

Equitable Development Without Displacement: Implementing Portland’s Anti-Displacement Commitments

August 2019

Introduction

After decades of decline—losing residents, jobs, and investment to the suburbs—cities have been lauded as a comeback story, captivating young people and innovation-economy companies with their diversity, density, and social opportunities. But too many low-income people and people of color who lived in cities through their long decline still struggle to get by, or face displacement altogether as their rents rise and their wages stagnate.

As new economic growth spurs new investments in urban places, city and community leaders must ask: for *whom* are cities coming back?

The ongoing prosperity of cities like Portland is dependent on advancing equity—just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Research proves that inequality and racial segregation hinder growth, prosperity, and economic mobility in regions, while diversity and inclusion fuel innovation and business success.¹ As Portland becomes more racially diverse, it will be increasingly critical that low-income communities and communities of color—those who have been left behind and excluded—are not just “engaged”, but are at the center of guiding decisions and investments in the city.

Portland has the opportunity to lead with racial equity to ensure that all residents participate in and benefit from new growth. But this will require the city to confront the historical and structural racism that has created deep racial inequities that continue to harm Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color:

- More than half of people of color in Portland are economically insecure (earn less than 200 percent of poverty, or \$42,000 for a family of three). Nearly 60 percent of Black and Latinx communities are economically insecure.
- Workers of color earn \$6 per hour less than their White counterparts, even when controlling for educational attainment.

¹ See a list of studies here: “The Economic Case for Equity and Inclusion,” National Equity Atlas, <http://nationalequityatlas.org/about-the-atlas/resources>.

- Nearly 3 out of 4 Black women renters are housing cost burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Homeownership is not necessarily a pathway to housing stability; nearly half of Black and Latinx women homeowners are also housing cost burdened.²

In order to reverse these trends, Portland city leaders must work alongside community leaders from these communities to ensure new investments benefit and are led by those most directly affected.

This memo summarizes the activities and information shared during a three-day visit to Portland by PolicyLink staff, as well as recommendations for moving forward.

Site visit activities and themes

On July 17-19, 2019, PolicyLink staff held a three-day visit with Portland city and community leaders to help chart a path towards addressing racial inequities and the displacement challenges facing the city.

The purpose of this site visit was three-fold:

1. City leadership and staff at all levels take ownership of anti-displacement work.
2. Elevate and validate leadership from impacted communities.
3. Develop clear next steps for implementing anti-displacement strategies, building off of the comprehensive plan policy directives.

Working with the All-In Cities Anti-Displacement Policy Network team in Portland, PolicyLink staff designed the site visit around these three goals, with the objective of identifying barriers and creating a space for city and community leaders to work together on developing lasting structures to address these barriers.

In advance of the site visit, PolicyLink staff conducted prep calls with the four directors of key agencies that are involved in addressing displacement (Prosper Portland Director Kimberly Branam, Portland Bureau of Housing Director Shannon Callahan, Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Director Andrea Durbin, and Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Chris Warner and Equity Manager Irene Marion). These calls helped to identify challenges and barriers to advancing racial equity and anti-displacement strategies within the agencies.

The site visit included meetings with the Anti-Displacement PDX coalition (ADPDX), the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff, and a city leadership meeting with the directors and senior staff from six agencies. The visit culminated in a three-hour workshop with roughly 70 participants, including Mayor Ted Wheeler, other elected officials and their staff, agency staff, and community leaders. During the workshop, participants broke up into five groups to discuss strategies in five areas:

1. Implementing anti-displacement strategies in the comprehensive plan;
2. Preventing displacement upstream before capital improvements are planned;
3. Strategies to move impacted communities to the center of decision-making;

² Data from National Equity Atlas: www.nationalequityatlast.org

4. Strategies to ensure small, diverse businesses and community assets are able to remain in place and grow; and
5. Community benefits agreements to ensure investments serve people of color rather than displace them.

During the prep call and site visit, a number of challenges and barriers were identified, including:

- *Need to recognize and address historic and current anti-Blackness.* Remediating Portland’s history of anti-Blackness must be a core element of any approach to addressing anti-displacement.
- *Intra- and inter-agency silos.* Silos both across and within city bureaus leads to confusion as to the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of staff on addressing displacement and advancing equity for a target population. Developing effective staffing structures and cultivating external partnerships are key catalysts to sustaining the work ahead.
- *Lack of a clear mandate from City leadership to do racial equity work.* In order for front line staff to understand that advancing racial equity is a Mayoral priority, it must be reinforced and resourced at the Commissioner and Director level. At a most basic level, any given city staff member should be able to identify and act on equity issues. Leadership should open channels to financial resources, develop and enable staff to lead, and actively remove barriers to success.
- *Need to look at neighborhood change and equitable development more holistically.* As the city explores anti-displacement strategies, staff need to look at projects holistically. For example, transportation projects can create workforce development opportunities, housing projects can yield economic development opportunities, and economic development projects can cause land value and housing costs to increase in the adjacent areas.
- *Need to move from outreach and engagement to co-design and co-implementation.* Advancing equity requires centering those most impacted and authorizing them to make decisions regarding the development and implementation of any reparative program or policy.
- *Lack of metrics to track success.* Effective policies and programs require ongoing tracking and updating strategies when necessary. Tracking how the City’s budget is allocated annually to implement anti-displacement strategies is a critical measure of commitment.
- *Need for transparency and accountability.* All parties should be able to anticipate regular open communication regarding planning and implementation successes and challenges.
- *Budgets and regulatory framework should reflect priorities.* All parties should be appropriately resourced to advance programs and policies that result in more equitable outcomes for the target populations. Regulations shaping market behavior should be developed to achieve equitable outcomes over the long-term, not solely with short-term financial feasibility in mind.

At the final workshop, both city leaders and ADPDX members expressed a desire to continue to work together to move this work forward. Appendix 1 provides a list of implementation steps put together by ADPDX members. **This document should serve as the starting place for subsequent meetings and conversation.**

Implementing Portland’s Anti-Displacement Commitments

There are a number of programs and policies that have been proposed or are currently under development and could be opportunities to embed racial equity strategies that center and stabilize communities most impacted by displacement. Over the course of the site visit, several were named, including the Anti-Displacement Action Plan; a Community-led city task force; zoning changes, particularly the Residential Infill Project; and public infrastructure investments, including new transportation capital improvements such as the Southwest Corridor project. These programs and policies provide opportunities to implement an anti-displacement framework that changes “business as usual” and moves the city towards a new set of anti-displacement principles and practices around centering impacted communities, reparations, housing as a human right, and community ownership.

Here are our recommendations on how Portland can implement its anti-displacement commitments:

1. **Racial equity must define both how the city operates and what is prioritized.** Authentically working to advance racial equity requires working in a fundamentally different way than how people and systems have operated historically. While evaluating the racial equity and displacement risk impacts of policies and projects is important, there must also be concrete financial and political support at the Council and director level for impacted communities to co-implement the policies and projects they have defined as their top priorities. The city may ultimately need to walk away from some City-prioritized projects or strategies that harm and/or do not benefit communities most at risk of displacement.
2. **Identify a target population.** Focusing on a target population helps the city and community more efficiently allocate resources and efforts across agencies to develop shared goals about who will benefit, who will pay, and who will make decisions that will impact community stabilization. It also defends the work against mainstream groups who may co-opt the anti-displacement agenda to maintain the status quo.
3. **Focus on policies that will actively address near-term displacement pressures in communities.** In particular, the city should ensure there are strong protections in place for residents before new public or private investments come in to a neighborhood. These policies need to be coupled with funding commitments to implement them. For example, policies like local preference/right to return for residents with generational ties to a neighborhood is an important tool to reverse displacement, but will require more investment in affordable rental and homeownership opportunities in the targeted neighborhoods in order to have greater impact. Zoning and other regulatory policies are also critical to improving longer-term outcomes over multiple cycles of real estate development and neighborhood change.
4. **Commit to a process that is led by people and communities most impacted by displacement and racial inequities.** The community should not just be invited to participate, but also have the resources to participate and have decision-making authority over things that will directly impact their lives and communities. Examples of authority include deciding which anti-displacement strategies are advanced by the City Council first and how funding is allocated.

5. **Be prepared for a long-term commitment, particularly a long-term commitment of resources.** The challenges of displacement were created over decades of state, local, and federal policy that enacted massive land and wealth dispossession for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color, and embedded white supremacy in policy, practice, and lived experience. It will require a long-term commitment of financial resources, staff time, and political capital to begin to reverse this. In particular, a permanent source of funding should be identified early on to fund grassroots organizing in communities directly impacted by displacement rather than funding them for a single year or a single project.

6. **Build in accountability, transparency, and measurement for every goal and action.** Addressing displacement will require significant action across city bureaus and community groups. Establishing a regular process, such as a task force and publicly visible regular reporting, will help with evaluation and troubleshooting problems as they arise.

Opportunities and concrete next steps to advance equitable development without displacement

Coming out of the site visit, a number of concrete next steps were identified:

1. **Create a community-led city task force** authorized by City Council to direct implementation of anti-displacement policies of the comprehensive plan with cross-bureau actions and accountability. It will be important that senior staff from the Mayor’s office and other Commissioners offices participate along with the senior staff from key bureaus.
2. **Commit to multi-year funding for ADPDX to have a full-time staff** to lead coordination of the coalition in developing anti-displacement strategies for the city to implement, and to liaise with senior leadership during the implementation process. Funding should also be identified and provided at an adequate level for neighborhood and grassroots organizations to have the resources and capacity to effectively work alongside city staff to co-design and co-implement an anti-displacement strategy.
3. **Identify a permanent source of funding for anti-displacement work.** An early charge of the task force should be to identify an ongoing source of funds to resource community capacity building and implementation of early anti-displacement strategies advanced by the task force.
4. **Create a process to track and annually report to City Council and the broader community** on progress of policies or plans developed collaboratively by community groups and the city. Dedicate funding for qualitative and quantitative data collection. Report on residential, commercial and cultural stability and displacement trends—disaggregated by race, income and geography. Align timing of the reporting prior to budgeting process to inform annual resource needs.

Examples and promising practices

As Portland develops next steps for advancing racial equity in addressing displacement, there are a number of examples from other cities that can provide ideas for further action:

Community engagement and capacity building

The [Citizens Planning Institute](#) (CPI) in Philadelphia is a seven-week capacity-building curriculum designed to empower neighborhood leaders to become more effective community advocates. Participants learn about the various facets of the community development process from both the private and nonprofit perspective. Development professionals and practitioners from across the city serve as instructors for courses such as Introduction to City Planning, The Zoning Code, The Development Process, and Coalition Building. Upon completion of the program, graduates become part of an ongoing network of community leaders and have access to other technical assistance resources.

Community-led strategies for permanent affordable housing

In Buffalo's [Fruit Belt](#), a historically Black community of nearly 2,600 residents began facing displacement pressures when the neighboring medical campus expanded. Fruit Belt residents decided to fight proactively against displacement and for community-controlled development. In 2015, they won a moratorium on the sale of City-owned lots that lasted two and a half years, ending with the City's approval of a community-driven strategic development plan for the neighborhood which included a community land trust. The City transferred the first eight parcels to the land trust and plans to transfer 50 lots within the first five years of the trust. The land trust hopes to eventually acquire 200 lots from the City.

Centering impacted communities in policy making

In 2015, a federal Fair Housing complaint was filed against the Twin Cities region for their Analysis of Impediments (AI), which led to them [creating an AI addendum](#). They brought impacted communities into the center of the process, establishing a Fair Housing Advisory Committee made up of community-based groups. The advisory committee created two separate consultant Request for Proposals – one for community engagement, and a separate one for data and analysis – recognizing that these activities require separate skill sets and both activities should be adequately resourced. The process included qualitative data collected by residents as a part of their data analysis for understanding displacement and its impact on communities. They held undoing racism workshops to unpack how structural and institutional racism created the existing conditions in many neighborhoods, including areas of concentrated wealth and predominately White neighborhoods, and the ongoing effects of racism today. As a result, the AI Addendum determined that it is not a fair housing violation to invest in affordable housing in a low-income neighborhood when it is a part of a larger investment in that place, and that the region must anticipate the potential for displacement that investments may have and plan to mitigate this.

Community-driven development without displacement

When the West Oakland Army Base closed in the 1990s, it eliminated hundreds of good jobs adjacent to a predominately Black community. The city decided to redevelop the site as a transportation and logistics center—rejecting several other, lucrative, proposals for luxury housing and a film studio—based on the need in the community for good-paying jobs. The first phase will include 1,500 construction jobs and another 1,500 permanent positions. A coalition of faith leaders, unions, youth organizers, and others worked with the city to create a good jobs framework for both the construction and permanent

jobs on the site, including a policy that employers cannot pre-screen job applicants for prior criminal records, as well as a living wage minimum of \$11.70/hour plus benefits. The agreement also provided multi-year funding for a job training center in the neighborhood to prepare and connect local residents to job opportunities. The project [broke ground](#) in late 2013. A Community Jobs Oversight Commission, with representatives from community, labor, and other stakeholders, meets monthly to review progress and make recommendations if problems arise.

Appendix 1: ADPDX Anti-Displacement Implementation Recommendations

Anti-Displacement Implementation at the City of Portland

Anti-Displacement PDX | July 2019

All City Activities, Plans, Policies, and Actions Must:

- Recognize and address historic and current anti-blackness in the City that is responsible for persistent negative outcomes;
- Avoid or prevent the continuous displacement of low-income people of color;
- Recognize the years of continuous work of communities of color to advance racial and economic justice in spite of the City's actions or inaction; and
- Recognize that displacement is regional and dispersed, not limited to a specific site or geographic location.

What Is Needed Now

A Community-led City Task Force that decides implementation of anti-displacement policies of the Comprehensive Plan with cross-bureau actions and accountability. To include:

- Community review of Comprehensive Plan policies;
- Council and Bureau Leadership participation;
- Community identified next steps for anti-displacement;
- Community creation and control of the implementation plan for anti-displacement policies; and
- Council adoption and adequate City resources allocated for the implementation plan.

Implementation Must Include

- Fall BMP funding for ADPDX to hire 1.0 FTE to coordinate coalition members and activities, as well as funds to support participation of groups and individuals providing significant time and expertise.
- Ongoing resources show a commitment to ending displacement. Anti-Displacement of Black, brown, and low-income Portlanders is a primary responsibility of the City and should be considered a permanent function across bureaus. The annual advocacy required with one-time funding resources sends a strong message that the City wishes to perpetuate race- and class-based segregation in the Portland region.

Existing Community-Led Plans and Recommendations

- PAALF's People's Plan
- EPAP's Anti-Displacement Recommendations
- CAT's SW Corridor Community-Led Solutions for Equitable Development
- State of Black Oregon
- Racial Equity Guide



**EXPANDING OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF WHO
LIVES IN PORTLAND
THROUGH VISION PDX**



**ESTABLISHING EQUITY AS
A CITYWIDE PRIORITY IN
THE PORTLAND PLAN**



**ADOPTING
ANTI-DISPLACEMENT
POLICIES IN THE
2030 COMP PLAN**



**RECOGNIZING
ANTI-BACKNESS IN
PORTLAND IN ORDER TO
ADDRESS GENTRIFICATION
AND DISPLACEMENT**