



## Equitable Development Planning Brief

Equitable development provides benefits for existing communities, including improvements to housing, job opportunities, environment, and quality of life. Considering potential displacement is one strategy to increasing equity. Indirect and involuntary displacement occurs when rising property values and real estate speculation lead landlords and property owners to raise rents or redevelop buildings where lower-cost homes or jobs are located. While not widespread across the region, displacement does take place in gentrifying transit-oriented areas, particularly where the housing market is constricted and neighborhoods offer attractive amenities.

By engaging low income residents and communities of color in the planning process, and explicitly recognizing their homes, community spaces and job opportunities as important assets, inclusive planning is more likely to lead to stable, integrated mixed-income neighborhoods and to include successful local economic development. In addition, securing affordable housing sites prior to the property value rise that accompanies higher densities helps to ensure a steady supply of affordable homes. Local efforts to invest in lower-income neighborhoods, address diversity, and minimize displacement benefit sustainability in the following ways:

1. Equity—An investment in low-income areas decreases regional inequities and concentrations of poverty while unlocking neighborhood development potential.
2. Environment—Increasing and safeguarding the amount of affordable housing near transit reduces sprawl.
3. Economy—Improving access to jobs in areas where opportunities are limited supports the neighborhood, municipal, and regional economies.

For planners in areas where substantial new transit and real estate investment is forthcoming, the strategies for preventing displacement can be summarized as follows:

1. Use demographic data and community surveys to establish who lives and works in the area and how it has changed over time, i.e. between decennial Census years.
2. Conduct an inclusive community engagement process and ensure that the character and vitality of the neighborhood informs the development vision.
  - a. Meetings can provide translation services, food, and childcare, and be held in transit-accessible and culturally relevant locations.
  - b. Local culture, including important neighborhood assets, history, and unique architecture, can become the basis for a planning vision
3. When planning affordable housing, secure sites in the area as soon as possible. Identify where the existing affordable homes are and how they may be impacted by market shifts.
4. Design zoning to direct the highest densities, and therefore largest redevelopment incentives, to areas where it will have minimal disruptive impact. For example, San Francisco and San Carlos have moved highest heights (and therefore maximum

- redevelopment incentives) away from local commercial corridors to adjacent streets in order to preserve functioning local retail environments. For more information, visit <http://www.bayareavision.org/initiatives/equitabledevelopment.html> and view the San Francisco-Eastern Neighborhoods Case Study.
5. Enhance housing and business retention programs to help residents stay in their current homes and to maintain existing levels of affordability.
    - a. Housing programs can include homeownership and rehabilitation assistance as well as strategies to preserve more affordable rental properties. The Mixed Income TOD Housing Guide, below, provides several options.
    - b. Business programs can include small business assistance, local hire, and commercial corridor/ “Main Street” revitalization For more information, visit the PolicyLink tool on commercial corridors or the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (<http://www.bayarealisc.org/>)
  6. Identify how important asset-building job bases, including small commercial districts and manufacturing centers, will fit within the proposed new vision and zoning.
  7. Direct resources to cultural and community centers, including schools, parks and small businesses, that provide social seams for diverse neighborhoods.
  8. Consider the use of development agreements and in lieu fees to provide community benefits.

For reference, there are three online Toolkits that provide analysis of specific policies:

**1. PolicyLink Equitable Development Toolkit**

[http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable\\_Development\\_Toolkit.htm](http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm).

**2. Great Communities Collaborative Preventing Displacement Tool**

<http://greatcommunities.org/intranet/library/sites-tools/great-communities-toolkit/PreventingDisplacement.pdf>

**3. Reconnecting America/Center for Transit-Oriented Development Mixed-Income TOD Action Guide**

[http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/public/display\\_asset/090304mitodag0109](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/public/display_asset/090304mitodag0109)

## **Case Study: Designing Zoning to Minimize Displacement**

San Francisco's Eastern Neighborhoods Plan began in response to displacement and has been a fertile testing ground for anti-displacement policies. When the Plan was adopted in 2009, the proposed zoning for the Mission placed the tallest heights—and therefore the most incentive for profitable redevelopment--along the Mission Street transit corridor between the BART stations. Though intended to promote TOD, this did not respond to either the development potential of sites or the displacement potential of small, minority-owned businesses. These businesses provide several community benefits. Most importantly, they are an asset-building resource for residents, including low-income residents with limited English who have become successful entrepreneurs in this area. Their businesses provide for daily neighborhood needs, give the area its cultural identity, and provide social seams for the neighborhood. The SF Board of Supervisors did not approve the zoning and commissioned a Mission Street Study to come up with an alternative proposal.

The proposed economic development strategies, which focused on revitalization rather than stabilization, also did not treat the area businesses as an asset. Many of the recommended strategies were more appropriate in areas with lots of vacancies, which is not the case on Mission Street. For this and other neighborhoods with displacement concerns, it is often a challenge for residents and community-based organizations to counteract perceptions of blight and to demonstrate the value of their businesses to the local economy.

The Mission Street Study's current proposal is to shift the highest heights to blocks adjacent to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> street BART stations, as well as to other areas where larger parcels could facilitate more development. As on many commercial corridors, the small parcel sizes on Mission Street would have been a significant handicap to achieving a full build-out. The new proposal considers larger sites that are more attractive for development. In addition, advisory group members created a formula for a more refined zoning of Mission Street itself based on architectural preservation, existing uses, and development potential. The proposed new zoning is more supportive of the local economy, preserves the character of the built environment, and would allow a greater number of transit-oriented housing units.

**For more information, visit FOCUS online:  
<http://www.bayareavision.org/initiatives/equitabledevelopment.html>**