviction fees may be another possible eviction prevention mechanism: research has found that higher eviction fees lead to lower eviction filing rates and eviction judgement rates, with disproportionately large effects in majority-Black areas (Gomory et al., 2023).

Researchers and advocates have long pointed out the need for rental assistance programs, pointing to examples of where such initiatives have existed and how they might be improved. Hartman and Robinson (2003) point to San Francisco and New York City as two cities in which community organizations have pursued such efforts to prevent eviction and displacement. However, this research does not provide figures on the outcomes of these programs on mitigating displacement (Hartman and Robinson 2003). To broaden the effectiveness of rental assistance programs, they might be expanded into a renters' tax credit, which would shift housing vouchers into the tax code and reimburse tenants for up to the entire amount of rent payments that exceed 30% of their income (Layser, 2025).

Need for further research

The prevalence and variety of rental assistance programs offer a diversity of approaches to measure their efficacy in mitigating displacement. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged cities to design policies that can protect vulnerable renters from displacement, leading to new studies on the effectiveness of rental assistance. Future research might examine the neighborhood stabilization impacts when localities and non-governmental entities leverage other forms of assistance, comparing their effectiveness to that of a broad approach like the renters' tax credit.

Finally, research must consider how tenant outreach and education shape the success of these programs in effectively reducing displacement pressures. In other words, future studies should investigate the extent to which cities and other entities are reaching tenants, and how their efforts could be improved.

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase

Policy Description

Like condo conversion restrictions, tenant opportunity to purchase programs work to preserve rental units, but target tenants directly by giving them the first right to purchase their building when it is put up for sale. The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) passed in 1980 in Washington, DC as a strategy to prevent displacement in the inner core (Gallaher, 2016). When the owner of a multi-unit building puts it up for sale, TOPA gives the existing tenants the right to purchase the property at the market price and then convert the units to a condo or cooperative so tenants can individually buy their own units, or work with a non-profit to preserve the building as affordable rental units.. This often involves tenants working with a third-party developer (either for- or non-profit) that makes necessary repairs and helps manage the property after the purchase. This strategy utilizes the condo conversion process, and point-of-sale more broadly, to assist existing tenants and is seen as one of the most tenant-friendly laws in the country (Gallaher, 2016).

The First Right Purchase Program in DC provides financial and technical assistance to income-qualifying tenants that are attempting to use TOPA to purchase their buildings. Between 2002-2012, the City financed the preservation of nearly 1,400 units of affordable housing (Reed, 2013). In 2014 and 2015, there were 42 TOPA purchases ; one-third of all multifamily transactions in DC were TOPA purchases in those years (Greysteel, 2015). Between 2015 and 2018 alone, over 1,400 units were purchased through Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) TOPA acquisition funding across 26 projects (Pelletiere and Wilson, 2018). TOPA has been an important part of creating limited equity housing cooperatives in DC; as of October 2019, DC had 4,400 units of limited equity cooperative (LEC) housing across 99 buildings (District of Columbia Limited Equity Task Force, 2019). Demographic data from these cooperatives demonstrates their diversity (Howell, 2020). In one neighborhood alone, TOPA was used to block the eviction of 26 families on one street in DC, leading researchers to conclude that it provides the "legal opportunity structure necessary for community organizations to fight redlining and gentrification" (Lloyd, 2015, 1091).

TOPA has been effective at preserving affordability, retaining approximately one quarter of multifamily buildings sold in the past 20 years in DC (Howell et al., 2025). However, recent research suggests that DC's TOPA program may dampen the production of new housing (Sayin and Calma, 2025). Research describes that the policy may have strayed from its original objective, and may discourage the long-term preservation of LIHTC housing, or price out affordable housing developers (as TOPA is sometimes now used to negotiate for cash rewards for tenants or other concessions) (Sayin and Calma, 2025). Washington DC revised its TOPA policy in 2025, limiting the types of buildings the program applies to (B26-0164 2025).

On a larger scale, the UK passed a similar, nation-wide "Right to Buy" policy in the 1970s, which research suggests was largely responsible for raising homeownership in the UK from 55% to over 70% in about 25 years (Disney and Luo, 2017). At present, several cities in California (Berkeley, Oakland, East Palo Alto, San Jose, and Los Angeles), and places around the country (Minneapolis, New York State, Massachusetts, and Atlanta) have recently considered passing similar legislation (Brey, 2020; Bruton and Nicholls, 2021).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Medium

Gallaher analyzed tenant associations' attempts to purchase their buildings through TOPA to understand if the law effectively prevents displacement. Using a representative sample of seven buildings (containing 1,179 units) that went through the TOPA process between 2003 and 2013, the study looked at both the percent of tenants who made it through the whole process, as well as whether the units remained affordable (Gallaher, 2016). Gallaher found that 58% of tenants in this sample made it all the way through the TOPA process, which qualitative interviews described as long and complex. While this number may seem low, Gallaher points out that when buildings were sold before, "landlords and developers interested in conversion routinely forced out [all of] their in-situ tenants" (Gallaher, 2016). Like other preservation strategies, TOPA purchases can represent a way for tenants to stay in their homes and avoid the trauma and disruption of displacement.

When it comes to the affordability of the units, however, Gallaher had a more nuanced take. While all 58% of tenants who made it through the whole TOPA process were able to afford their units in the end, the units that were vacated by existing tenants were most often converted to market-rate rents, becoming affordable only to people with higher-than-average incomes. Gallaher considers this "exclusionary displacement" because although units are voluntarily vacated, rent increases or tenure changes make it so that someone who could have afforded the unit before conversion no longer can. Bringing these vacated units up to market rate is often the result of pressure from developers to increase the returns on a project (Gallaher, 2016).

Howell et al. (2025) examined Washington DC and found that the city's TOPA helped preserve the affordability of approximately one quarter of multifamily buildings sold in the past 20 years, though there was geographic variation. TOPA was successful in preserving properties in gentrifying areas but less successful in preserving affordable housing in areas adjacent to public transit.

These analyses suggests that while TOPA can be an effective way to use the condo conversion process and other sales to keep tenants in their homes, the complexity of the process, the characteristics of the local neighborhood, and pressure from developers may affect how many people are able to access this resource. Additionally, tenants who can afford to buy their homes at the time of sale are typically not in the lowest-income groups, which means TOPA laws may not protect the renters most at risk. One criticism of TOPA's effectiveness at preserving affordable housing is that it puts too much responsibility into the hands of tenants. Some argue that the structure of the TOPA law forces tenants to work in their own best interest instead of allowing the government to mandate that units remain affordable for all (O'Toole and Jones, 2009). However, TOPA should be viewed as part of a broader anti-displacement policy framework that also includes tenant protections and production of new affordable housing. In fact, Howell argues that, in addition to tenant-oriented preservation strategies leading to increased community stability, these tenant-led approaches can "be a mechanism for changing the way that housing policy is formed and the goals to which it aspires (Howell, 2019).

Need for further research

Gallaher's research suggests this process can be effective, but recommends that future research is needed to understand the affordability and displacement effects of similar laws in different cities. If similar ordinances proposed around the state are passed, this would present an opportunity to conduct similar research on how effective these laws are at preventing displacement in a more local context.

Foreclosure Assistance

Policy description

Foreclosure assistance programs offer financial and non-financial means of support to homeowners facing financial distress and risk of displacement. In response to the tidal wave of foreclosures during the Great Recession, jurisdictions established assistance programs that provided financial aid and/or loan counseling that would protect homeowners and prevent further residential instability at the nadir of economic downturn.

For instance, during the Great Recession, the federal government established multiple programs that provided foreclosure assistance in a variety of forms (Mayer et al., 2012). Localities typically received federal grants that were used to prop up families in or on the cusp of financial default by providing free assistance on renegotiating mortgage terms or, in extreme cases, supporting households that ultimately ceded their home (National Housing Conference, n.d.). Additionally, community development institutions spearheaded initiatives to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure.

More recently, after COVID-19 pandemic, the US Treasury launched the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), providing nearly $10 billion for mortgage payments and other housing-related costs, with a focus on earlier intervention and greater flexibility than Great Recession-era programs (US Department of the Treasury 2024).

Overall, the Great Recession and pandemic efforts offer case studies of how foreclosure assistance programs function and their efficacy in preventing displacement.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Low

The magnitude of the foreclosure crisis during the Great Recession yielded a significant amount of literature on the subject of assistance programs. Because foreclosure, like eviction, is directly related to displacement, the outcomes reported in these foreclosure assistance programs essentially serve as a proxy for displacement mitigation.

The Urban Institute conducted a comprehensive, three-year evaluation of the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling (NFMC) program, one of several initiatives that emerged during the foreclosure crisis of the Great Recession (Mayer et al., 2012). As part of its program evaluation, Urban Institute researchers matched a sample of 180,000 records from the NFMC program to a loan performance data-sharing partner (Mayer et al., 2012, 3-4). By several metrics, households with troubled loans that received counseling were significantly more likely to avoid default at various stages, prevent completed foreclosures, benefit from loan modification, and subsequently remain current on their mortgages relative to households not receiving counseling (Mayer et al., 2012: 4-7). Although this study does not explicitly discuss displacement, the outcomes assessed — such as loan modification, avoiding

delinquency, and remaining current — suggest that foreclosure counseling programs may promote residential stability (Mayer et al., 2012).

Another analysis by the Urban Institute conveyed the benefits of mortgage counseling programs as piloted by a program in Washington D.C. In a data-sharing arrangement with the Urban Institute, a local non-profit housing counseling organization engaged in outreach with over 400 households facing the threat of foreclosure between 2011 and 2012 (Urban Institute, 2013). Nearly half of the participating households were able to become current on their mortgages through their assistance, with only five counseled households reporting foreclosure (Urban Institute, 2013). While a small sample, this study further conveys the benefits of foreclosure assistance programs in preventing displacement.

Additionally, in a joint report between the Boston and Cleveland Federal Reserve Banks and Federal Reserve Board, one case study examined a pilot program that provided foreclosure assistance to low-income households facing imminent displacement. This study described how, between the Fall of 2009 and April 2010, Boston Community Capital — a non-profit financial institution — piloted a program that acquired more than 60 housing units at discounted rates and resold them to existing occupants across several low-income neighborhoods in the Boston area (Cherry and Hanratty, 2010; Carr and Mulcahy, 2010). The program explicitly served households who had not been evicted in neighborhoods targeted by subprime mortgage lenders (Cherry and Hanratty, 2010). While not a comprehensive study, this case study sheds light on innovative approaches to foreclosure assistance that explicitly prevented displacement of homeowners (Cherry and Hanratty, 2010; Carr and Mulcahy, 2010).

Program evaluations for the US Treasury's HAF highlight the importance of speed. The department's three-year review found that programs were most effective when assistance reached households before foreclosure proceedings advanced, rather than after prolonged counseling and loan modification processes common during the Great Recession (US Department of the Treasury, 2024).

Post-2021 research reframes foreclosure prevention as a housing preservation strategy. California's Foreclosure Intervention and Housing Preservation Program (FIHPP), enacted in 2021 but never implemented, was designed to allow nonprofits to acquire properties at or near foreclosure and convert them to long-term affordable housing, treating foreclosure prevention as an anti-displacement tool rather than solely homeowner relief (Wampler et al., 2024). Thus, policy durability remains a key challenge. While acquisition-rehabilitation can preserve housing "three to five years faster" than new construction, FIHPP funding was eliminated in California's 2024 budget before implementation, underscoring the vulnerability of foreclosure prevention and preservation programs to fiscal cycles (Wampler et al., 2024).

Other states have also established foreclosure prevention initiatives. For instance, the State of Washington passed the Foreclosure Fairness Act, which requires lenders to offer homeowners financial counseling options, including mediation, prior to beginning foreclosure proceedings (Chen, 2016). Washington's Foreclosure Fairness Act, according to Chen, has helped hundreds of homeowners to modify their loans and avoid displacement through this state law through the state law (Chen, 2016, 232).

Need for further research

Foreclosure assistance is an anti-displacement policy that lends itself to direct measurement similar to "Just Cause" eviction protections and tenant's right to counsel. The existing research on the subject demonstrates how these programs, from foreclosure assistance to counseling to financial literacy, have benefited vulnerable homeowners, insulating them from residential instability precipitated by The Great Recession and widespread subprime, predatory lending practices, and from a global pandemic that affected many people's livelihoods.

To further explore this policy, researchers should examine how federal, state, and local policies established in the aftermath of the economic downturn have continued to function as home prices stabilized. Additionally, this research should consider local programs — like that established by Boston Community Capital — that leverage the resources of local financial institutions embedded in communities where foreclosures are concentrated. Finally, given the specifically ethno-racial dimension of subprime lending that precipitated the Great Recession, researchers should investigate how foreclosure assistance programs have performed in communities of color that bore the brunt of these lending practices.

Community Benefits Agreements

Policy Description

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are legally-binding contracts between developers and local stakeholders that set the terms and provisions of a proposed development project; more specifically, these agreements stipulate the tangible resources that a developer must provide to community members in exchange for tacit support of the proposed project (Salkin and Lavin, 2008; Pastor et al., 2018). These types of agreements have become channels through which community organizations have compelled public and private entities to meet local needs and ensure that large-scale projects serve as assets, rather than liabilities, to the surrounding population. Given the economic uncertainty introduced by new development, CBAs often include affordable housing requirements, local hire provisions, and other conditions that intend to mitigate displacement pressures in neighborhoods at risk of gentrification.

Against a backdrop of heightened public and private investment in central cities, CBAs emerged as a mechanism for neighborhoods—particularly in low-income communities of color—to tailor development projects and impacts to also benefit incumbent residents. In a sense, CBAs are a form of development value recapture, except that community organizations, rather than governments, usually initiate these agreements to recapture value that new developments will generate out of land use entitlements. Overall, CBAs offer historically disenfranchised communities formal opportunities to negotiate development terms that minimize the negative externalities of new investment activity.

CBAs take a variety of forms, but most often exist in strong real estate markets, in which developers are willing to grant concessions to neighborhood groups in exchange for enjoying substantial financial returns upon project completion, and usually depend on a government actor to serve as a mediator (Cummings, 2007; Pastor et al., 2018). A recent study, however, argues that CBAs are not limited to high-growth markets. Studying 14 CBAs in Detroit, Berglund and Miles (2025) find that agreements can be also negotiated in "legacy cities with weak real estate markets," but that long-standing economic conditions make it harder to deliver promised benefits like jobs and affordable housing.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Medium

Although a substantial amount of literature on CBAs exists in planning and policy circles, much of the research discusses the political and legal dimensions that influence their adoption, rather than investigating whether CBAs have accomplished their established objectives. In other words, studies on CBAs focus more descriptively on the terms of the agreements and less on how such terms achieve the desired outcomes beyond project completion. In this way, the existing literature does not explicitly measure how CBAs have reduced displacement pressures.

Much of the research on Community Benefits Agreements took place in Los Angeles, where they originated, as this city witnessed a wave of redevelopment in the late 1990s into the 2000s. The nation's

first CBA focused on community stabilization at the southern edge of Downtown Los Angeles, which was being redeveloped into an entertainment hub hosting professional sports, live entertainment, and conventions at the Staples Center and L.A. Live venues. As this multi-phase project proceeded, a coalition of community groups organized to compel the developer to fulfill demands for affordable housing, economic opportunity, and other programs that would serve residents in neighboring low-income communities of color (Salkin and Lavin, 2008; Bornstein, 2010). After initially evading local efforts demanding community benefits, the developer ultimately negotiated with stakeholder groups when local opposition stood in the way of the land use approvals necessary to complete the project. Ultimately, the coalition secured a variety of concessions from the developer—including funding for affordable housing, job training, and living wage requirements—that would serve neighboring residents (Salkin and Lavin, 2008; Pastor et al., 2018).

Because of its groundbreaking significance, the Staples Center/L.A. Live CBA is a major focal point of the literature on CBAs and displacement. However, this initial CBA also set the stage for future agreements between power brokers and community advocates in nearby communities to combat residential instability. In the decade following the Downtown project, UNIDAD—United Neighbors in Defense Against Displacement—continued to use its organizing capacity to reach two separate agreements from two major projects in South Central LA: the University of Southern California's Master Plan implementation and a high-end housing project in Historic South-Central. In both cases, the coalition situated gentrification and displacement concerns front-and-center, and secured a variety of concessions out of these projects, including affordable housing, living-wage employment and vocational training, and healthcare access (Pastor et al., 2018).

The social scientific and legal research on the topic address the political shifts that yielded these agreements and how these agreements fit within the landscape of public policy (Salkin and Lavin 2008; Wolf-Powers, 2010; Saito, 2012). Discussions of displacement tend to be limited to how the issue is among those raised by the coalitions that spearhead CBAs, rather than the primary focus of the literature.

While the majority of the literature on CBAs does not explicitly focus on displacement mitigation, a few recent studies seek to explain the failure of CBAs to produce the desired outcomes. Focusing on Detroit, Berglund and Miles (2025) find that affordable housing commitments often did not go beyond existing inclusionary requirements, and local hiring goals were limited by labor market conditions and local capacity. Case studies from Cincinnati and New York City find that CBAs often lack meaningful enforcement, with residents unaware of their entitlements and benefits failing to materialize years after project approval (Local Housing Solutions, 2024; Robinson, 2025). Additionally, CBAs often operate through discretionary planning processes, which can lead to uneven outcomes. Research finds that CBAs frequently arise when projects exceed zoning permissions and are approved conditionally and based on negotiations for public benefits, making outcomes dependent on local leverage, capacity, and oversight (Biggar, 2021; Moore-Bloom, 2025).

While there is a dearth of studies examining the impact of CBAs on gentrification or displacement, preliminary evidence suggests that CBAs do not reliably prevent these outcomes. Reporting on Albuquerque, a city attorney concluded that CBAs "have not protected neighborhoods from

gentrification," noting that agreements tied to large redevelopment projects failed to prevent rising rents or displacement pressures (Fisher, 2021).

Need for further research

While displacement and gentrification are topics found throughout Community Benefits Agreements, existing research tends to examine how these issues are instrumental in the formation of agreements and not their outcomes. However, because several CBAs exist in jurisdictions throughout the country, there are research opportunities to examine how different communities have fared with these anti-displacement mechanisms. Although countless other forces are at play that influence displacement pressures, future research could investigate the impact of CBAs in these contexts that have enacted such agreements. Future research can also examine if certain CBA requirements, such as the provision of a park or transit improvements, may actually lead to increased displacement pressures.

Pass-through Limitations for Green Energy Retrofits

Policy description

Green energy and building decarbonization initiatives, particularly energy retrofits and electrification upgrades, are now central to California's housing and climate policy landscape. State programs such as the Equitable Building Decarbonization Program and federal programs like the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) support both multifamily and single-family housing for the transition to clean energy and resilience upgrades. These initiatives can take many forms, including direct retrofit grants, incentive-based financing, or code-mandated electrification upgrades for existing buildings. This section focuses specifically on residential retrofit programs rather than infrastructure such as parks or public greening, emphasizing programs that affect multifamily housing and older unsubsidized affordable housing, where retrofit costs or new code requirements can have direct implications for tenant stability. The overarching goals of these initiatives are to reduce emissions, improve energy performance, and lower household utility costs, while advancing climate resilience and health co-benefits for residents. Implementation relies on a combination of mandates such as Title 24 codes and local electrification ordinances, and incentives or low-interest financing that shape how property owners, landlords, and tenants experience the transition.

However, the literature highlights a growing set of unintended consequences, particularly for low-income renters and households of color. Without explicit affordability or tenant protections, retrofit mandates can trigger rent increases, "reno-victions" (Palm, 2020; von Platten et al., 2022; Kirk, 2021), or speculative resale in rent-stabilized or older unsubsidized properties. Recent federal analysis by the Climate and Community Project (Gourevitch, 2024) emphasizes that Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding creates both opportunity and risk for tenants. The IRA allocates over $9 billion in home energy rebates and tax credits, but most benefits flow to property owners, with limited safeguards to prevent rent increases or evictions following upgrades. Gourevitch (2024) warns that without strong tenant protections, decarbonization programs could "improve building conditions while worsening housing insecurity," a dynamic already evident in California's rental markets (Kirk, 2023). These programs hold high potential for climate resilience, but also high potential for displacement if not implemented equitably and intentionally. Nearly 45 percent of California households are renters, many living in pre-1980s buildings with high retrofit costs that often range from $14,000 to $28,000 per unit for full electrification and building efficiency improvements (Kirk, 2021). These costs create pressure to recover investments through rent increases or property turnover. Strong tenant protections, particularly as it pertains to maintaining affordability, are therefore essential to align decarbonization goals with housing stability.

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect

Research on displacement linked to retrofit or decarbonization policy is emerging but remains incomplete. While many studies acknowledge affordability risks, few directly measure tenant mobility or eviction outcomes. Unfortunately, much of the available research comes from contexts in Europe, which have different retrofit costs and energy rates than California. While the context differs, research in

Sweden documents rent increases of 30 to 60 percent following deep energy retrofits, far exceeding energy-bill savings and leading to tenant turnover (von Platten et al., 2022; Palm et al., 2020). In California and nationally, several reports (Kirk, 2021; Kirk 2023; Bromfield et al. ,2025; Gourevitch, 2024) identify clear displacement pathways such as cost pass-throughs, vacancy decontrol, remodel evictions, and ownership consolidation, but rely on descriptive rather than longitudinal data. The CCP brief (Gourevitch, 2024) is particularly significant for connecting federal climate funding under the IRA to housing equity risks, noting that few state energy offices have established anti-displacement or affordability requirements in their implementation frameworks. Social and behavioral research (Judson and Maller, 2014; Gram-Hanssen, 2014; Zedan and Miller, 2017, 2018) examines governance, decision-making, and inequitable access to retrofit programs but does not measure displacement outcomes. Broader green-infrastructure and climate-resilience literature shows how sustainability investments can drive gentrification and inequitable redevelopment (Chan et al., 2021; Shokry et al., 2022; Oscilowicz et al., 2025; Hansen et al., 2023), offering conceptual parallels but not direct evidence for housing retrofits. Research from rural contexts (MacDonald et al., 2020; Maloney et al., 2024) finds that energy-efficiency programs can reduce out-migration by lowering household energy costs by 20 to 30 percent, suggesting these programs can serve as anti-displacement tools in high-cost energy markets.

Summary and evaluation of literature

Green energy retrofits aim to improve building efficiency and reduce emissions, but can introduce affordability pressures for low-income tenants. In Los Angeles, decarbonizing with electrification retrofit costs range from approximately $14,000 to $28,000 per unit in older buildings, which, even when restricted by programs and the Rent Stabilization Ordinance, could translate to rent increases of 10%, with new rent levels lasting even after the cost of the retrofit is paid in full (Kirk, 2021). Key displacement pathways include cost pass-throughs under rent-stabilization or capital-improvement provisions (i.e. Los Angeles's Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which allows up to 10 percent rent increases over two years); "substantial remodel" or "reno-viction" evictions used to re-lease units at market rate; and ownership transfers where retrofit incentives raise property values and encourage sales to higher-capacity investors. Given high retrofit costs, no-cost subsidy programs such as the Equitable Building Decarbonization programs are important for supporting building decarbonization in units occupied by low-income tenants, as these programs can integrate tenant protection provisions including restricting passing retrofit costs on to tenants through rent increases (Kirk, 2023). Traditional retrofitting programs tend to benefit owner-occupied and higher-income households (Gram-Hanssen, 2014; Judson and Maller, 2014), leaving renters, particularly those in older unsubsidized housing, at greater risk of cost burden or exclusion. Health and resilience trade-offs also emerge: poorly designed retrofits can increase overheating risks, especially for elderly and low-income tenants (Taylor et al., 2018). At the same time, though, rural and regional programs have shown measurable affordability benefits and reduced displacement risk through lower energy burdens (MacDonald et al., 2020), offering models for inland and northern California. Research also highlights governance and power dynamics, with tenants and community-based organizations often excluded from retrofit policy design (Gourevitch, 2024; Zedan and Miller, 2017, 2018), reinforcing inequities in who benefits from decarbonization investments.

The literature demonstrates increasing recognition that decarbonization and housing equity must be addressed together. Strong evidence identifies clear risk mechanisms, such as rent escalation, remodel

evictions, and speculative reinvestment, and an expanding international evidence base shows consistent inequities across advanced industrial economies (i.e. Sweden). Emerging national analyses such as the CCP report (Gourevitch, 2024) highlight that implementing the Inflation Reduction Act raised the need for stronger tenant protection at both the federal and state levels. However, significant gaps remain. Few studies provide California-specific longitudinal data on tenant displacement following retrofits, and limited integration of housing, energy, and land-use datasets constrains understanding of long-term outcomes. There is also minimal evaluation of financing models that balance decarbonization with long-term affordability, and few examples where agencies embed tenant participation or enforce affordability covenants in retrofit funding. Recent frameworks supporting anti-displacement measures (Kirk, 2023; Bromfield et al., 2025; Gourevitch, 2024) emphasize tenant protections, relocation and return rights, and prohibitions on rent pass-throughs as key design strategies. Case studies (Downing and Hsu, 2024; Sunikka-Blank et al., 2012) show that deep retrofits can maintain affordability when paired with community governance and layered subsidies. Gourevitch (2024) recommends incorporating several policies at the federal level such as rent caps, relocation assistance, and community oversight into IRA-funded decarbonization programs to prevent "green displacement." Since this funding has since been discontinued, these recommendations may be less applicable to the current federal context, but may be relevant at the state level. Without affordability safeguards, research warns that decarbonization can reproduce displacement under the guise of sustainability (von Platten et al., 2022).

Future research

Future research should examine implementation and enforcement strategies that ensure equitable decarbonization, particularly in jurisdictions with older rental stock. Priorities include evaluating data-sharing mechanisms between energy and housing agencies, assessing financing structures that cap rent increases, case studies of pass-through limitations for unsubsidized units, and identifying and analyzing models that embed affordability covenants and tenant participation in retrofit programs, such as the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program (GRRP). Further research on the effects of retrofit policies on lower-income homeowners, and on methods to integrate tenant representation in program design, would help prevent displacement and ensure the clean energy transition supports both climate and housing stability.

COVID-19 Pandemic Policy Supports

Policy description

Impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic led to unprecedented funding and regulatory support for anti-displacement efforts across the country. This included $46 billion from the federal government for an Emergency Rental Assistance program (ERA) as well as anti-eviction moratoria at the federal, state, and local levels. This section examines lessons learned from these temporary programs.

The federal government, 43 states, DC, and five American territories issued varying eviction moratoria on the grounds of public health due to the pandemic (Benfer et al., 2022). Overall, the CDC and local eviction moratoria significantly decreased the number of eviction fillings, with the CDC moratorium alone preventing an estimated 1.55 million eviction filings, from September 4, 2020 to July 31, 2021 (Rangel et al., 2021; Benfer et al., 2022). However, these state and local moratoria differed by jurisdiction, and court implementation of the CDC moratorium was inconsistent (Rangel et al., 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in significant losses of income for households across the country (Tran et al 2022). Over one out of every ten renters in the US applied for emergency rental assistance for utility or rent payments from August 2021 through February 2022 (Hermann 2022). The pandemic also led to changes in the distribution of rental assistance programs: while rental assistance is traditionally disbursed to landlords, local program administrators were allowed to send payments directly to eligible households if they had difficulty reaching landlords (Reina et al., 2025). There was also a new voucher program set up, a single-use Emergency Housing Voucher created at the federal level, supporting households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness or survivors of domestic violence (Reina et al., 2025).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

While the rental assistance programs and eviction moratoria during the Covid-19 pandemic were temporary, spanning several years at most, there is a robust body of research studying their impacts on eviction filings and other factors related to residential displacement, including rental arrears. This research included evaluations of the policies and spanned jurisdictions across the country and world.

Summary and evaluation of literature

While most research examined the impacts of eviction moratoria and rental assistance programs separately, research has found that the combination of rental assistance, eviction moratoria, and other assistance programs during the pandemic meant that eviction filings were dramatically reduced in the 2020-2021 time period in thirty-one cities across the US (Hepburn et al., 2023).

Eviction Moratoria

While research broadly shows the impact of eviction moratoria on reducing eviction filings, these effects differed geographically. Federal moratoriums offered fewer protections than state and local moratoriums, reducing evictions by approximately 50% between March and November 2020 (Callison, 2022). In some places, eviction filings were close to their historical average overall: for example, eviction filings were at 91% of the historical average in Las Vegas and above 75% at sites in Florida, compared to being below 12% of the historical average in Austin, TX (Rangel et al., 2021). Qualitative interviews in Connecticut, Florida, and Ohio found that moratoria protected tenants' stability and well-being, reducing the immediate stress associated with rent, and provided "breathing room" for tenants to navigate the often-lengthy process of obtaining benefits to replace lost income (Keene et al., 2023). Research in Canada found that the first ban on evictions was more effective than subsequent bans, and that none of them entirely eliminated eviction filings (Brown et al., 2023). All eviction moratoria were temporary, and following the expiration of local and state moratoria, the average suit amount for eviction filings doubled from pre-Covid-19 filing amounts (Callison et al., 2022).

Some research found that state moratoria tempered the relationship between community poverty and filings, and racial and ethnic demographic composition and filings (Fusaro et al., 2023), and research in 31 cities found that the largest reductions in evictions were in places previously with the highest eviction filing rates, particularly majority-Black and low-income neighborhoods (Hepburn et al., 2023). However, other research found that disparate racial patterns in eviction filings remained: Black renters continued to be over-represented in receiving eviction filings (Rangel et al., 2021).

There were also additional benefits of the moratoria on tenants beyond direct housing impacts. Evictions and utility disconnection moratoria were associated with health benefits, including reduced psychological distress among renters (Leifheit et al., 2021), and reductions in Covid-19 infection and death rates (Jowers, 2021). Covid-19 incidence and mortality increased steadily in states after eviction moratoria expired, and expiration was associated with a doubling of Covid-19 incidence and a five-fold increase in Covid-19 mortality 16 weeks after moratoriums lapsed (Leifheit et al., 2021), underlining the importance of eviction prevention as a critical public health intervention.

The moratoria were not failproof in preventing evictions. Research in Washington state using a survey, administrative data, and in-depth interviews found that while moratoria were associated with fewer formal evictions, there was a higher prevalence of informal evictions and informal eviction tactics (e.g. asking tenants to leave, changing door locks to prevent tenant access, and removing possessions) (Fowle and Fyall, 2024). In another study, most participants still felt a sense of urgency to address rental arrears, and some were threatened by their landlords with eviction despite the moratorium, with others evicted due to loopholes and restrictive criteria of the moratoria, or evicted without knowing about the moratoria (Keene et al., 2023). Other tenants preemptively moved out, describing that moratoria would not be able to address the gap between rental costs and incomes; this emphasizes the structural issues that moratoria were unable to address (Keene et al., 2023). Research found that Shelter in Place (SIP) was associated with a slow-down in the home purchasing market, and that selective moratoria were associated with smaller year-on-year changes in multifamily building permit approvals (Sayantani, 2024), indicating that there might be other effects on the housing market due to reductions in housing supply.

Rental Assistance Programs

The broad amount of research on emergency rental assistance programs (supporting rental and utility payments) found that these programs helped renters, but some research found less of a direct impact on displacement indicators. Quantitative research found that the technical return on investment of rental assistance is between 229-473%, stabilizing tenants and landlords and preserving neighborhoods (Gilman 2021), and research in Los Angeles suggests that government income support during the pandemic helped tenants stave off eviction threats (Manville et al., 2022). A panel study in Philadelphia found that ERA was associated with reducing rental arrears, rent-related debt, and tenants experiencing frequent debilitating anxiety (Reina and Lee, 2023).

However, other research on one wave of ERA payments in four large metro areas found that while assistance led to increases in rent payments and reduced tenant concerns about eviction, they found little effect on housing stability – evictions, homelessness, and residential mobility (Collinson et al. 2024). The researchers explain that other circumstances, including limits on evictions and an enormous expansion of the social safety net, may have meant that everyone received support, whether or not through the ERA. The authors also reason that the pandemic may have led to changes in landlords' calculus about evictions regardless of rental payments (Collinson et al. 2024). Other research in Virginia similarly found no statistically significant effect of the state's ERA program on eviction filings and judgements, even though it stabilized households (Teresa et al., 2025). Rent relief was too limited to address tradeoffs households were making in terms of food and medical care (Reina and Lee, 2023).

The rental assistance programs faced challenges, including limited funding and not enough awareness of the program. The number of households assisted by ERA more than quadrupled over the second half of 2021, indicating that more people learned about it as the program went on, but over half of low-income renters behind on rent in the Household Pulse survey from the Census had not applied for it, indicating barriers to accessing the program (Hermann, 2022). In California, renters whose primary language is not English appeared to be underrepresented in ERA applicant pools (Tran et al., 2022). One study in Denver, CO found that very few interviewees (who were predominantly low-income Hispanic/Latinx immigrant families) were able to access government financial support during the pandemic due to documentation status and/or language barriers (Westbrook, 2024), underlining the importance of further dissemination of information about supportive interventions. In California, two-thirds of program applicants received assistance, leaving about 30% who were denied (Tran et al., 2022). One in three Bay Area applicant households who were facing imminent eviction were denied (Tran et al., 2022). Research on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) found that limited funding meant that they had to prioritize those at immediate risk of eviction (with a court date) (Kneebone, 2024). Utility debt also grew during the pandemic (Pierce et al., 2025).

Takeaways

Some of this research on the ERA and moratoria had findings that can inform future programs: Results of research across 27 municipal areas found that moratoria targeting earlier stages of the eviction process had a particularly pronounced effect on filing rates, and that eviction filings were lowest with both state and federal moratoria in effect (Fusaro 2023). Moratoria had varied effects, with significant differences between jurisdictions with strong protections and those without (Rangel et al., 2021).

Research on renter and tenant behavior found that lost work and lost income were the primary drivers of missed or late payments, and that smaller landlords were more likely than larger ones to cut tenant services and threaten or initiate evictions (Manville et al., 2022). Tenants took on different forms of debt to make rent, which require other policy responses (Manville et al., 2022).

Across the world, researchers have found that these temporary programs were insufficient to address the underlying structural inadequacies of housing systems (Lima, 2024) and challenges facing households during the pandemic (Marçal et al., 2023). Research using simulations affirmed that while the eviction moratorium and ERA prevented evictions, other challenges, including rental arrears, overcrowding, and homelessness remained elevated due to the pandemic (Marçal et al., 2023). Research from this time period underlined the importance of addressing the root causes of housing instability (Howell et al,. 2023). Research in Richmond, VA found that while rental assistance helped keep rental households in their homes, it did not remove the threat of eviction and rent was only one of many needs of the households during the pandemic: a lack of employment opportunities and high healthcare costs weighed on housing stability (Howell et al., 2023).

Future research

While eviction moratoria were constrained to the unique circumstances of the pandemic, the new extent and flexibility of emergency rental assistance opens the door to research on other areas. In particular, there is more to learn about short-term/temporary assistance and its ability to address short-term shocks, such as through a revolving loan fund, as well as ways to support administrative capacity for administering such funds (Reina et al., 2025). Researchers have advocated for new forms of vouchers, such as one for an emergency created by a medical event, possibly supported by Medicaid given the important ties between housing and health (Reina et al., 2025). Other areas for more research include ways to reduce administrative burdens, for example, through direct payments to renter households, and methods to encourage more landlords to participate in rental assistance programs, as well as leveraging rental assistance to increase the housing supply (Reina et al., 2025).

Rural and Weak Market Contexts

Housing dynamics in rural and weak-market regions have become increasingly complex as migration, remote work, and uneven economic recovery reshape small towns and non-metro areas. These areas–once defined by slow population growth and a healthy stock of affordable housing–now face mounting pressures from rural amenity migration (people moving for quality of life reasons and the natural environment), telework in-migration, and rising construction costs that strain existing housing supply, especially naturally occurring affordable housing. This section examines housing market shifts and displacement risks in rural and weak-market contexts, to understand how these changes intersect with displacement, economic restructuring, and regional inequities. The central policy issue is that rural communities often lack planning capacity, preservation tools, and dedicated affordable housing programs to manage new pressures due to in-migration or subsidy loss. While urban areas grapple with redevelopment-driven displacement, rural areas often face market-shock displacement, where new demand outpaces limited supply and drives up rents and home prices in communities with little new construction and limited access to affordable housing programs. California's experience reflects these dynamics, with amenity and lifestyle migration to coastal, mountain, and agricultural counties (i.e. Marin, Humboldt, Nevada) reshaping demand and local identity (Lage, 2019, 2022; Park, 2024) and with persistently high eviction rates and housing instability across the Central Valley (Crowell and Nkosi, 2020). Northern rural counties illustrate how unstable and substandard housing conditions directly affect residents' physical and mental health, with rural housing insecurity as a critical public health concern (Antin et al., 2024).

Key housing factors include the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated remote work and increased rural housing demand (Park, 2024; Colomb and Gallent, 2022); amenity migration increasing property values and creating social divides (Sherman ,2023; Ocejo, 2024; Lage, 2022); limited federal and state investment in rural housing production and preservation (Scally et al, 2019; HAC, 2023); the growth in short-term rentals (Theophilus and Ulrich-Schad, 2025; Choi and Won, 2023); increasing insurance costs (Koller, 2025), with relatively high shares of uninsured homeowners in rural areas (Dong et al., 2025); and fragmented regional coordination across housing, transportation, and land use (Rumore and Stoker, 2023). In California specifically, the USDA Section 515/521 portfolio, rural rental assistance and housing programs, is aging and shrinking; many of the state's roughly 1,700 rural Section 515 properties face mortgage maturity this decade, threatening affordability if recapitalization does not occur (HAC ,2023; An et al., 2025). Manufactured-housing communities remain a critical affordability resource in rural California, and resident-owned/cooperative land approaches show potential to stabilize communities and support climate adaptation when paired with technical assistance and financing opportunities (Mukhija and Mason, 2014; Lamb et al., 2022).

Extent and type of literature that covers policy's effect on displacement

Research on rural residential displacement and weak-market vulnerability is growing but remains incomplete compared to urban-focused literature. Some research quantifies affordability pressures, preservation risk, and program shrinkage/discontinuation. National analyses find that approximately 44 percent of rural renters are cost-burdened and that the subsidized affordable rural stock is declining due

to mortgage maturities and limited refinancing pathways (HAC, 2023; Scally et al., 2019; An et al., 2025). Pandemic-era studies document sustained post-2020 demand in scenic and lower-cost rural counties, with home price growth well above pre-pandemic trends and very low rental vacancy in some California counties (Park, 2024; Colomb and Gallent, 2022). California-specific research provides qualitative depth: ethnographic and case studies in West Marin trace amenity-driven gentrification, conservation land-use constraints, and labor precarity in farmworker communities (Lage, 2019, 2022), while Central Valley reporting frames eviction and overcrowding as systemic and racialized (Crowell and Nkosi, 2020). Public-health research in the far northern part of the state links rural housing insecurity to anxiety, chronic illness, and other adverse outcomes, underscoring housing as a determinant of health (Antin et al., 2024). Conceptual and definitional work cautions that how "rural" is delineated can exclude California's semi-rural and exurban places from resources and distort comparative findings (Hermann and Airgood-Obrycki, 2024; Kordel and Naumann, 2024). Complementary studies highlight resident-owned and cooperative models in manufactured-housing communities as promising anti-displacement and resilience strategies (Mukhija and Mason, 2014; Lamb et al., 2022).

Summary and evaluation of literature

Across California's rural and weak-market regions, the literature identifies dual and overlapping pressures. First, structural disinvestment and program contraction erode affordability as subsidy-assisted properties age out and local capacity to preserve or recapitalize remains limited; nonprofits and mission-driven owners are more likely to maintain affordability but face barriers related to capital and scaling (Scally et al., 2019; HAC, 2023; An et al., 2025). Second, amenity-driven in-migration and second-home/tourism demand elevate prices and reorient local land use toward conservation and lifestyle branding, producing both cultural/symbolic exclusion and material displacement (Lage 2019, 2022; Sherman, 2023; Ocejo, 2024). California-specific evidence underscores spillovers and regional effects in gateway areas (Rumore and Stoke,r 2023), with recreation and tourism hubs driving housing pressures into adjacent agricultural towns. Public health studies in Northern California and reporting from the Central Valley show that rural housing instability is deeply intertwined with health and labor systems (Antin et al., 2024; Crowell and Nkosi, 2020). Together, these pieces expand the concept of displacement beyond physical relocation, illustrating how housing insecurity affects residents' wellbeing, employment, and community stability even when they remain in place.

The literature also points to emergent resilience strategies: resident-owned/cooperative land approaches in manufactured-housing parks can reduce displacement risk, support energy and infrastructure upgrades, and enhance climate adaptation when paired with financing and technical assistance (Mukhija and Mason, 2014; Lamb et al., 2022). As mentioned in the green energy retrofits section above, results from research on energy-efficiency programs in rural contexts have found that lowering energy costs can reduce out-migration from these areas (MacDonald et al., 2020; Maloney et al., 2024). As with many anti-displacement measures, efficacy depends on design, enforcement, and local context. In very high-amenity regions, affordability benefits may be muted without complementary tools (acquisition-rehab funds, tenant protections, land stewardship aligned with working landscapes). Definitional ambiguity continues to complicate targeting and evaluation across California's semi-rural and exurban communities (Hermann and Airgood-Obrycki, 2024).

Future research

Given how important preservation and local capacity are in California's rural areas, future work should focus on 1) tracking affordability and tenant stability in two key areas: Section 515 rural rental properties as their mortgages mature and subsidies potentially expire, and largely unsubsidized manufactured-housing parks as they go through ownership changes or reinvestment to keep them affordable; 2) evaluating community ownership and cooperative land models in rural settings, including climate-resilience and public health co-benefits; 3) improving rural data and typologies to better capture renter mobility, second-home or short-term rental conversions, and cultural displacement in small-town and agricultural economies; and 4) testing integrated regional strategies covering housing, transportation, broadband, and climate adaptation that align state funding with rural equity and long-term affordability (An et al., 2025; HAC, 2023; Scally et al., 2019; Rumore and Stoker, 2023; Antin et al., 2024; Mukhija and Mason, 2014; Lamb et al., 2022; Hermann and Airgood-Obrycki, 2024).

Gaps in the Literature [Original, 2021]

Racial Disparities in Anti-Displacement Policy

In our review of the literature on anti-displacement policies and their effectiveness, we found a surprising dearth of information disaggregating the effects of these policies by race or ethnicity. While much of the existing research recognizes the harm that housing policies have historically caused African American communities, very little looks at how contemporary policies do or do not effectively prevent the displacement of communities of color. It is not sufficient to state the effects of housing policy without also looking into how those effects may change based on people's racial identities. Without explicitly looking at policy effectiveness by race or ethnicity, these studies risk implying that the effects are equal for all communities and perpetuating the same patterns of past housing policy. For this reason we have included this section to look for evidence of anti-displacement policies that work especially well or poorly for communities of color and call for any future research to include this view when studying policy effectiveness.

In our review, there is very little rigorous research on policies that actively work to preserve communities of color. We did find some of discussion of how incumbent non-white households have benefitted from anti-displacement policies in research on the Tenant Right to Counsel program in San Francisco as well as rent stabilization laws (Fracassa, 2020; Pastor et al., 2018). However, these examples were an exception and illustrated the lack of discussion around these topics in the literature overall.

It is well-documented that throughout the 20th century, racially restrictive covenants, redlining, blockbusting, and urban renewal displaced and excluded non-white communities across the nation's urban landscape. In the process, through cycles of disinvestment and reinvestment, these policies and practices paved the way for waves of displacement in communities of color. Despite this history, scholars have conducted limited research on the subject and how anti-displacement policies may protect vulnerable communities from displacement.

Nevertheless, community organizations, advocates, local governments, and academics alike have contextualized displacement and residential instability within the racialized histories of urban development. For instance, in 2015, the Bay Area-based organization Causa Justa/Just Cause (CJ/JC) produced an exhaustive analysis of gentrification and displacement throughout San Francisco and Oakland. In its report *Development Without Displacement: Resisting Gentrification in the Bay Area*, CJ/JC presents robust quantitative and qualitative data that illustrates how cycles of disinvestment and immense public and private reinvestment have uprooted low-income communities of color (Causa Justa/Just Cause, 2015).

This publication - produced in collaboration with the Alameda County Department of Public Health - specifically focuses on how development in the Bay Area has overwhelmingly unsettled incumbent non-white communities residing in the previously disinvested urban core. In particular, the report highlights the dramatic demographic and socioeconomic changes in gentrified neighborhoods of North Oakland and San Francisco's Mission District between 1990, 2000, and 2011 (Cause Justa/Just Cause, 2015). During this 21-year period, the report found that North Oakland - an historically African American community - lost more than 2,000 African American households, and the percentage of African

American homeowner households plummeted from 50% to 25% of all North Oakland homeowners (Causa Justa/Just Cause, 2015, 7). Similarly, in the Mission - an historically Latinx community - the neighborhood saw a decline of approximately 1,400 Latinx households and an increase of nearly 3,000 white households, contributing to a twofold increase in white homeownership (Causa Justa/Just Cause 2015, 7). Once displaced, these groups tend to resegregate in low-resource neighborhoods far from the urban core (Urban Displacement Project and California Housing Partnership, 2019).

In response to the forces of displacement, CJ/JC asserts the need to protect incumbent residents of gentrifying communities. To this end, the report presents policy recommendations that are explicitly designed to mitigate displacement pressures endured by low-income households in neighborhoods witnessing public and private investment activity. For example, one set of recommendations focuses on protections for economically vulnerable tenants such as fair relocation assistance for displaced households, preservation of existing housing stock, and tenants' rights outreach programs (Causa Justa/Just Cause, 2015). Moreover, according to the report, neighborhood stakeholders would craft these initiatives through participatory efforts to ensure that community needs are sufficiently addressed in any anti-displacement program. In the process, policies would actively incorporate an equity lens tailored to the communities facing residential instability (Causa Justa/Just Cause, 2015).

In addition to collaboration with community organizations, local governments have also commissioned research on the relationship between gentrification, displacement, and racial disparities. Lisa Bates of Portland State, for instance, conducted a comprehensive study on the relationship between residential instability and racial disparities on behalf of the City of Portland. Bates's analysis is situated within a racial equity framework that underscores the disproportionate vulnerability to displacement of communities of color and the necessity for an equity-informed approach to policymaking (Bates, 2013). To illustrate, Bates identifies the historic linkage between racial segregation and urban disinvestment, and the gentrifying pressures unfolding in these same communities today. Against the backdrop of structural inequality, Bates emphasizes the need for equity-minded policymaking that prioritizes resources to support low-income communities of color that face barriers to residential stability through housing discrimination, lower wages, and less access to credit (Bates, 2013).

As conveyed in these studies, communities of color have borne - and continue to bear - a disparate impact of displacement pressures across the urban landscape. The interwoven policies, institutions, and practices that directly or indirectly uproot non-white communities have indelibly shaped patterns of urban development as well as access to housing and residential stability. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated and further exposed the acute displacement pressures in communities of color. For example, national and local studies on eviction filings during the pandemic have underscored how communities of color are enduring heightened risks of displacement as the economy remains shuttered (Blasi, 2020; Merle, 2020; Mironova, 2020). According to survey data collected by the Census Bureau in May and June of 2020, over 40% of both Black and Latinx renters reported slight or no confidence in their ability to pay rent for the subsequent month, as compared to 21% of white renters (Merle, 2020). Overall, given the minimal literature on the longstanding racial disparities in residential instability, along with the ongoing crisis that has underlined these inequities, this project calls for all future research to explicitly address how anti-displacement policies may support communities of color at greatest risk of economic displacement.

Limited Research on Displacement [Original, 2021]

While substantial research exists on the topics explored in this literature review, we also find significant gaps. In the previous section, we discussed a striking gap in the absence of discussion of how to best protect minority populations from displacement. Additionally, there is generally limited research on the extent to which different policies effectively prevent displacement and foster residential stability. Lacking also is a discussion of how specific contextual characteristics may shape the effectiveness of particular policies. For example, certain policies may require a strong market to be effective; some policies may require a long term to become effective; some policies may be effective only in particular parts of a metropolitan area; lastly some policies may be effective only if complemented with particular provisions or other policies.

In the limited research that does exist on displacement, those policies that are implemented in the short-term seem to yield the most promising results for stabilizing low-income neighborhoods and mitigating displacement pressures. In contrast, much of the research on policies that necessitate longer time horizons largely does not evaluate impacts on displacement. What's more, as discussed below, these longer-term policies tend to be more diffuse and difficult to isolate - e.g. housing production - than short term interventions that directly focus on maintaining household stability - e.g. "Just Cause" protections. The following sections discuss the barriers and opportunities to robustly analyze displacement mitigation policies as well as the most promising paths forward.

The time horizons of these policies vary widely across production, preservation, and stabilization strategies. For instance, housing production policies would require several years for effects on displacement to be measurable, whereas stabilization policies like "Just Cause" eviction protections or rental assistance programs would necessitate only a brief rollout period. Similarly, production strategies generally lack a clear timeline of effectiveness while stabilization strategies - and to a lesser extent preservation strategies - are typically implemented through legislation and therefore have legible "start" and "end" dates that enable easier measurement of outcomes. Unsurprisingly, then, there is notably more research on how stabilization strategies directly affect displacement compared to production and preservation strategies.

To illustrate, tenant right to counsel programs, a short-term stabilization strategy, featured substantially more research on displacement than inclusionary zoning, a long-term production strategy. In the first place, right to counsel programs are explicitly focused on reducing household displacement by offering legal representation or services to incumbent households facing eviction. In contrast, inclusionary zoning policies yield additional units for low-income households as a result of the development process, and therefore may be useful by contributing to the existing housing stock over time, rather than helping a household to remain in place. Both the longer time horizon and the unit of measurement render inclusionary zoning (and other production strategies) less conducive to analysis on the nexus between the policy and displacement mitigation.

However, the more complex relationship between policies such as inclusionary zoning and residential stability does not suggest that these policies - in the long term - fail to effectively prevent displacement. In fact, existing research on production strategies suggests that new housing, and especially new affordable housing, mitigates displacement pressures on a regional scale. Rather, these strategies are more difficult to measure because they rely on more indirect outcomes, such as rental costs and rent

burdens, and necessitate longitudinal study that depends on several external factors that cannot be controlled (e.g. market conditions, financial practices).

Suggestions for Additional Research

In light of the barriers and opportunities to robustly analyze displacement, this report proposes research that examines direct, short-term strategies focused on maintaining residential stability. These policies include:

1. Tenants Right to Counsel: confers renter households access to legal representation in eviction, or unlawful detainer trials;
2. "Just Cause" Eviction Protections: forbid property owners from evicting tenants except under certain specified circumstances, such as nonpayment of rent, violation of lease terms, or permanent removal of a dwelling from the rental market;
3. Tenant Opportunity to Purchase: gives the existing tenants the right to purchase the property at the market price and then convert the units to a condo or cooperative so tenants can individually buy their own units;
4. Unsubsidized Affordable Housing: rental units offered by the private market that are affordable outside of any subsidy or regulatory scheme; and
5. Accessory Dwelling Units: secondary units or apartments typically added to low-density residential properties (e.g., single-family homes).

Notably, two of these policies are "stabilization" strategies, two are "preservation" strategies, and one policy is a "production" strategy. They were selected based on a combination of their relevance to current California housing policy, their comparatively direct measures of displacement, and shorter time horizons. Through a combination of methods, these diverse strategies can be evaluated for their efficacy across a variety of jurisdictions.

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Appendix B: Policy Inventory Methodology for Policy Map

Policy	Where it can be found	Keywords/phrases
Just Cause Eviction	Municipal Code	At-fault, evict, just cause, no-fault
Rent Stabilization or Rent Control	Municipal Code	Rent control, rent stabilization, rent restriction
Rent Review Board	Municipal Code	Rent board, rent review, rent review board, rent review commission
Mobile Home Rent Control	Municipal Code	Mobile home, mobile home park, manufactured home, rent control, rent stabilization
SRO Preservation	Municipal Code, Planning and Zoning Code	Single room occupancy, single room occupancy preservation, single room occupancy standards, residential hotel unit
Condominium Conversion Restrictions	Municipal Code	Condo conversion, condominium conversion, condominium conversion restrictions
Foreclosure or Homeownership Assistance	City website, Program website	Foreclosure, foreclosure assistance, foreclosure program, homeowner assistance, homeowner program
Inclusionary Zoning and Affordable-Housing Linkage Fees	Municipal Code	Affordable housing fee, affordable housing linkage, housing fee, housing linkage, in-lieu fee, inclusionary housing, inclusionary zoning, required housing
Commercial Linkage Fees	Municipal Code	Commercial development, affordable housing requirement, affordable housing linkage, below market rate housing program
Density Bonus	Municipal Code	Affordable housing, density bonus, density bonus for provision of affordable housing
Community Land Trusts	Program website; Northern California Land Trust website, California Community Land Trust Network website	Community land trust, limited equity, shared equity
First Source Hiring Program	Municipal Code , City website	Builder program, first source, first source hiring program, hiring program

ADUs	Municipal Code	Accessory dwelling unit, ADU, junior accessory dwelling unit, JADU
Housing Overlay Zones	Municipal Code	Housing overlay, housing overlay zone, overlay, overlay development, overlay zone, residential overlay
Unsubsidized Affordable Housing Preservation	City websites, Program website, Housing element	Naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), preservation of at-risk housing units, unsubsidized affordable housing preservation program
Subsidized Housing Preservation	CHPC Preservation Database, Housing element	Housing preservation, LIHTC, LIHTC properties, preservation of at-risk assisted units, project-based Section 8 and LIHTC properties, subsidized housing preservation
Housing Rehabilitation Programs	City websites	Housing rehabilitation, housing rehabilitation program
Tenant Opportunity to Purchase	Municipal Code	tenant opportunity to purchase, tenant right to buy, tenant right to purchase, TOPA, community Opportunity to Purchase, (COPA), right of first refusal
Rental Assistance Programs	City websites, Program websites	Eviction prevention assistance, rental assistance
Tenant Right to Counsel	Municipal Code	Tenant right to counsel, mediation, tenant right
Green Retrofit Pass Through Limitation	Municipal Code	Capital improvement, capital improvement pass-through, pass-through, pass-through limit, rent control ordinance pass-through, retrofit pass-through
Short-Term Rental Ban/Limitation	Municipal Code	Airbnb, short term rental restriction, STR

Appendix C: Anti-Displacement Policy Research Design [2021 original]

Tenant Right to Counsel

Of the anti-displacement policies considered, tenant right to counsel is particularly well-suited for study. In the first place, outcomes of eviction filings offer a direct measure of residential displacement, specifically, vacating a dwelling. Outcomes may also include further detail on the causes of displacement (e.g. nonpayment of rent) that underlie broader trends of residential instability in an area, as well as the demographic groups that are facing eviction and benefiting from legal representation. Additionally, right to counsel programs provide researchers with clearly delineated time periods to compare outcomes prior to and after a policy's implementation. Along the same lines and unlike other anti-displacement policies, program evaluation before and after implementation can occur within time horizons of a few years (in contrast to policies requiring much longer time horizons such as upzoning). Moreover, right to counsel programs apply only to qualifying tenants within a handful of jurisdictions and therefore avoid the risk of geographical "spillover" effects. These spatial boundaries therefore minimize unobserved external factors that could complicate robust research and data analysis.

Tenant right to counsel programs have been implemented in jurisdictions across the country in various forms, and most notably, a right to counsel program is currently operating in San Francisco and has been under discussion in Los Angeles (Mironova, 2019; Fracassa 2020; Nittle, 2019). Additionally, prior to the implementation of municipal programs in California, several large cities have received funds through the statewide Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act, which offers legal assistance for lower-income tenants facing eviction where resources are available (NPC Research, 2018). While not a codified right to counsel, this program expanded access to legal services for indigent tenants. Further, the program has yielded results that provide a baseline for further more robust analysis of outcomes in jurisdictions where a tenant's right to counsel is implemented (NPC Research, 2018). Finally, San Francisco's right to counsel program - approved through a 2018 ballot measure - has shown promising results for tenants in that City, with hundreds of households benefiting from full-scope and limited representation, as well as an overall decline in legal actions filed against tenants (Fracassa 2020).

In light of existing and emergent legislation, as well as the direct measure of displacement that eviction filings offer, future research could examine how these programs foster residential stability and how different jurisdictions' initiatives minimize displacement pressures. In effect, these programs can serve as natural experiments within and between jurisdictions, depending on how they are designed. For instance, in New York City, where tenant's right to counsel is being rolled out gradually by zip code, analysts have investigated how renters have fared in those first wave of zip codes relative to those that were not included in the initial roll out (Mironova, 2019). Additionally, New York City offers legal representation only to tenants below certain income levels, whereas San Francisco's program offers services to all tenants, irrespective of income (Mironova, 2019; Fracassa, 2020). With other jurisdictions, such as Los Angeles, considering a tenant's right to counsel, researchers can perform robust analyses of these programs to offer lessons learned on how to mitigate economic displacement pressures endured by tenants (Nittle, 2019).

Rental Assistance Programs (H/M)

Rental assistance programs serve as a lifeline for tenants facing displacement facing economic hardship. These programs offer emergency assistance grants for low-income households at risk of displacement through eviction for falling into arrears with their landlord. Similar to tenant right to counsel program, rental assistance programs offer a somewhat direct measure of displacement, as tenants may be served with eviction notices or may choose to voluntarily vacate their dwelling while enduring economic hardship or landlord harassment. Further, rental assistance programs are typically administered through an application process, whereby income-qualifying households petition for emergency assistance to stave off evictions. In this way, the administration process of rental assistance programs allow for data collection on the populations who seek resources, their circumstances, and their outcomes.

Rental assistance funds can be designed as permanent sources of emergency assistance, or as temporary measures during economic downturns to help keep households afloat until broader conditions improve. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, jurisdictions throughout the country - including the City of Los Angeles - instituted emergency renters assistance programs, in which federal funds were allocated to subsidize housing costs for low-income households affected by the crisis (Dillon, 2020). As this example demonstrates, these programs tend to be introduced at the municipal level, which allows for local governments to adapt to structure these interventions according to needs. Therefore, the implementation and outcomes are geographically confined to households residing within a jurisdiction, and depending on the design of the program, may be administered within a limited period of time. Accordingly, rental assistance programs can be easily analyzed for their impact on displacement with minimal spillover effects both between and within jurisdictions. For example, we could compare the use of CARES Act money across jurisdictions, determining what portion went to rental assistance and looking at what happened to evictions or displacement more broadly.

Along the same lines of right to counsel, rental assistance programs function as a natural experiment in which jurisdictions design and implement initiatives with different requirements and scope. Because permanent programs are not widespread, the varying approaches to emergency renters assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to examine the extent to which these initiatives have prevented displacement, who the beneficiaries of these programs are, and the outcomes of these programs over the long term. Further, in addition to temporary measures, researchers can explore how permanently funded programs operate and the outcomes of such initiatives during periods of relative macroeconomic stability. For example, existing research on this topic suggests that such programs do not achieve their potential to prevent eviction because of information gaps between local governments and their intended beneficiaries (Aghayev, Feng, and Wiens, 2017). Therefore, future research can explore how jurisdictions can better oversee these policies and how displacement may be more effectively mitigated through tenant outreach and counseling as part of the administration process. For instance, households can participate in trial studies with “treatment” and “control” groups that offer divergent forms of counseling to analyze how these programs can most effectively allocate resources to prevent displacement.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Despite California's state accessory dwelling unit (ADU) reform, there is relatively very little research on their ability to reduce displacement. Given the local nature of zoning reform, the rules permitting ADU development vary widely across local jurisdiction. While current research has shown that relaxing zoning requirements on ADUs leads to more ADU production, and many cities are counting ADUs as part of their RHNA production targets, it remains unclear how these policies stabilize communities.

Given the significant variation in how many ADUs each jurisdiction is permitting/producing, there is an opportunity for research to look into their impact on displacement. Using the diversity in these policies and their overall productivity, research could seek to determine how more ADU availability relates to displacement pressures in certain neighborhoods or cities, and which policies are most effective at reducing outmigration.

In order to do this we would first need to understand the demographics of the population moving into these units to determine how those residents are changing the demographics of the neighborhoods. Descriptive research on ADU implementation in California, Oregon, and Minnesota is underway and could be a helpful baseline for causal research. While comparing across jurisdictions may be difficult due to the nuances of each policy, we could compare displacement pressures before and after ADU policies were enacted in order to account for the unobserved factors in each area. Additionally, we could also compare displacement pressures in regions with effective ADU policies with that in neighboring jurisdictions with less effective ADU ones.

Current research suggests that ADUs are not serving lower-income groups or communities of color. However further evaluation could focus on the Santa Cruz ADU loan program, which provides a forgivable loan for homeowners to build an ADU if they agree to keep the unit affordable (County of Santa Cruz Planning Department, 2018). Understanding the impact that this program has on housing affordability and displacement in the area would be useful in understanding whether such ADU policies can prevent displacement via affordable housing production.

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase

Tenant opportunities to purchase laws require landlords to inform tenants if they plan to sell the building and then to offer them right of first offer and/or right of first refusal on the purchase. The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) in Washington, DC, for example, gives tenants (often in partnership with nonprofit organizations) the first right to purchase their building when it goes up for sale. There is no research as to whether the program had any impact on displacement in the area, though there are many descriptive accounts, including of developers attempting to buy tenants out to leave, implying a building-level pressure to vacate. Studying this program could provide insight into how best to implement these policies, but may not be as useful in understanding how effective this policy will be in California. In 2019, San Francisco passed the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) that closely follows DC's. Given that it is a relatively new program, there is very little data on how many buildings have been purchased using COPA.

With proposals to pass policies like TOPA in Berkeley, Oakland, and East Palo Alto, there is an opportunity to build research into the implementation of the program to understand their impact on

displacement from the beginning. Using DC and San Francisco as case studies could help future programs tailor their implementation to serve communities most at risk of displacement. These cities could also create quasi-experimental studies by opening applications to access the program and randomly selecting which buildings get selected for assistance. In so doing, analysts could compare the outcomes of the two groups to determine the type of assistance for these programs to successfully prevent displacement.

As more jurisdictions implement these programs, researchers could examine the differences between those that have implemented TOPA and their neighbors who have not (matching them based on common characteristics in order to account for other factors that may determine displacement pressures). This way, we could begin to isolate the effect that TOPA had on displacement in these communities.

Given the time it takes to buy and sell property, the impact of TOPA laws may not fully become clear for years after their implementation. However, similar to right to counsel programs, the outcome of interest is very clear as the TOPA process explicitly focuses on preventing residential instability and therefore understanding who had the opportunity to remain in place and who elected to relocate. Indeed, given the potential for exclusionary displacement (Gallaher, 2016), it would also be important to keep track of how building rents change throughout this process and whether they remain affordable as compared with nearby buildings.

Unsubsidized Affordable Housing

Unsubsidized (or naturally occurring) affordable housing is a term used to define rental housing units that are affordable without being rent-restricted or receiving any form of subsidy to offset rent costs. Since they are not restricted in this way, they are vulnerable to market forces pushing up rents and making them unaffordable, which has prompted governments to try to guarantee their affordability before this happens. While affordable is defined as costing less than 30% of a person's income, the population in need of affordable housing ranges from those in extreme poverty to those making as much as 120% AMI – or more. While this makes research comparing these programs challenging, cities and states are considering implementing unsubsidized affordable housing preservation programs that are ripe for study.

One of the most well-documented programs that explicitly seeks to preserve unsubsidized affordable housing is the Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative, but there are other programs around the country that are smaller or don't use this terminology that also do this work. In San Francisco, the Small Sites Program aims to acquire and preserve small multifamily rental buildings, taking them off the market and ensuring they remain permanently affordable (MOHCD, 2020). From 2014 - 2018 this program acquired 25 buildings, serving 327 people with an average income at 65% AMI. While this data gives credence to the idea that these programs could protect lower-income renters, further research is necessary to understand how they impact displacement overall. The Bay Area Preservation Pilot through Enterprise Community Partners, the New York Acquisition Fund, the Chicago Preservation Compact, and the Housing Authority of King County, do similar work to preserve affordable housing that could be included in order to broaden this research as well.

To understand the potential impact of these policies, research could look statewide to identify where unsubsidized affordable housing exists in California. Using rental data for properties across the state (through databases such as CoStar), or the combination of American Community Survey and Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data, we could set criteria for what target populations these programs should serve and identify the unsubsidized rental units that are affordable to them. Using the market cost of those buildings, we could identify how much funding would be required to preserve a significant number of these buildings.

Additionally, we could propose a research design for any program implemented on a statewide or local scale. Having identified where this housing exists, we could match areas with similar displacement pressures and provide preservation for some of them, but not others - effectively creating a control group against which we could compare the displacement pressures after program implementation.

If studied, it would be critical to understand what residents these programs are best able to serve. Given that much of this housing may be affordable due to low-quality amenities or age, some buildings may be more expensive to preserve (and rehabilitate) than others. This could create disparities in the racial and socioeconomic demographics of residents served by these programs, a factor which should be considered during program design and implementation. Although large programs like this have not been implemented yet, unsubsidized affordable housing is a highly discussed policy intervention that could likely gain traction at a larger scale and should be ready to include evaluation research when it does.

Upzoning

Much debate is occurring over policies to relax zoning requirements to allow more housing units built on the same area of land (upzoning). Over the past few years, state Senator Scott Weiner has proposed an evolving series of bills that would attempt to allow this kind of housing development throughout the state. While these bills have stirred consistent debate, the result of upzoning could be more housing units on the market, increasing supply and with potentially mixed effects on displacement (as noted in the literature review); however, some research has suggested that upzoning alone will be insufficient to increase supply significantly. While we wanted to propose research that could study the effects of upzoning on displacement, there is currently no program existing (or being considered) large enough to evaluate its effects. Moreover, at least in the short-term, the five policies described in our research agenda above are more likely to have direct effects in mitigating displacement. Still, upzoning is an important, but understudied tool, for potentially increasing housing affordability and reducing displacement pressures across the state.