

# Community-Based Research In Action

Maximizing Community Benefit, Repairing Historical Harm, and  
Preventing Displacement Along the Blue Line Light Rail  
Extension

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**cura** Center for Urban  
& Regional Affairs



# Background

The Blue Line Extension has been in the works for over a decade. For at least that long, Blue Line Extension corridor communities have been challenging governments and private sector actors to be considerate of the local population to **ensure that they are not displaced as a result of development.**



When examining major public infrastructure projects, like the Blue Line Extension, there is a clear pattern that is quite troublesome: **public infrastructure investment in vulnerable communities can often exacerbate harm instead of catalyzing repair and prosperity for existing residents in proximity to those projects.**

This investment should serve to **prevent displacement, repair historical harm** in disinvested communities, **maximize future community and economic benefits** to corridor residents, and **build the capacity** of marginalized communities to have more agency in public works projects that government agencies pursue.





# CURA's Role

**Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council contracted with CURA to work with community to develop anti-displacement policy and strategy recommendations, and lead and facilitate the Blue Line Extension Anti-Displacement Working Group (ADWG)**



Present research and community input that would deepen the understanding of displacement for ADWG members



Translate concerns into prioritized outcomes that can be achieved through anti displacement policies, and build the capacity of members to understand the pathways to achieving outcomes



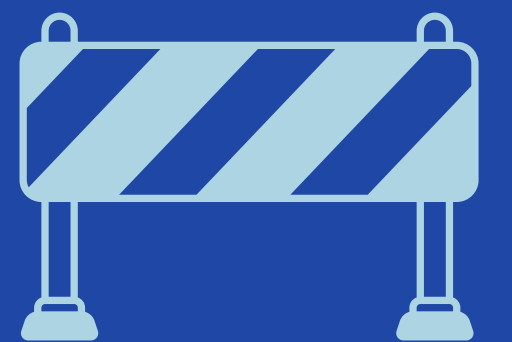
Identify core concerns from Blue Line Extension corridor communities related to anti-displacement



Increase transparency between the various stakeholders for preventing displacement



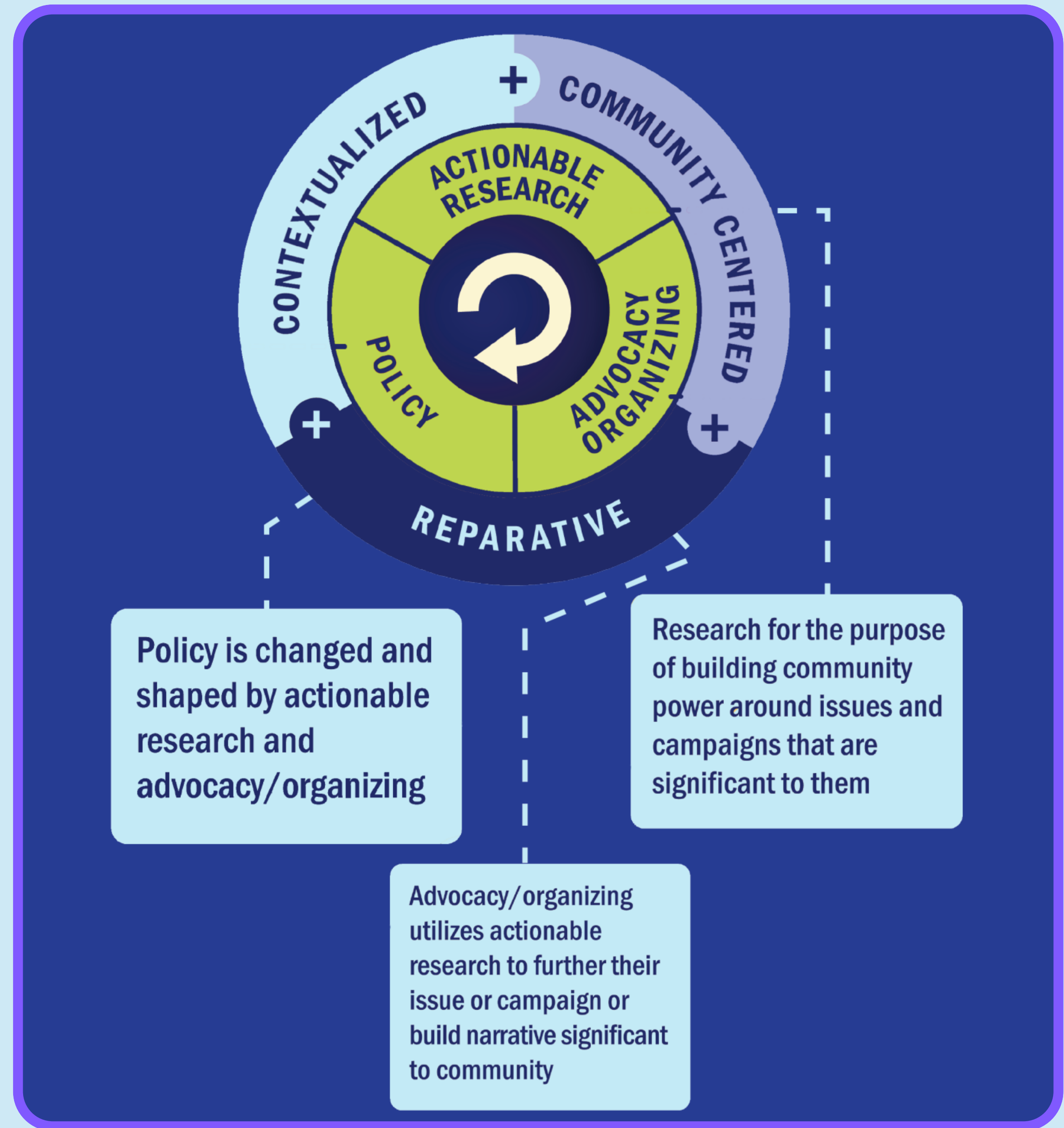
Improve relationships and alignment on mutual goals between residents, businesses, philanthropy, and government.



Demystify barriers to implementing anti-displacement policies



# CURA's Research Model





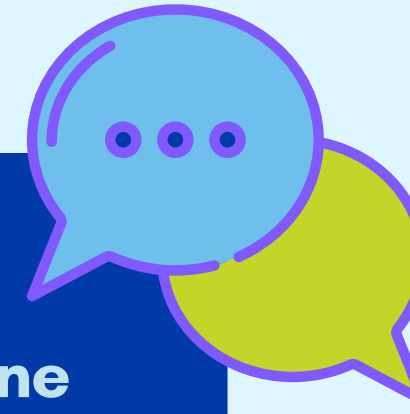


# Research and Data

CURA's team sought to contextualize displacement in the Twin Cities through research that examined:

## lessons learned from the construction of the Green Line

interviews with people who directly worked on the efforts to address construction-induced displacement and disruption along the Green Line Central Corridor.



## previous research on transit impact in the Twin Cities

Existing studies suggest that the opening of the Blue Line and the funding announcement of the Green Line both induced a significant increase in the sales price of residential properties within the station areas



## quantitative analysis of Green Line station areas

descriptive data on population changes, residential property value and sale data, multifamily building rents, and eviction filings for time periods that span the construction of the Green Line.



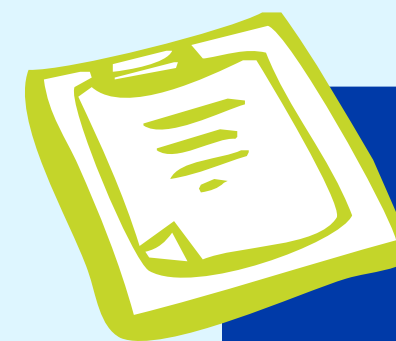
## baseline study of the Blue Line Extension Corridor

mapped housing and population characteristics throughout corridor, such as cost burden, no car ownership, and housing choice vouchers in use. Most variables mapped as % and % point change between 2010-2019



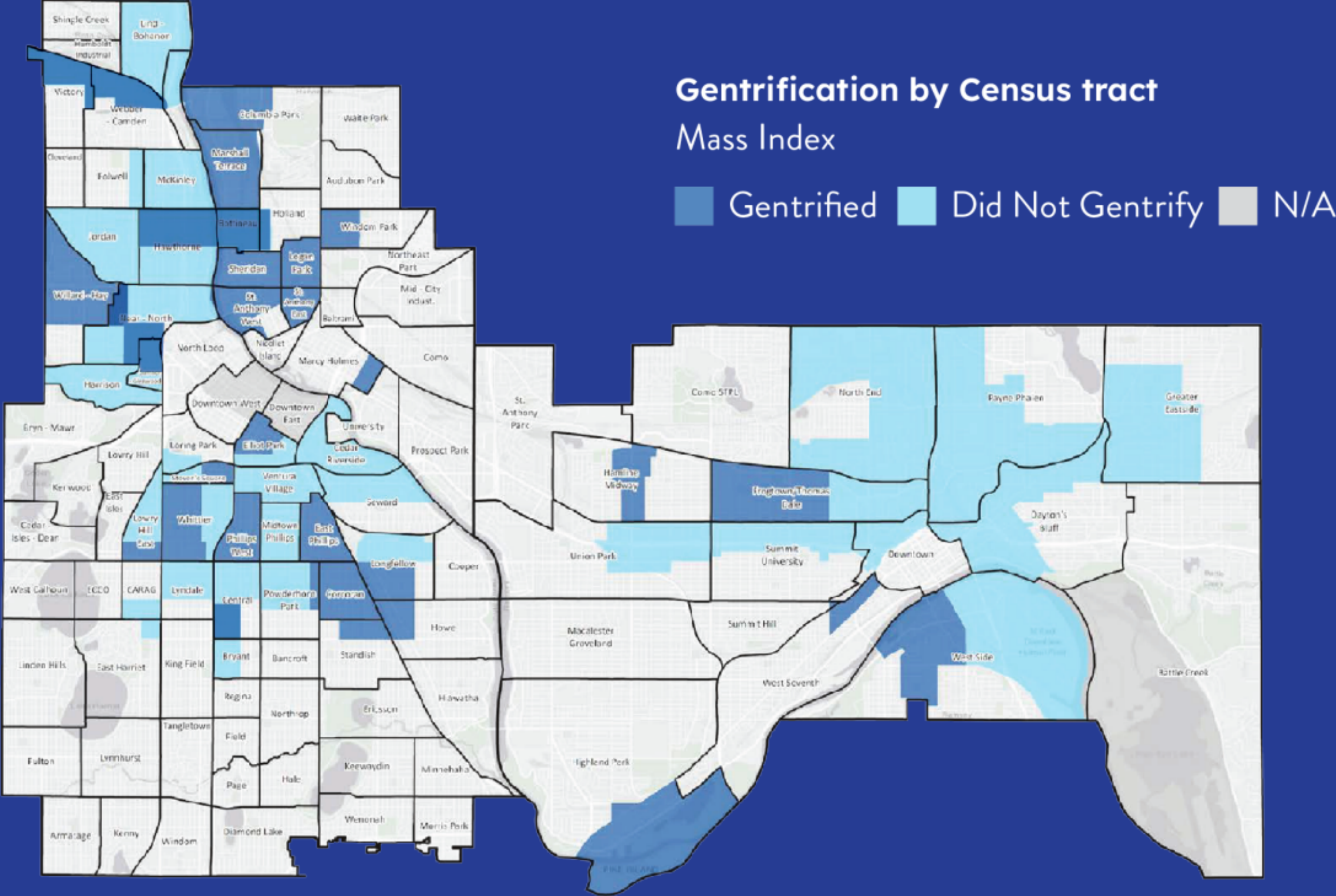
## inventory of businesses along the Blue Line Extension Corridor

conducted a windshield survey of businesses along the extension to create an inventory of businesses and land uses





# LESSONS FROM GREEN LINE AND PREVIOUS LIGHT RAIL PROJECTS IN THE TWIN CITIES



In Minneapolis the Blue Line Extension corridor runs through the Near North, Hawthorne, Jordan, and Willard-Hay neighborhoods. All of this area met the criteria for vulnerability to gentrification and portions of the Near North and Willard-Hay actually exhibited signs of gentrification between 2000 and 2015.

## Recommendations

ADWG members were empowered to engage research, community input, and their own experiences to recommend policies that would prevent displacement in the Blue Line Extension corridor. The recommendations of the ADWG prioritize outcomes first, which are to be read as desired outcomes as a result of implemented anti-displacement strategies. Recommendations are conscious of the various challenges to implementing anti-displacement strategies, but implementing agencies will need to refine recommendations through real budget, political, legal and other realities.

**Outcomes are then meant to be interpreted as the guiding framework for anti-displacement work and policies are encouraged and researched possibilities to achieve those outcomes.**

## Underlying Principles

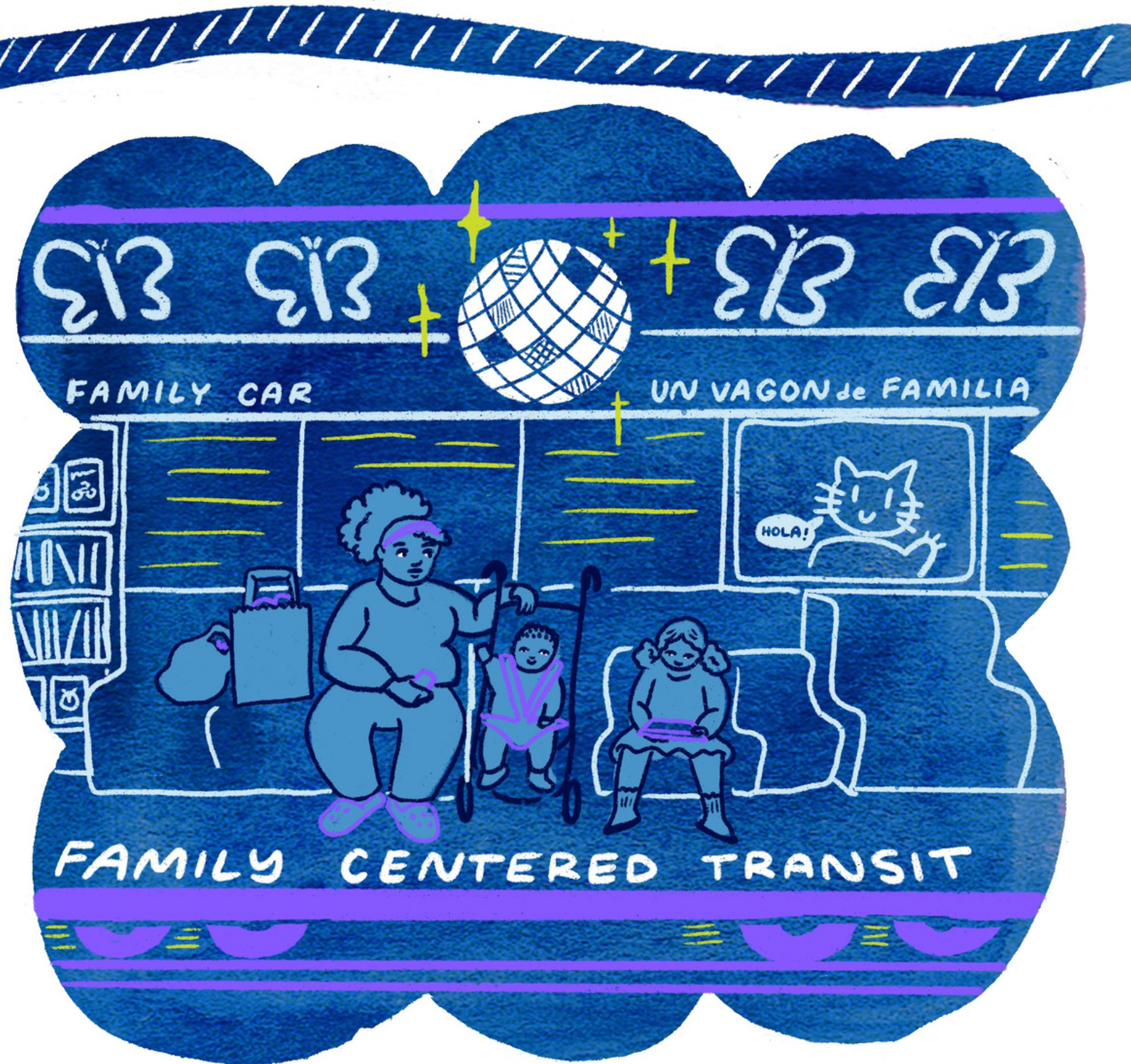
## Outcomes by Jurisdiction

## Timeline

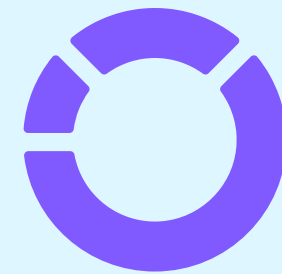
## Policies



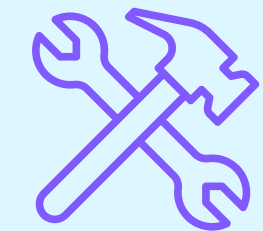
# Underlying Principles



All policies need to be accessible to people with different language needs, people with disabilities, and people without social security numbers/documentation



Every recommendation should be measurable and should have accountability mechanisms.



Recommendations should be designed to support those most impacted by construction



Policies and outcomes should target existing residents, not potential ones.



# Outcomes by Jurisdiction: Minneapolis



- Providing opportunities for community to connect to BLRT and development in a joyful way



- Creating opportunities for community ownership and being able to measure levels of community ownership



- Empowering community to have control over decision making throughout the corridor



- Providing opportunities for existing residents and businesses to stay in place and feel supported



- Addressing reparations to the Harrison neighborhood from previous route alignment



- Creating and enforcing structures of accountability for government agencies along the alignment



- Ensuring that there are sufficient resources to support policy implementation, organizing efforts, community development and ownership, and other anti-displacement strategies



- Ensuring that there is access to land, housing and businesses in the corridor throughout all phases of construction



- Ensuring that 50% of jobs from the Bottineau Light Rail development are held by corridor residents



- Ensuring that there is a continued role for ADWG members throughout all phases of the project



# Policy Research Structure:

- Description of policy
- How does it support achieving the desired outcome?
- Example
- Where does it exist along the alignment?
- How do existing policies need to change?
- Timeline
- Other considerations/limitations

## Policies:

- **Mandatory Relocation Assistance**
- **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase**
- **Limiting Investor Purchasing/Corporate Ownership**
- **Land Disposition Policy**
- **Right to Return**
- **Rent Stabilization**
- **Commercial and Residential Land Trusts**
- **Financial Resources for Organizing**
- **the Right to Organize**
- **Zero to Low Interest Loans**
- **Small Business Grants/Small Business Support**
- **Workforce Programs**
- **NOAH Preservation**
- **Inclusionary Zoning**
- **Universal Basic Income/Guaranteed Basic Income**
- **Right to Counsel**
- **Tenant Screening Reform**
- **Cultural Placekeeping**





## Next Steps

1. The creation of a regional group to continue the conversations about corridor-wide implementation of anti-displacement policies and strategies
2. The creation of local government groups to receive the recommendations of the ADWG and to begin bringing recommended policies through official policy making processes
3. The creation of a dedicated regional anti-displacement funding to support policy implementation, organizing efforts, and other anti-displacement strategies
4. Aligning anti-displacement research and recommendations with Blue Line Extension supplemental environmental impact statement mitigation measures
5. Developing a corridor-wide supported anti-displacement policy agenda for 2024 state legislative session





**Thank you!**