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University of Arkansas: Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design

**Gentrification and Displacement: Connections Between Changing Housing
Typologies and Long-Time Residents' Quality of Life in East Austin, Texas**

Grant Wilson – (B. Arch 2023)

December 6, 2022

Honors College Capstone

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impacts of gentrification on quality of life, displacement, and housing typology in East Austin, Texas. The neighborhood is examined as a case study and example of the concepts discussed. Evaluated through both a qualitative and quantitative lens, this study serves as a report and update on the continued disruption of the living patterns of minority residents in the city. Recommendations are given to mitigate displacement for East Austin residents and improve the quality of life for those remaining. By identifying the connection between changing housing typology and displacement impacts, this report aspires to give designers a better understanding of the impact of their work on the contexts in which they build.

History of East Austin



Photo of East 6th Street, 1866.¹

Origins

Following the Civil War, the area that is now East Austin was mostly plantation land. Over the following years it would be sold to freed slaves. One of the first lots sold in 1869 was to a freedman named Malick Wilson who built a house on what is now 11th Street. By late 1894 the area had grown large enough to warrant the construction of two schools. Residents of the area worked primarily in trades or services industries. Two higher education institutions opened in the area for the African American population, Samuel Hutson College and Tillotson Collegiate and Normal Institute.² Being one of the only areas in the city with a majority of black owned businesses, housing, and the only

¹ [Man on Horse on East Sixth Street], photograph, 1866~; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth123938/>; accessed November 28, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

² Hill, Sharon. "The Empty Stairs: The Lost History of East Austin." Texas State University. <https://doi.org/https://gato-docs.its.txst.edu/jcr:e08c7244-9193-49b1-b4d8-6cb3e4c4daab/The%20Empty%20Stairs%20The%20Lost%20History%20of%20East%20Austin.pdf>.

services like water and electricity outside of the district's defined boundaries.³ Black citizens would later refer to this plan as the "Negro Plan" because of its direct and lasting impact on non-white citizens of the city. The plan stated:

"...in our studies in Austin we have found that the Negroes are present in small numbers, in practically all sections of the city, excepting the area just east of East Avenue and south of the City Cemetery. This area seems to be all Negro population. It is our recommendation that the nearest approach to the solution of the race segregation problem will be the recommendation of this district as a Negro district; and that all the facilities and conveniences be provided the Negroes in this district, as an incentive to draw the Negro population to this area." ⁴

³ "The City of Austin Plan • Austin Revitalization Authority." *Austin Revitalization Authority*, 27 May 2021, <https://austinrev.org/timeline/the-city-of-austin-plan/>.

⁴ Sorensen, Stephanie S. "CASOCKS AND OVERALLS: THE BUILDING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS IN EAST AUSTIN, TEXAS, 1928-1941." *Editorial Office* (2013): 71.

that this play-field be enlarged and developed to provide for a modern play-field. We also recommend that other play-fields be established in various part of the city. If it is the intention of the school board to provide additional high schools, such play-fields should preferably be located at, or adjacent to, these high schools.

There has been considerable talk in Austin, as well as other cities, in regard to the race segregation problem. This problem cannot be solved legally under any zoning law known to us at present. Practically all attempts of such have been proven unconstitutional.

In our studies in Austin we have found that the negroes are present in small numbers, in practically all sections of the city, excepting the area just east of East Avenue and south of the City Cemetery. This area seems to be all negro population. It is our recommendation that the nearest approach to the solution of the race segregation problem will be the recommendation of this district as a negro district; and that all the facilities and conveniences be provided the negroes in this district, as an incentive to draw the negro population to this area. This will eliminate the necessity of duplication of white and black schools, white and black parks, and other duplicate facilities for this area. We are recommending that sufficient area be acquired adjoining the negro high school to provide adequate space for a complete negro play-field in connection with the negro high school. We further recommend that the negro schools in this area be provided with ample and adequate play ground space and facilities similar to the white schools of the city.

The plan called for an approximately six-mile radius for the district and included plans for development of segregated parks, schools, and other city facilities. This area was located on the east side of what was once called East Avenue and is now I-35.

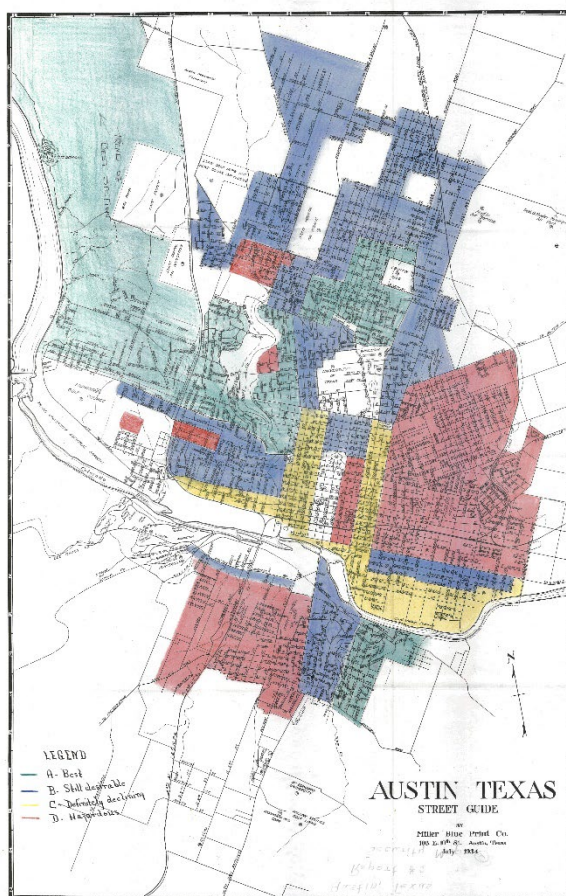
Redlining is a discriminatory practice that involves the denial of financial services such as mortgages, insurance loans, and various banking resources to residents in certain areas, based on their ethnicity or race.⁶ In the 1900s's the Homeowners Loan Corporation (HOLC) mapped areas of cities in the United States and assigned an appraised risk for home financing within them. The areas were ranked on a color spectrum from lowest risk (green) to highest risk (red), giving redlining its name. The HOLC map of Austin from 1934 showed East Austin as highest risk (red).⁷ Residents who lived in redlined neighborhoods residents were excluded from government backed mortgages offered by President Roosevelt's New Deal in 1935. This effectively excluded black Austinites from one of the largest wealth building efforts in United States history.⁸ This phenomenon, in cohesion with the City Plan of 1928, resulted in a concentration of black residents in East Austin while many white residents moved to other areas.

⁵ Koch & Fowler. 1928. *A City Plan for Austin, Texas*. Austin, Texas: Department of Planning. <https://doi.org/http://hdl.handle.net/2152/65853>.

⁶ Wex Definitions Team. "Redlining: Definition." Cornell Law School: Legal Information Institute. April 1, 2022. <https://doi.org/https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/redlining>.

⁷ Huggins, John C. "A Cartographic Perspective on the Correlation Between Redlining and Public Health in Austin, Texas—1951." *Cityscape* 19, no. 2 (2017): 268-271. Accessed October 10, 2022.

⁸ "The City of Austin Plan • Austin Revitalization Authority." *Austin Revitalization Authority*, 27 May 2021, <https://austinrev.org/timeline/the-city-of-austin-plan/>.

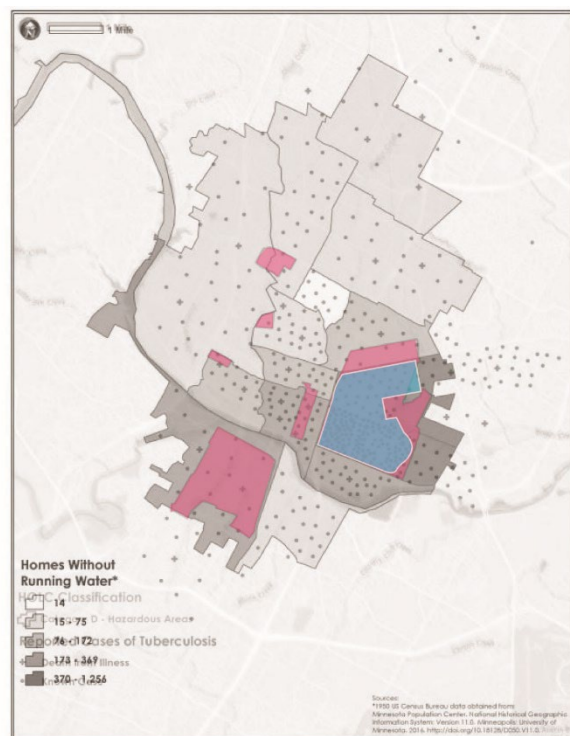
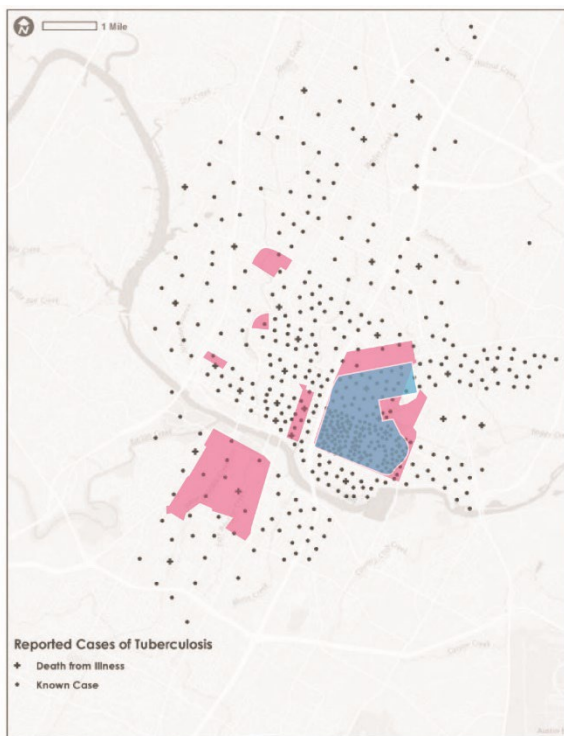
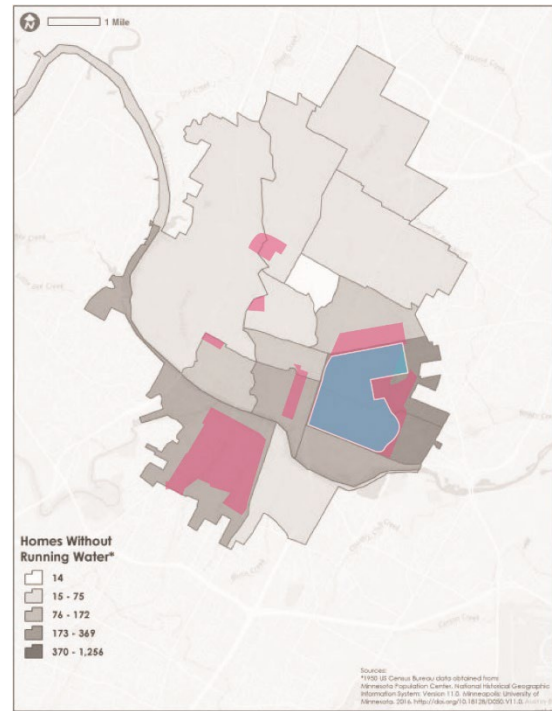
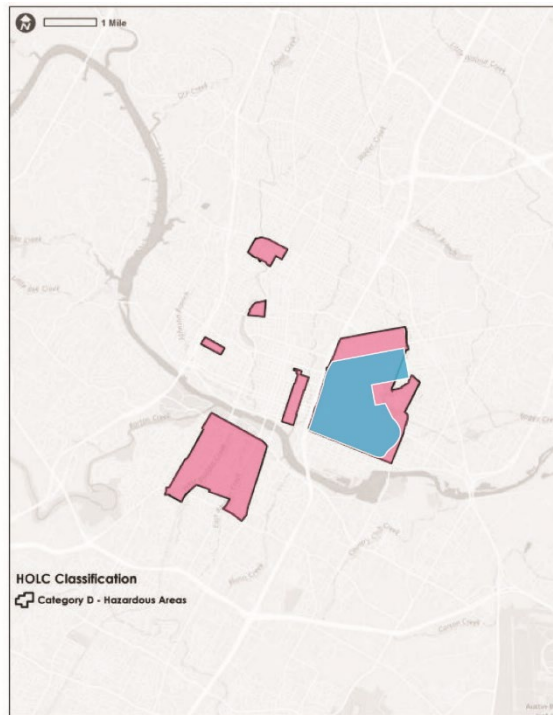


HOLC Map of Austin, 1943⁹

Designated as the “Negro District”, East Austin was in many ways an afterthought for city planners moving forward. While the city did provide basic services like water and power in addition to parks, it did not encourage the development of medical facilities in the neighborhood. The little care that did exist from neighborhood doctors was often inadequate and many residents went without proper treatment. For example, many babies were born at home with minimal prenatal or postnatal care. Additionally, roads in East Austin weren’t paved until 1974.¹⁰

⁹ HOLC Map of Austin Texas. Map. Home Owners Loan Corporation.

¹⁰ Sorensen, 78.



Mapping from "A Cartographic Perspective on the Correlation Between Redlining and Public Health in Austin, Texas-1951 (Huggins, John) overlaid with the Area of this Study.¹¹

¹¹ Huggins, John C. "A Cartographic Perspective on the Correlation Between Redlining and Public Health in Austin, Texas-1951." *Cityscape* 19, no. 2 (2017): 268-271. Accessed October 10, 2022.

Along with general neglect from city planners, city regulators often failed to enforce zoning laws in the area. This allowed many residents to run businesses out of their homes rather than move them to dedicated commercial spaces.¹² With fewer regulations for the small business economy of the area began to boom. Additionally, the lack of proper roads and fact that car ownership wasn't accessible for many in the area meant that the neighborhood was inherently walkable with schools, businesses, and churches all existing within walking distance of each other. East Austin already had a high concentration of black owned businesses after the Civil War but by the mid-1900s it become the center for black owned business in Austin. These businesses were mostly concentrated around Eleventh Street.



Women at the Travis County Negro Extension Service Program building located at 1154 Lydia Street, May 24 1960.¹³

¹² Hill, 14.

¹³ [Group of Women], photograph, May 24, 1960; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph531365/m1/1/>; accessed December 3, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

Shops that served the specific needs of African Americans like Hillside Drugs and Rhambos Barbershop were situated in the area to provide essential services for the community.¹⁴ These institutions were founded and owned by local residents, with the intention to fulfill the needs of the community. Underserved by the city, East Austin residents took it upon themselves to make the best of what they had and create a community that served them.

In addition to businesses serving the practical needs of residents, cultural institutions were also established within the area. The now famous Victory Grill was opened on Eleventh Street following the United States' victory in the Japanese Theater. Originally, the grill served as a place for black servicemen to congregate as East Austin was the only part of the city that allowed nightclubs for black citizens. Over time, it would become a part of the "Chitlin Circuit" a legendary venue for black musicians in The South. Famous artists who played at the grill include B.B. King, Tina Turner, and Erbie Bowser.¹⁵

¹⁴ Hill, 14.

¹⁵ Hill, 14.



Victory Grill Reunion (L-R Standing) Henry "Blues Boy" Hubbard, James Kirkendall, T.D. Bell, "Little Herman" Reese, William Fagan, B. Brown, Johnny Holmes, Grey Ghost, (Kneeling) Ural Dewitty and Erbie Bowser.¹⁶

Renewal Efforts

Over time, East Austin deteriorated, and the city made efforts to improve the area. The Kealing Project of 1964 was one of the first of these efforts. The plan sought to rebuild and beautify existing housing in the neighborhood. However, the plan forced many existing residents to relocate from their original homes. In fact, 68% of households involved in the program were displaced from the area and were forced to relocate.¹⁷ Black Austinites were forced to relocate their homes once again.

In March of 1966 the City Planning Department of Austin investigated the area and published a report titled "A Climate for Renewal" that investigated sociological and economic impacts of the urban renewal that was planned in East Austin. The study concluded that a renewal effort was needed but should be put to voting ballot rather

¹⁶ Texas Historical Commission. [Victory Grill], photograph, Date Unknown; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht971694/m1/1/?q=VICTORY%20GRILL>: accessed November 28, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Texas Historical Commission.

¹⁷ WILLIAMS, J. ALLEN. "THE EFFECTS OF URBAN RENEWAL UPON A BLACK COMMUNITY: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS." *Social Science Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (1969): 703–12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42860186>.

than left to the city council to decide. However, the council went forward with the move without a public vote. Implemented into effect in 1972, the plan brought many needed changes to the area like the aforementioned paving of streets. However, similarly to the Kealing Project, many residents were once again forced to leave their homes if they could not afford to update their properties to the new standard.¹⁸

With these plans, and others like them, the City of Austin began systematically removing black Austinites from the neighborhood it had forced them into only fifty years prior. Under the guise of “Urban Renewal” the city found a new way to move those citizens they found undesirable. Only this time, they were being moved further out of the city.

A report published by the University of Texas in 1969 reporting on the outcomes of the Kealing Project stated that a majority of those forced to relocated moved east, further away from downtown. Additionally, nearly all of those forced to relocate moved into primarily black neighborhoods with almost no white residents replacing them.¹⁹ It can then be concluded that these programs did not serve black residents as many were forced out of their neighborhoods unable to experience the positive effects of the renewals. Additionally, the renewals did not provide a major contribution to desegregation and instead contributed to de-densification.

Following a series of “backhanded” renewal efforts, East Austin residents began to demand better representation. The Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan of 1996 began as a genuine effort to improve the neighborhood while preserving the many

¹⁸ Hill, 16.

¹⁹ Williams, 708.

historic structures present.²⁰ At the same time, the City Councilmen and East Austin advocate Eric Mitchell brought forward a plan to establish a private corporation to work in concert with the city to create a sustainable neighborhood. The corporation, called the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) began work to restore existing historic buildings, build affordable housing, and update the neighborhood parks. The ARA exists to this day and has a mix of projects ranging from affordable housing developments to restored historic businesses, adapted for contemporary use.²¹ The end of the 1900s saw more honest efforts to improve East Austin begin to materialize. Through better representation in government and new partnerships between private development and city planners, East Austin was on the rise.

Recent Growth

As earnest efforts began to restore and preserve East Austin, the city at large began experiencing major growth of its own. The City's growth spread throughout its neighborhoods, including East Austin. East Austin's history of neglect had left its properties with lower values than many other areas of the city. Lower property prices and proximity to downtown made it a prime candidate for the new development accompanying Austin's growth. With this new development came a new outlook for the neighborhood, and Austin's black population, once again. New businesses arrived, new housing developments were created, and new residents moved in. Along with these changes came the sense that East Austin was losing its history and identity as a center

²⁰ Hill, 16.

²¹ "The City of Austin Plan • Austin Revitalization Authority." *Austin Revitalization Authority*, 27 May 2021, <https://austinrev.org/timeline/the-city-of-austin-plan/>.

of the Black Community in Austin. This idea, called gentrification, has coincided with another mass movement of the minority community in Austin.

Discussion Regarding Value of the Project

There is a growing effort to research and document East Austin's history. Its status as the historic hub of Austin's minority community makes it a well-known area of the city. Organizations exist to preserve East Austin's history while working responsibly with developers. For example, the previously mentioned Austin Revitalization Authority is a private organization, that works closely with the city of Austin to engage in responsible development that has the community's best interests in mind.²² Additionally, there is a decent body of work describing the changes occurring in East Austin's built environment, specifically its historic buildings. Simultaneously, researchers are interested in the changing demographics of the neighborhood and how longtime residents perceive these changes. This project aspires to make connections between the actions of architects, developers, and city planners and their impacts on longtime residents of a neighborhood. Specifically, this project aims to highlight often overlooked consequences of changing real estate markets on neighborhood residents and their overall quality of life. There are impacts well beyond an increase in property taxes.

The well documented changes in East Austin show correlations between a changing housing market and changes in quality of life for residents. An important portion of this study aims to highlight the effects on residents who chose to leave East Austin and how their choice to move left them with similar consequences to those who

²² "The City of Austin Plan • Austin Revitalization Authority." *Austin Revitalization Authority*, 27 May 2021, <https://austinrev.org/timeline/the-city-of-austin-plan/>.

stayed. The hope is that this study can highlight some impacts of new design work on residents of a gentrifying neighborhood.

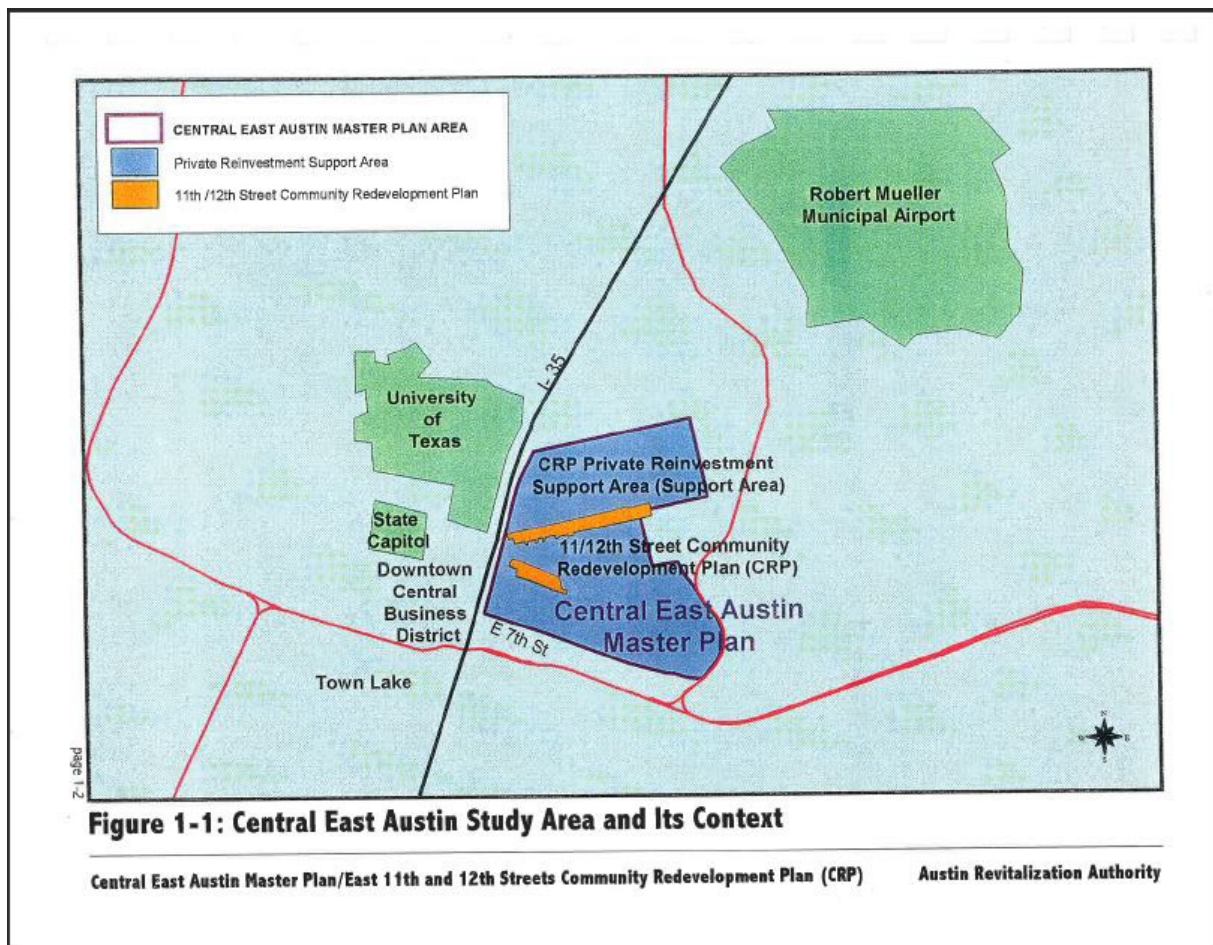
Methods/Process

For the purposes of this study, East Austin is defined as the area east of I-35, South of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, North of 7th Street, and west of the railroad tracks.



This boundary is based on the boundaries included in the aforementioned 1999 Central East Austin Master Plan. The 1999 Plan made note of East Austin's proximity to the downtown business district, University of Texas, State Capitol, and Robert Mueller Airport (now replaced by Austin Bergstrom Airport to the southeast). Census Data will

be pulled from: Census Tract 9.01, Block Groups 1 & 2; Census Tract 8.03 Block Groups 1,2, & 3; Census Tract 8.04 Block Groups 1 & 2.



Central East Austin Master Plan, 1999.



Larger scale view of the Area of Study.

The basis for this project is a two-part study by researchers from the University of Texas: Austin's Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis. The study, performed by Dr. Erich Tang from UT Austin's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and Dr. Bisola Falola from UT Austin's Department of Geography and Environment, investigates long-time residents of East Austin's perceptions of their changing neighborhood. The first portion of the study, titled "Those Who Left" investigates community members who left or were displaced from the area following recent gentrification trends. The second portion, titled "Those Who Stayed", investigates similar metrics but instead focuses on the remaining members of the community. Designers should be invested in understanding their role in creating these problems,

Drawing on data regarding how people live, and have previously lived, in East Austin, correlations are clear between the actions and decisions of designers and their impacts on residents of the neighborhood. Examining Census data and focusing on the pain points identified by Tang and Falola, this study will show relationships between impacts on residents of East Austin and the changing housing patterns in the neighborhood. Comparing these pain points, alongside Census data regarding the built environment, connections are made between residents' perceptions, the actions of designers, and their proven impacts on quality of life.

Three specific areas will be investigated. First, East Austin's changing housing market will be explained to establish context. Second, residents' perceptions of their relationships with their neighbors and correlations with changing demographics and the housing patterns. Third, residents' perceptions of the businesses present in the community will be explored, and again connected to changing housing patterns through Census data. Comparative methods of mapping data (graphs, charts, geographic mapping) will be used to make connections between data more easily observed and understood.

Results/Outcomes

East Austin's Changing Housing Market

Median Contract Rents in East Austin increased from \$395 per month in 2000²³ to \$1,547 per month in 2020²⁴. In that same time, the Median Family Income in East

²³ U.S. Census Bureau; Decennial Census, 2000 DEC Summary File 3, H056 MEDIAN CONTRACT RENT (DOLLARS) [1] ; generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (8 November 2022).

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 ACS: Five Year Estimates Subject Tables, B25058 MEDIAN CONTRACT RENT (DOLLARS); generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (8 November 2022).

Austin increased from \$26,640 in 2000²⁵ to \$95,357 in 2020²⁶. A 72% increase in median income in twenty years far outpaces normal wage increases of three to five percent per year.²⁷ Data suggests that new residents are moving into the area with higher incomes.

From 2000 to 2020, 66% of Black residents of East Austin, left. The primary racial demographic replacing them were white residents. As previously mentioned, median wages have increased dramatically in East Austin over the last twenty years. However, looking at median income by racial demographic shows a clearer picture. The median family income of White Residents of East Austin in 2020 was \$116,382. For Black Residents of East Austin, it showed little change from twenty years ago at \$33,194.²⁸ This suggests that white residents are moving in with significantly higher salaries and hold most of the wealth in the neighborhood. For the most part, these new residents in East Austin's higher salaries coincide with bigger budgets. While the change in racial demographics in East Austin is well documented and studied, the change in income relative to race can start to explain some of the perceived changes experienced by Black residents over the last twenty years. This change in buyers affects the housing market. It also impacts quality of life for longtime residents in a myriad of ways, beyond an increase in their mortgage or rent.

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau; Decennial Census, 2000 DEC Summary File 3, P077 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME IN 1999 (DOLLARS); generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (8 November 2022).

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 ACS: Five Year Estimates Subject Tables, S1903 MEDIAN INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2020 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS); generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (8 November 2022).

²⁷ Payscale. "Annual Salary Increases: Industry Averages & Key Factors." Payscale. July 22, 2022. <https://doi.org/https://www.payscale.com/compensation-trends/annual-salary-increases/>.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 ACS: Five Year Estimates Subject Tables, S1903 MEDIAN INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2020 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS); generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (8 November 2022).

Gentrification and Displacement

The effects of the changing environment in East Austin can easily be identified as gentrification. A negative result of gentrification is displacement, which can be directly observed through the mass exodus of black residents from the neighborhood since 2000. While Direct Action Displacement has occurred, as seen through the rising cost of rents in the neighborhood, other forms of displacement, more commonly seen in later stages of gentrification, are now affecting residents.

Exclusionary Displacement is the phenomenon in which a household leaves a unit voluntarily, having their former home gentrified. That particular unit is now unable to be occupied by a household of similar economic situation that left it vacant, in turn reducing the number of units available on the market to original residents.²⁹ This phenomenon is reflected in East Austin's increasing property prices and overall decrease in number of housing units in the last twenty years.

Influences to leave the neighborhood, called Pressure Displacement and defined as "When a household sees the dramatic change of its neighborhood, it feels the pressure of displacement and lives by the fear of being pushed out,"³⁰ are mounting for longtime residents. Exhibited by Tang and Falola and further explored in this thesis through quality-of-life analysis, there is a growing sense of change that is causing many residents to feel pressured to leave.

²⁹ Ghaffari, L., Klein, J-L., Angulo Baudin, W. Toward a socially acceptable gentrification: A review of strategies and practices against displacement. *Geography Compass*. 2018; 12:e12355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12355>

³⁰ Ghaffari et al. 3.

The Importance of Sense of Community and Neighborhood Relationships

Sense of Community, as a psychological term, refers to social capital defined by feeling of belonging and collective identity derived from long term meaningful contact with others. Sense of Community (SOC) is associated with individual and community wellbeing, physical and mental health, and quality of life.³¹ A strong sense of community is associated with positive cognitive effects on perception and behavior. Links have been made between a positive Sense of Community and perceptions of personal wellbeing and engaging in healthy behaviors.³²

Maintaining positive and relationships with one's neighbors is the highest contributor to a positive Sense of Community.³³ Defined as "informal mutual assistance and information sharing among neighbors", neighboring refers to the interaction with and attachment to others within the community.³⁴ Maintaining informal social interactions and sense of community are documented as having long term positive health effects, regardless of outside stress events.³⁵ Further research shows that one's Sense of Community and relations with their neighbors has direct impact on their satisfaction with the neighborhood they live in and their overall satisfaction with their life.³⁶

³¹ Bruhn, J.G. 2011. *Social Connections*. In: *The Sociology of Community Connections*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1633-9_1.

³² Ross, Allison, Craig A. Talmage, and Mark Searle. "The Impact of Neighboring on Changes in Sense of Community Over Time: A Latent Transition Analysis." *Social Indicators Research* 149, no. 1 (05, 2020): 327-345.

³³ Bruhn, J.G. 2011.

³⁴ Ross, et all.

³⁵ Ross, et all.

³⁶ Taniguchi, H.

With this information, the argument can be made that one's feeling of connection to their community is a part of their quality of life, both mentally and physically. Keeping this in mind, it's important to investigate neighboring relationships as part of the measure of East Austin resident's quality of life.

Neighboring Relationships for East Austin Residents

Neighboring relationships have negatively decreased for all long-term residents of East Austin, regardless of whether they chose to remain in the neighborhood or move somewhere else. Longtime East Austin residents who stayed in the neighborhood experienced a decrease in neighboring relationships and a negative change in relationships with resident's neighbors and this was identified as one of the primary changes taking place in the community. Many respondents in Tang and Falola's study expressed they felt invisible in their own neighborhood or felt that their new neighbors had no interest in knowing them.³⁷

Housing data shows a few potential reasons for this perceived change. The availability of residence types often determines who can live in a place. For example, an increase in studio apartments in a neighborhood would coincide with an increase in smaller family units inhabiting them, specifically more single occupants with no intention of increased family size. Typically, these types of units have shorter occupation times and quicker turnover.

³⁷ Tang, Eric, and Bisola Falola. "Those who stayed." *Institute for Urban Policy and Analysis*. https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/iupra/_files/Those-Who-Stayed.pdf (2016).

One of the greatest predictors of strong, positive neighboring relationships is the amount of time one has spent in a place.³⁸ Intuitively, putting down roots in an area and spending time as an active member of one's community, allows interpersonal relationships to build over time. The fact that long-time residents experienced a decreased relationship with their neighbors, rather than the typical increase, could be attributed to changing housing typologies.

Studies show that younger working professionals present less "neighborly" than families and the elderly.³⁹ Additionally, young professionals tend to move more often. It can be assumed then, that a higher presence of housing for younger, single residents whose occupancy periodically changes can lead to decreased neighbor relationships and a lack of local investment. The type of dwelling taking place in East Austin has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. Changes in housing type can then be connected to decreased neighboring relationships, decreased Sense of Community, ultimately causing negative impacts on quality of life for long-time residents experiencing a disjointed Sense of Community.

Changes in Median Age Connected to Change in Neighboring

A major point of change mentioned by longtime residents was the lack of children in the neighborhood. One resident mentioned in an interview that "there are more dogs in the neighborhood than children."⁴⁰ To further this point, Tang and Faola mention that

³⁸ Ross, et. all.

³⁹ Bruhn, J.G. 2011

⁴⁰ Tang et. All, Those Who Stayed.

many residents interviewed identified the lack of children and perceived increase in dogs as a major change in neighborhood character.

This is substantiated by census data, showing a decrease in residents under the age of 18 in the last twenty years.⁴¹ While the percentage of married couples in the neighborhood has actually increased slightly, the percentage of married couples with children decreased from 57% in 2000⁴² to 29% in 2020.⁴³ Using this data, it can be inferred that younger married couples are moving into the neighborhood without children, and perhaps with dogs in their place.

This data starts to identify who is moving into the neighborhood, but not necessarily why. Tang and Favola report that the primary reason most long-time residents left East Austin was in search of better schools for their children.⁴⁴ While this explains at least one reason families with children left East Austin, it doesn't explain why they aren't being replaced by more families with children. While impossible to attribute to one specific reason, East Austin's increased Cost of Living (COL) combined with the national increases in cost to raise a child could be part of the answer. Once again, this change is directly tied to housing and dwelling typology.

⁴¹ Tang et. All, Those Who Stayed.

⁴² U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 ACS: Five Year Estimates Subject Tables, AGE AND NATIVITY OF OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS IN FAMILIES AND SUBFAMILIES BY NUMBER AND NATIVITY OF PARENTS; generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (9 November 2022).

⁴³ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 ACS: Five Year Estimates Subject Tables, AGE AND NATIVITY OF OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS IN FAMILIES AND SUBFAMILIES BY NUMBER AND NATIVITY OF PARENTS; generated by Grant Wilson; using data.census.gov; <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>> (9 November 2022).

⁴⁴ Tang et. All, Those Who Left.

Similar Effect for Those Who Left

Eleven percent less of longtime residents who moved further East of East Austin reported good relationships with their new neighbors as opposed to before moving. For residents who moved north of Austin, there were 21% fewer residents who reported a positive relationship with their neighbors.⁴⁵ (Tang, Those Who Left).

Food Accessibility is Different Than Food Affordability

Access to quality food is a well-documented metric of quality of life. Food accessibility and food deserts have become a focus of city planners and researchers for many years. Food deserts create conditions in which neighborhoods lack access to supermarkets and affordable healthy foods.⁴⁶ East Austin experienced an increase in food options over the course of the study and it may be difficult to argue it qualifies as a “food desert” in the described sense. However, it is important to investigate who these new food options serve.

In Tang and Falola’s study of East Austin, 93% of longtime residents reported they did not patron the new restaurants in the neighborhood, citing that the new restaurants do not cater to their tastes and preferences and that some were specifically unwelcoming. When interviewed, participants in the study spoke specifically to increased prices as reason for not going to the new establishments.⁴⁷ This increase in

⁴⁵ Tang et. All, Those Who Left.

⁴⁶ Adams, A. T., Ulrich, M. J., & Coleman, A. (2010). Food Deserts. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 4(2), 58–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/193672441000400206>

⁴⁷ Tang, Eric, and Bisola Falola. "Those who stayed." *Institute for Urban Policy and Analysis*. https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/iupra/_files/Those-Who-Stayed.pdf (2016).

restaurant prices correlates with the increase in median incomes, and median rents in East Austin.

As residential rents increase, so do commercial rents forcing many local businesses to close. New businesses replacing them must increase their prices to account for the higher rents they inherit. This change makes sense for business owners who must maximize profit by marketing themselves to new residents' budgets, in order to keep their doors open. New, high quality food options are now present in the neighborhood, to those who can afford them. However, residents who have maintained their previous incomes are now faced with prices that are unaffordable to them and experience a decrease in available food options.

Relationships with Local Restaurants as Measure of SOC

Food affordability is certainly linked to quality of life. However, this is only part of the impact. As mentioned previously, a Sense of Community is closely linked to quality of life. Informal social interactions which make up neighboring behaviors are central to a sense of community. These everyday interactions are also common in the businesses residents frequent regularly. Informal social interaction creates a feeling of support and belonging which promotes a sense of empowerment, acts as a catalyst for the building of social capital, and fosters health promoting behaviors and well-being.⁴⁸ Having daily

⁴⁸ Ross, Allison, Craig A. Talmage, and Mark Searle. "The Impact of Neighboring on Changes in Sense of Community Over Time: A Latent Transition Analysis." *Social Indicators Research* 149, no. 1 (05, 2020): 327-345. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-019-02242-5>.
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/impact-neighboring-on-changes-sense-community/docview/2561645695/se-2>

conversations and maintaining relationships at local businesses contribute to community members' larger sense of belonging and investment in their neighborhood.

As more and more business owners are forced out of East Austin, longtime residents are losing their relationships with business owners, contributing to a loss of Sense of Community and quality of life. Tang and Falola's study highlights this through an oxymoron. East Austin experienced an increase in food accessibility from 2000 to 2020 according to the Census Bureau. Many new restaurants have opened in the neighborhood and improvements were made to the existing supermarket. While most respondents felt they had improved access to supermarket food, they also felt they had decreased relationships with neighborhood businesses. Additionally, 38% of respondents in their study felt that East Austin was "no longer a people of color neighborhood" ⁴⁹ On paper, these new changes and improvements should be positives for the neighborhood, and in many ways they are. However, the influx of new businesses, and loss of historic staples, present some negative impacts on longtime residents' quality of life, beyond access and affordability.

Same Effects for Those Who Left

A similar effect is observed for East Austin residents who moved out of the neighborhood. Perhaps more predictably, residents who left East Austin reported experiences that hinder a sense of community. Residents who moved further east of

⁴⁹ Tang, Eric, and Bisola Falola. "Those who stayed." *Institute for Urban Policy and Analysis*. https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/iupra/_files/Those-Who-Stayed.pdf (2016).

Austin, reported 29% in positive perceptions of neighborhood business after moving.⁵⁰

Like their former neighbors, these former residents lack sense of community through local businesses. Former East Austinites who moved East also reported decreased access to supermarkets and decreased relationships with their new neighbors.⁵¹

Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations

Conclusions

Zoning regulations that prioritize Neighborhood Character are widely debated in the urban planning space. Such practices are often criticized as working against Natural Density, having exclusionary goals, and being clouded by Status Quo Bias. This debate is not a primary focus for this report, but it's important to emphasize the difference in focus from how a place looks to how a place serves its residents. Even if a place looks the same as it used to, it may not serve the same residents, and whether or not those should relate. Much focus has been placed on the changing built environment in East Austin but it can be argued that it's more important who is able to live there and their quality of life. To this point, the problem that should be prioritized in East Austin is displacement and factors contributing to it.

Seeing explicit negative effects of new development evokes the question; what role does the designer play? How might designers be a part of the solution for East Austin, or does complacency create more problems? Many approaches exist to alleviate displacement but should realistically be viewed as mitigation strategies rather than

⁵⁰ Tang et. Al, Those Who Left.

⁵¹ Tang et. Al, Those Who Left.

comprehensive solutions. While the displacement effects of gentrification examined in this thesis are negative, there are positive effects as well. Decreased concentration of urban poverty, easier access to and higher quality public amenities because of an increased tax base, increased developmental investments, and additional employment opportunities are positive impacts that have real benefits for areas experiencing gentrification.⁵² Because of the potential benefits of gentrification strategies that attempt to directly mitigate displacement while preserving economic benefit are preferred approaches to pursue in East Austin. These strategies include at a minimum: Community Advocacy, Non-Market Housing, establishment of Community Development Corporations, and incorporation of a Community Land Trust.

Recommendations

Community organization, both informally and formally, is widely regarded as the most important factor to combating displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods.^{53 54} Whether through educating residents on home ownership, organizing bargaining bodies, or simply providing a sense of community for residents it is vitally important that community members work together to advocate for themselves and become involved in the development process. Additionally, home ownership programs that provide financial literacy training for first time buyers and continuing owners are important to giving fundamental understanding of the housing market to buyers.

⁵² Ugenyi, Chibuzo. "Displacement Due to Gentrification: Mitigation Strategies." Master's Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2011.

⁵³ Ugenyi, Chibuzo, 10.

⁵⁴ Ghaffari et al. 3.

Non-Market Housing

“Non-Market Housing is rental, or for-sale housing provided for low and moderate-income groups not traditionally served by the private market. It is typically made affordable through public and/or non-profit ownership of housing units or through rent supplements that allow low-income households to access housing in the private market.”⁵⁵ Nonmarket housing allows for rents to be stabilized without forcing regulation on to developers and potentially impacting economic growth in an area. Additionally, as non-market housing becomes more common, market rates are stabilized as for-profit development must compete with non-market housing.⁵⁶

Community Development Corporations

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are nonprofits established by residents, business owners, and service providers, etc. with the aim of revitalizing the community. Acquire and develop commercial real estate to stim economy and provide retail service. Shareholder participation in CDC models allows for residents to have a say in the development process.⁵⁷ East Austin already has a CDC, the East Austin Revitalization Authority, who’ve done a great job working to preserve East Austin and maintain its growth through developing affordable housing units as well as mixed use commercial development.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Calgary City Council. "Non-Market Housing Land Disposition Policy." *City of Calgary, Canada*, (2019). Accessed November 19, 2022.

⁵⁶ "The Non-Capitalist Solution to the Housing Market." About Here. November 1, 2022. Video, 5:44:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKudSeqHSJk>.

⁵⁷ Ugenyi, Chibuzo. "Displacement Due to Gentrification: Mitigation Strategies." Master's Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2011.

⁵⁸ "Projects." *Austin Revitalization Authority*, <https://austinrev.org/projects/>.

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts provide access to land for homeowners. Land is owned by the trust and leased to the community for multiple uses. For housing, this solution can aid homeowners, reducing land costs.⁵⁹ Levy et al. shows six successful examples of land trusts throughout the United States, and there are examples show internationally. CLTs have been cited as equitable development tools in multiple studies of displacement mitigation strategies.⁶⁰ The Austin Community Land Trust has existed through the Austin Housing Finance Corporation since 1979 and provides housing solutions to the Austin area, with specific leases in East Austin.⁶¹

These are a small number of the many existing approaches to mitigate gentrification-based displacement. Most existing displacement mitigation strategies are meant as preventative measures, meaning they are designed to be implemented before or in the early stages of gentrification. In an extensive report on existing displacement mitigation strategies, researchers identified the need for more research on strategies that can be implemented after gentrification has begun and address the more nuanced factors that influence displacement. As mentioned, East Austin has been experiencing gentrification trends for a decent period and is in what could be called “later stage gentrification”. Additionally, many of the recommended strategies to deal with displacement are actively being used in the area but displacement persists. This is proof that more research must be done to identify strategies that work in later stage

⁵⁹ Ugenyi, Chibuzo. "Displacement Due to Gentrification: Mitigation Strategies." Master's Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2011.

⁶⁰ Ghaffari et al.

⁶¹ "About." Austin Community Land Trust, <https://www.aclt-homes.org/about>.

gentrification to solve existing problems, and potentially restore neighborhood histories and character while maintaining high quality of life for all residents.

Closing Remarks

The changes taking place in East Austin have far reaching effects for longtime residents, regardless of whether they were displaced or remain in the neighborhood. The patterns of the last twenty years are a repetition of the forced movement of Austin's black citizens. While clearly racist in its history, it could be argued that this latest change is more subtle with some plausible deniability resting with city planners. The intention behind the decisions that have led to these effects is somewhat irrelevant because the effects are the same. As before, minority citizens find their community increasingly uninhabitable, must move to a new location, and manage the significant changes that come with relocation.

As the design professions attempt to change their role from being perpetrators of racist practices, they must look further. Simply not perpetuating the status quo is not enough. What is required is a thorough, and uncomfortable investigation into the consequences, both intended and unintended, of designs and design policies on the people who experience them. It is required of an ethical designer to not only refuse to participate in discriminatory practice, but also use their role to advocate for a better future.

The displacement mitigation strategies previously mentioned are a few of many areas in which designers have license and authority to influence how cities are

designed and inhabited. It is imperative that more research be done into long term effects of “urban renewals” not only on the physical environments they affect, but more importantly on the people who inhabit them. Only by being advocates for all members of our communities can designers truly build a better future.

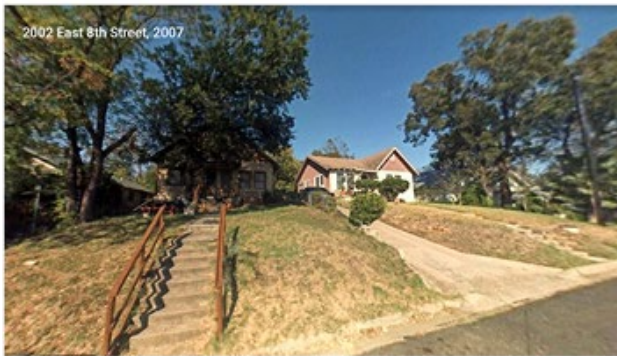
“Windshield Study” 2007 – 2022

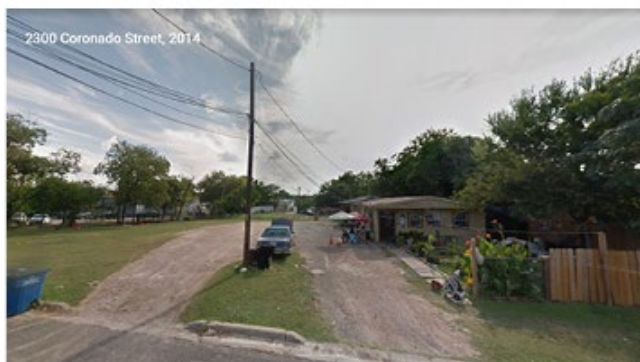
Using images from Google Street view, the changes in East Austin's built condition can be observed. Conditions selected were chosen with a particular focus on changing housing typology.

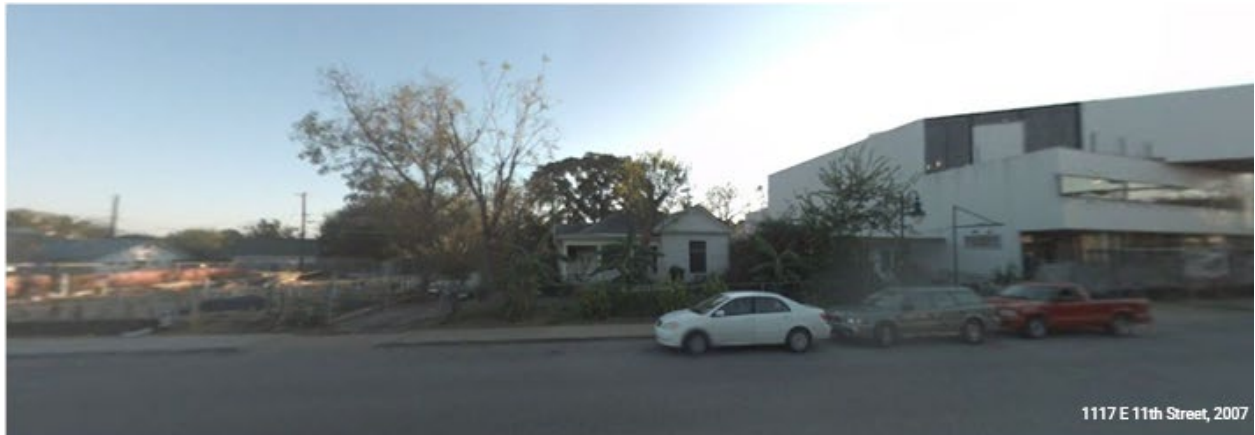












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