



RESHAPING THE BARRIO WITH EQUITABLE TOD

A NITC project examines how equitable transit oriented development (TOD) can lead to neighborhood revitalization without displacing residents.

The Issue

Multimodal transportation and land use decisions have important effects on vulnerable low-income communities. Gentrification is a common, and deeply controversial, outcome of urban development. Investments in new infrastructure often draw the affluent, causing market forces to displace lower-income residents. As neighborhoods become renovated, often the people who once defined a neighborhood can no longer afford to live there.

Transportation sustainability investments such as bike and pedestrian infrastructure and improved access to public transportation, as well as land use changes that increase housing and commercial density, have the potential to bring needed resources to low-income communities of color. Investments in transit-oriented development (TOD) can improve access for transit-dependent communities, encourage economic development, facilitate affordable housing projects, and even relocate social services near stations, all of which have important equity outcomes. However, there are risks associated with using TODs as catalysts for revitalizing low-income communities of color. These new transportation infrastructural investments make these neighborhoods more lucrative for higher-income residents and can increase pressures of gentrification.

The Research

Planners can mitigate this risk by using best practices for community engagement. To assist planners and policymakers in arriving at an understanding of the processes involved in equitable TOD, NITC researcher Gerardo Sandoval of the University of Oregon has conducted extensive



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THE ISSUE

TOD can protect low-income residents and spur a neighborhood renaissance if community stakeholders are engaged in the planning process.

THE RESEARCH

The key recommendations that emerged from this research are threefold:

- Focus on the endogenous forms of capital in the neighborhood;
- Build upon that social, political, economic and cultural capital;
- Emphasize public participation processes.

IMPLICATIONS

Following these recommendations lets existing communities guide how their TOD project is implemented.

Photo: Mariachi Plaza station in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles

qualitative case studies of several TODs which have successfully rejuvenated neighborhoods without displacing residents. Sandoval's research focuses on Latino immigrant communities in California.

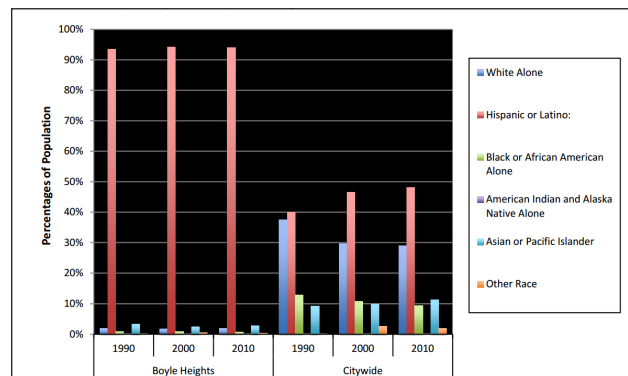
Beginning in 2012 with a NITC project called Latino Immigrant Communities and Equity in Transit Oriented Development, Sandoval first conducted qualitative studies of TODs in two California neighborhoods: MacArthur Park in Los Angeles and Fruitvale in Oakland. He found that with the participation of community leaders and activists, the MacArthur Park and Fruitvale TOD projects were able to catalyze economic growth and enhance the Latino immigrant neighborhoods that were already in place. Rather than displacing residents, these TODs connected residents with more services and helped local businesses to thrive. With a second NITC grant, Sandoval added more case studies. His most recent report analyzes TOD projects in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles and Logan Heights, San Diego. The report provides detailed accounts of how community-driven transformation occurred in both places.

Implications

Sandoval's case studies have shown that the various forms of social, political and cultural capital that exist in the neighborhoods can be the biggest asset. By making use of such capital, planners, residents and activists can transform TOD projects into a major source of community benefits. In Boyle Heights, for example, the community and planners invested in creating a culturally relevant public space as a way to spur vibrancy in the neighborhood. Mariachi Plaza is now a key location where Latino cultural celebrations and festivals occur, and is also contributing to the emerging economy on nearby First Street, attracting more tourists and shoppers to the neighborhood. The TOD in Logan Heights evokes cultural elements of the barrio, and incorporates public art from Chicano Park muralists throughout the apartments and storefronts. The Latino

supermarket in the neighborhood ensures access to food for residents of the affordable housing development.

By allowing a neighborhood's own cultural capital to become an essential feature of its renaissance, planners take an important step away from the kind of top-down planning models which often lead to gentrification. The new case studies reinforce findings from the first report: TODs can make important contributions toward improving low-income neighborhoods, but the key to an equitable outcome is the role of community residents in authentically guiding the development process.



Latinos in Boyle Heights vs. City of Los Angeles, 1990 to 2010

This graph illustrates the high percentage of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino in Boyle Heights, compared with other ethnicities and with the city of Los Angeles as a whole.

PROJECT INFORMATION

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