

# Texas Anti-Displacement Toolkit

A Guide to Help Texas Communities  
Combat Residential Displacement  
in Gentrifying Neighborhoods



2019 EDITION

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**Part of the Uprooted Project at The University of Texas at Austin:**  
<https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject>

Texas Anti-Displacement Toolkit: A Guide to Help Texas Communities Combat Residential Displacement in Gentrifying Neighborhoods

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For electronic access to the report and additional information related to gentrification and displacement in Texas, visit <https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject>.

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# Acknowledgments

The Anti-Displacement Toolkit was supported by a grant from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation. Much of the material in the toolkit is drawn from the report, “Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin’s Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It,” by Professors Heather Way, Elizabeth Mueller, and Jake Wegmann at The University of Texas at Austin. Alice Woods, a 2019 graduate of the Community and Regional Planning Program at The University of Texas School of Architecture, provided many months of assistance with research, graphics, and other content for the toolkit. Additional assistance with the toolkit was provided by Ben Martin and Nicholas Armstrong, also 2019 graduates of the Community and Regional Planning Program. The toolkit design work was provided Katy Byther. Many thanks to all of these folks for their invaluable support of this project.

We welcome your suggestions and comments for improving the toolkit. For electronic access to the toolkit and additional resources and information related to gentrification and displacement, visit <https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject>.

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## Introduction

Gentrification is rapidly reshaping many cities across the United States, including Texas, displacing vulnerable residents and changing the cultural character of communities. This toolkit was created to help local elected officials, neighborhood leaders, and community organizations in Texas understand the policy tools available locally to combat this displacement.

### What is Gentrification?

Gentrification is a process of neighborhood change where higher-income and higher-educated residents move into a historically marginalized neighborhood, housing costs rise, and the neighborhood is physically transformed through new higher-end construction and building upgrades, resulting in the displacement of vulnerable residents and changes to the neighborhood's cultural character.

A core driver of gentrification in the U.S. has been the strong and growing demand for central city living by more affluent households, which in turn drives up housing prices in central city neighborhoods. This broad-scale demographic shift is actively underway in many Texas cities, including Houston, Austin, and Dallas. City planning, economic development initiatives, and tax incentives fostering redevelopment in central neighborhoods are considered to be additional factors influencing gentrification.

Neighborhoods impacted by gentrification have been shaped historically by decades of discriminatory public policies and private real estate practices that undermined property values, facilitated substandard living conditions, and generated racially segregated housing patterns. These neighborhoods' lower property values, location in the urban core near good jobs and transit, and historical and cultural character are all factors that are making them more attractive to newcomers and susceptible to redevelopment.

### Understanding Displacement

There are several types of displacement that can occur in gentrifying neighborhoods:

**Direct displacement** occurs when residents can no longer afford to remain in their homes due to rising housing costs. Residents may also be forced out by lease non-renewals, evictions, eminent domain, or physical conditions that render homes uninhabitable as investors await redevelopment opportunities. While displacement occurs routinely in low-income neighborhoods, when it occurs in the context of new development and an influx of wealthier residents, the displacement becomes a characteristic of gentrification.

**Indirect displacement** refers to changes in who is moving into a neighborhood as low-income residents move out. In a gentrifying neighborhood, when homes are vacated by low-income residents, other low-income residents cannot afford to move in because rents and sales prices have increased. This is also called **exclusionary displacement**. Low-income residents can also be excluded as a result of discriminatory policies (for example, a ban on tenants with housing vouchers) or changes in land use or zoning that foster a change in the character of residential development, such as eliminating units for households without children.

**Cultural displacement** occurs as the scale of residential change advances. Shops and services shift to focus on new residents, the character of the neighborhood is transformed, and the remaining residents may feel a sense of dislocation despite remaining in the neighborhood.

When understood as a process rooted in the uneven treatment of particular neighborhoods and racial and ethnic groups, addressing gentrification-induced displacement requires attention to former residents who have already been displaced, current residents, and future residents. Some cities have created "right of return"

or preference policies that focus on former residents or those at risk of being displaced. At the same time, it is important to ensure that in the future other low-income persons and persons of color will also be able to access the opportunities in gentrifying neighborhoods and that the scale of change does not erase key aspects of neighborhoods that allow both current and future residents to feel at home.

## Who Is Impacted by Gentrification and Displacement?

Census Tract 3123, Part of  
**Houston's Third Ward**

2000 to 2017 change

 White Population  
**3% to 10%**

African American  
Population  
**81% to 63%**

Hispanic or Latino  
Population  
**12% to 22%**

 People 25+ with  
Bachelor's Degree  
**5% to 30%**

 Median Home Value  
**\$61K to \$240K**  
**292% Increase**  
Compared to **58% Increase**  
in **Houston MSA**

 Median Gross Rent  
**\$491 to \$692**  
**41% Increase**  
Compared to **26% Increase**  
in **Houston MSA**

 Median Family Income  
**\$26K to \$34K**  
**30% Increase**  
Compared to **3% Decrease**  
in **Houston MSA**



Source: Texas Housers

Based on decennial census and ACS 5-year data. All Values in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars. "MSA" stands for Metropolitan Statistical Area and for Houston includes Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery counties, along with five others.

As communities seek to craft tools for reducing displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods, it's important to first identify which neighborhoods in the city are already gentrifying or are susceptible to gentrifying, as well as the groups of residents in those neighborhoods who are most vulnerable to displacement in the face of rising housing costs. Cities can then more effectively tailor their tools to address the needs of those neighborhoods and residents. For example, many tools to address gentrification are more effective in neighborhoods in the earlier stages of gentrifying, while other tools are more viable in the later stages. And some tools are more effective in addressing the displacement of renters, while others are more effective in addressing the displacement of homeowners.

When cities create economic development projects and implement major public infrastructure projects, understanding a neighborhood's vulnerability to displacement also helps a city recognize when to incorporate displacement mitigation strategies up front into those projects, rather than waiting until later. Once gentrification picks up steam, reducing displacement becomes much more difficult.

Of 200 Austin neighborhoods . . .

**Susceptible** Near high value/high appreciation areas. Not yet experiencing demographic change.

**Early Type 1** Experiencing appreciation, still with low/moderate home values.

**Dynamic** Exhibit demographic change indicative of gentrification.

**Late** Newly high value areas, still with vulnerable populations

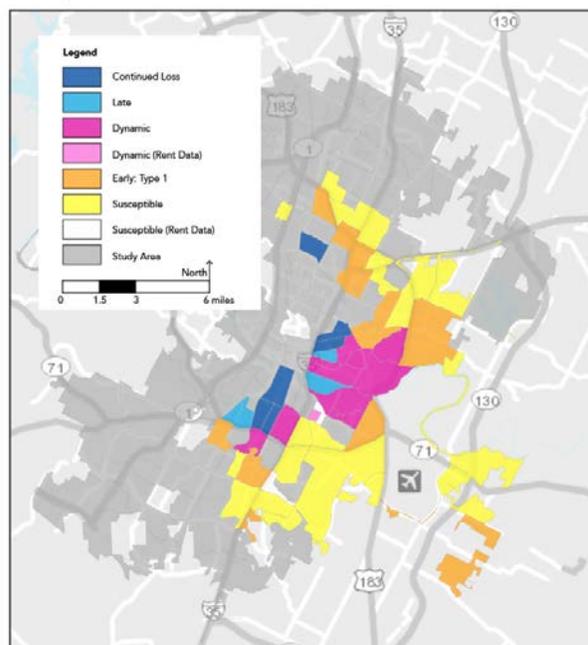
**Continued Loss** High value areas that have experienced demographic change



A number of methodologies are available for analyzing which neighborhoods are gentrifying and the level of gentrification occurring, as well as which neighborhoods are at the greatest risk of gentrifying. The analysis for the [City of Austin](https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject/) by faculty from The University of Texas at Austin (<https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject/>) built upon a methodology developed by Professor Lisa Bates at Portland State University. The [City of Denver's](#) gentrification analysis also built off of Professor Bates' methodology. The gentrification analysis for the [cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul](#) combined three different methodologies, including Bates' methodology. The [Urban Displacement Center](#) has also developed a useful methodology that has been used in many cities.

As for identifying groups of residents who are most vulnerable to displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods, there are five primary indicators of vulnerability. Renters, low-income households, persons of color, households headed by a resident without a college degree, and families with children in poverty are, overall, more vulnerable to displacement from rising housing costs than other groups of residents.

Neighborhood Typology (2016)  
Austin, Texas



Source: *Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It*

## Who is most vulnerable to displacement?



Persons of Color



People 25 and older without a Bachelor's Degree



Renters



People making at or below 80% Median Family Income



Households with children in poverty

Renters, for example, are more vulnerable to displacement than homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods because of landlords' ability to raise rents, convert their units to condominiums, and replace older apartments for more profitable land uses. African-American and Hispanic residents are more likely to be impacted by multiple vulnerability indicators. For example, African-American residents are more likely to live in poverty and be renters than white residents and Hispanics are more likely to be renters and have lower levels of education.

## Toolkit Overview

**Part 1** provides an overview of **seven key lessons learned from gentrifying neighborhoods** across the country, in areas where city and neighborhood leaders have been working for years to combat the displacement of vulnerable residents. These lessons provide important considerations for Texas cities and community leaders to take into account as they seek to address displacement in their communities.

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**Part 2** provides a **framework for understanding and weighing the merits of different policy tools** used to address displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods. The criteria discussed here are meant to help policymakers consider which tools best further the city's goals and best match the needs of particular vulnerable populations at different stages of neighborhood change. The criteria also allow policymakers to weigh the effectiveness and impact of specific tools and consider which ones the city has the resources to implement or capacity to develop. To illustrate how these criteria can be used to generate more nuanced evaluations of tools and strategies in particular contexts, they are applied to the ten policy tools discussed in Part 3.

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**Part 3** features **ten recommendations of policy tools available to Texas cities** for addressing displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods, taken from the more comprehensive list of tools in Part 6. The tools selected provide a range of approaches, including high-impact but difficult to implement tools, as well as “low hanging fruit” tools that are fairly easy for a city to implement but not as wide-ranging in their impact. This section includes a brief discussion of each tool along with a list of key action steps to get started with the tool. This section also applies the analytical framework presented in Part 2 for assessing each tool.

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**Part 4** presents an overview of the most **important revenue sources available to Texas cities** for funding programs that address the displacement of vulnerable residents. The overview includes examples of Texas cities utilizing each particular revenue source.

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**Part 5** presents a list of **important displacement-mitigation tools** used in other parts of the country that are **illegal in Texas**, as a result of a state legislative or constitutional ban. Absent legal reforms, these tools are off limits to Texas cities.

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**Part 6** presents an overview of more than **50 diverse local tools available in Texas** for combating the displacement of vulnerable residents in gentrifying neighborhoods. The tools are organized under six goals, which provides a reference point for understanding how certain strategies and tools further specific displacement mitigation goals while not furthering others. Each tool includes a short description along with any special considerations and examples of where the tool has been implemented. Only tools that can be legally adopted in Texas are included here.

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**Part 7** provides an overview of **three case studies** of historically vulnerable neighborhoods—both inside and outside of Texas—where local efforts have focused on mitigating displacement in the face of rising housing costs and redevelopment pressures. The case studies demonstrate how a variety of strategies and policies can be used successfully to mitigate the displacement of vulnerable populations in gentrifying communities and offer both hope and concrete lessons to advocates in other communities. The complete case studies are available at <https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject/>.

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