Making Displacement Visible: A Case Study Analysis of the “Mission Trail of Tears”

Executive Summary

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Note: In this Executive Summary, we include only the main findings from 51 interviews conducted with households displaced from Mission Trails. For study purposes and methods, historical and policy context for the Mission Trails displacement, and direct quotes and testimony from residents, please see full report.

**Basic Numbers**

- Total number of households originally displaced: 106
- Households for which we were able to identify contact information: 86
- Households contacted: 85
- Interviews completed: 51, comprising 51 households and 62 individual residents. Altogether, interviews accounted for 178 residents (interviewees plus family members).
- We have definitive information on particular impacts for an additional 11 households we were not able to interview directly, either as reported by family members interviewed or via close personal contact.
- Of those not interviewed, 14 households were not locatable (number disconnected or resident deceased), four declined to participate, and 16 did not respond after multiple attempts to contact.
- Response rate for all households with contact information: 59.3% (51/86)
- Response rate for all households displaced: 48.1% (51/106)

**Key Demographics**

- **Residents were disproportionately Mexicano/Mexican-American** (85.5%). This is a smaller percentage than for the census tract in which Mission Trails was located (92.1%), but a significantly higher percentage compared to San Antonio at large, already majority Mexicano/Mexican-American (63.3%).

- **An overwhelming majority of households were low or very low income**, with over half of households interviewed (55.6% or 25/45) making under $20,000 a year. According to categories used to determine housing assistance, 1 in 5 households interviewed (20.0% or 9/45) would be considered Low Income (51-80% of San Antonio's Area Median Income of $46,744), over half (55.6% or 25/45) would be considered Very Low Income (31-50% of AMI), and about 1 in 7 (15.6% or 7/45) would be considered Extremely Low Income (30% or lower of AMI). Only 4 out of 51 households interviewed (7.8%) were not low income.

- **Mission Trails interviewees were far more likely to be monolingual Spanish-speakers compared to San Antonio at large.** Over 2 in 5 households interviewed (43.1% or 22/51) were Spanish-dominant, compared to just 12.0% of San Antonians who speak Spanish and also report speaking English “less than very well”. Likewise, interviewees were much less likely to be English-dominant (about 1 in 5 interviewed compared to over half for the city at large).

- **Just over half of those we interviewed were immigrants** (51.6% or 32/62) and about 1 in 5 among all residents living in households interviewed (21.3% or 38/178). By contrast, the foreign-born population of San Antonio at large is only 14.1%.

- **The Mission Trails community was significantly younger than the city at large**, with youth under 18 comprising almost half of residents living in households interviewed (44.9% or 80/178) versus 26.0% for San Antonio.

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1 All census data for census tracts and for San Antonio is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
comparable to San Antonio at large. However, Mission Trails households had a higher proportion of residents on fixed incomes (41.9% of interviewees, compared to 33.4% for those receiving Social Security or SSI within San Antonio).\(^2\) Around 1 in 5 were fixed-income households (where all members were on fixed incomes).

- Finally, interviewees were disproportionately female—around 7 in 10 interviewed. While this may represent selection bias (with females more likely to participate), it more likely reflects the reality that women were more likely to be active in the struggle against rezoning and displacement. Men and women attended meetings in equal numbers, but men but took leadership roles far less frequently than women (the Resident's Council, for instance, was made up of all women). Women were thus more likely to come into our orbit as researchers whose project grew out of our earlier role as community supporters of resident organizing.

Destinations
Of the 67 households for which we have addresses or know general locations, only about 2 in 5 were able to stay on the Southside and about half within the central city, while another nearly 2 in 5 moved near or outside 410. Five households moved outside Loop 1604, and three moved outside San Antonio, one to another Texas city and two out-of-state altogether:

Map of Resident Destinations. Purple star marks site of Mission Trails. Black markers indicate mobile home parks approved for relocation assistance.

\(^2\) Note that Census data does not break out how many within these categories receive Social Security or SSI as their SOLE source of income. The discrepancy between Mission Trails interviewees on fixed incomes and San Antonio generally may thus in fact be greater.
Of the 70 households for which we have information on housing situation post-move:

- **About 2 in 5** (42.9% or 30/70) **moved to other mobile home parks** (27 to parks on the list provided by developers, three to parks not on this list);
- **Nearly 1 in 5** (18.6% or 13/70) **became renters** (8 in houses and 5 in apartments);
- **Another 12 (17.1%) bought a house** (8 via mortgages, 1 with house donated, 3 unknown);
- **Six (8.5%) moved their mobile homes to land they purchased** (4 via mortgage, 2 unknown);
- **Four (5.7%) are doubled up with friends or family and technically homeless**;
- **Three (4.3%) accessed public housing**;
- **One (1.4%) purchased an RV**; and
- **One (1.4%) moved their trailer to an approved park but actually lives in their place of business.**

While the largest category of housing situation post-move continued to be mobile home parks, this group nonetheless represented less than half of the households displaced from Mission Trails whose housing situation was known to us. In other words, more than half elected not to move into another mobile home park, highlighting the inadequacy of this option as the standard or default assistance offer.

Moreover, as detailed in the following section, these numbers greatly obscure the reality that **only about 1 in 4 households interviewed or reported** (27.8% or 15/54) **could be considered settled economically and housing-wise at the time of the interview**, without any prior period of homelessness or multiple moves between displacement and relocation. Conversely, **almost 3 in 5 (57.6% or 31/54) were still unsettled** due to one or more forms of displacement pressure (high housing burden, poor conditions of housing or mobile home park and others), while **another 1 in 7 (14.8% or 8/54) were settled but only after a period of homelessness or multiple moves.**

**Biggest Impacts of Displacement**

Based on interviews completed with 51 households, we learned that the rezoning, displacement, and relocation had four main impacts: 1) on housing security; 2) on health; 3) on economic security; and 4) on social/family wellbeing.

1. Housing Security

Interviews reveal that **displacement disrupted a largely settled community of homeowners, leading to high rates of housing insecurity** (multiple moves and/or overcrowding) and **significant rates of homelessness**:  

- Interview questions about length of residence, ownership, and park conditions reveals that Mission Trails was a settled community of homeowners, without high turnover; by and large, residents moved in intending to stay.

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3 We define “settled” households as relatively stable economically and housing-wise, without any form of displacement pressure that makes further moves likely. By contrast, “unsettled” households experience displacement pressure stemming from one or more problems with their current housing conditions (lack of utility service, mold or other environmental hazards in rental home, damage to trailer that can’t be fixed, bad management at current park or apartment complex, overcrowding, lack of air conditioning, poor physical condition of house or mobile home park, crime and other safety issues).
Four households interviewed had lived there over 30 years
Longest term residence: 38 years
Average length of residence: 10.3 years
Over half of households interviewed (56.9% or 29/51) had lived there between one and nine years
Only three of 51 households had been there less than a year

- A large majority of households at Mission Trails (69.8% or 74/106) owned their homes, while another quarter (23.6% or 25/106) were in rent-to-own contracts. Only seven households (6.6%) rented their home.
- Asked to rate conditions at Mission Trails upon move-in on a scale from 1 (terrible) to 5 (good, no problems), about 3 in 4 households (75.6% or 34/45) described the park as “good” or “pretty good,” with an average rating of 4.03.
- A large majority (70.2% or 33/47) felt that conditions began to get bad at Mission Trails only during the last 2-3 years, coincident with purchase of the park by American Family Communities (AFC).
- There were several reasons displacement had such a destabilizing impact on housing security:
  1) Only about half of all households for which we have data on current housing situation (51.4% or 36/70) ended up actually keeping and living in their homes, for a variety of reasons (most common of which was not wanting to go to another mobile home park and be displaced again).
    - Of those who lost their homes, nearly half (16/34) became renters; approximately a third (12/34) became conventional homeowners, albeit saddled with high mortgages that increased their housing burden considerably; and five households became homeless.
  2) The timeline of the moving process put tremendous pressure on families to move before they were ready, with almost 2 of 3 households (63.2% or 67/106) moving out prior to an early incentive deadline of October 15th, four months before residents' legal deadline to leave.
    - In open-ended questions about factors involved in resident decisions about when to leave, the most frequent response (33.3% or 18/54 residents) was pressure from Mission Trails management and developers (including threats and harassment by management, utility shut offs, and the bringing in of construction equipment).
  3) The move itself caused many unexpected problems, in particular damage to mobile homes, reported by 17 households of 30 (56.7%) who kept their homes.
    - As a result of the rushed and forced conditions that led residents to abandon their homes, move to undesirable locations or endure bad housing conditions, over 2 out of 5 households interviewed (43.4% or 23/53) had moved more than once at the time of the interview, fitting one definition of housing insecurity from public health research.
    - In the worst instances of housing insecurity, just over 1 out of 5 households (21.6% or 11/51) experienced homelessness:
      - 7 of these households experienced “invisible” or “hidden” forms of homelessness, doubling

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5 See full report for how we defined homelessness.
up with friends or family, including:

- A single mother of two who sold her mobile home and moved herself and her children into a single room in a nearby house owned by her boyfriend's father, where she continues to live today;
- Two sisters and their children who had been living with their parents at Mission Trails and who went back and forth between the homes of family and friends for at least a year after the household got split up;
- A woman who bounced between an apartment in a public housing complex, her friend's house, and her mother's public housing apartment, all stemming from complications following a change in management at the complex;
- A woman who fled a break-in to her trailer while she was making arrangements to move and doubled up with friends and family for eight months afterwards;
- A family that sold off their home and moved into a relative's home for eight months, at times sleeping in parks because of unsafe conditions at that house;
- One single mother of two who sold her home and almost everything she owned and moved into a friend's apartment with nothing to her name.

Two of these households lived in vehicles, shelters, or on the streets, including:

- A veteran in his 70s who moved five times over the course of a year, living first in temporary housing, then in his van for three weeks, then in two more temporary rentals, before finally being donated a house he had been promised by a veteran's rights organization a year prior;
- A single mother of three who could not locate affordable housing in San Antonio after displacement and who returned to New Mexico. As a renter, she received only $1,000 in relocation assistance, most of which she used to fix up her van for the trip; she and her children had to panhandle to purchase gas for the last leg of the trip. A year and a half after leaving Mission Trails, she had accessed public housing, but only after living out of her van for several weeks, then in two apartments she described as “crappy” and “temporary,” then in a shelter, and finally in her present location.

One household, an elderly couple, has been living out of their place of business since moving out of Mission Trails. While they moved their trailer into one of the parks approved for assistance, the park management took two months to connect the trailer, in the process reneging on promises to cover hook up costs and scamming them out of the six months' free rent promised. While waiting for the trailer to be set up, they moved into their appliance shop, intending it to be a temporary arrangement. Ultimately they had to pay out of pocket to connect the trailer, and afterward attempted to stay the night at the new park. However, the woman experienced panic attacks there, and as a result they have continued to live out of their shop since July 2014.

One household, headed by a mother with five children and an incarcerated husband, moved five times in the 15 months following displacement, first with a relative because the new park did not have their utility connections ready for three weeks; then to a temporary mobile home without electricity at the new park while they waited another week for management to connect their home. Several months later, they were evicted after the park management claimed they had not received rent they mailed. Leaving their home behind, they moved into a rental house temporarily; shortly thereafter, the husband was incarcerated and the woman gave birth to a baby. On her own with four school-aged children and a newborn at the time of the interview, the woman then managed to retrieve her home and move it once more into
another mobile home park.

- Notably, predominantly Spanish-speaking residents experienced housing insecurity differently than English-speaking/bilingual residents, with Spanish speakers experiencing higher rates of multiple sequential moves (52.2% vs 35.5% among English speakers) and English speakers experiencing higher rates of homelessness (23.3% vs 13.0% among Spanish speakers).

- What this discrepancy suggests is not so much that Spanish speakers, more likely to be undocumented or to live in mixed-legal status households, had some kind of protective advantage. Rather, in a sad irony, it suggests that those not dealing with citizenship issues on top of displacement could afford the visibility associated with becoming homeless (even the invisible kind experienced by most of the residents who became homeless). This is borne out by the fact that the three most “hidden” cases of homelessness, in which people remained technically housed while living in informal or grossly inadequate living circumstances, were all monolingual Spanish-speaking families.

- Of the 11 households that had experienced homelessness after displacement, five to our most recent knowledge continue to experience “hidden” forms of homelessness, including four headed by single mothers with children.

2. Health Status

Overall, residents saw a decline in their health as a result of the rezoning and forced relocation, which we attempted to measure both quantitatively and qualitatively. To quantify overall impacts on health, for instance, we asked residents to rate their health on a scale from 1-10 at three points: 1) before things got bad at Mission Trails (which most defined as when rezoning started, though some defined it as when AFC bought the park); 2) right around the time of the move; and 3) currently (at the time of the interview).

Compiling and taking the average of all responses shows that:

- Residents' reported health status dropped by about half (from 8.3 to 4.2) from before things got bad at Mission Trails to their displacement;
- Residents' health recovered from that point, but at the time of the interview was not as good as reported before things got bad at Mission Trails (7.0 after vs 8.3 before);
- Before things got bad at Mission Trails, over three-quarters of residents interviewed (76.1%) rated their health as good or pretty good (8-10), while at the time of the interview, this number fell to under half (47.5%);
- Conversely, only 10.9% of residents rated their health as not great or poor (5 or below) before things got bad at Mission Trails, while this number rose to 17.5% at the time of the interview, as a result of the impact of forced relocation.

Beyond overall impact on health status, one of the most striking health impacts uncovered by the interviews was fact that three residents died in the wake of displacement:

- One woman in her 70s, a frail elderly woman who relied on a walker, passed away in March 2015, six months after moving to another mobile home park with a housemate. The coroner's
report ruled her death the result of a heart attack, but a close friend and adopted daughter from Mission Trails feels that the woman's housemate, who had a known history of abusive behavior and had already been charged once with elder abuse, was involved because of an incident of domestic violence witnessed by the friend just a few days before the woman's death. At Mission Trails this friend had always played a protective role, but the displacement split them up from one another.

- An elderly woman in her 80s died in August 2015, nine months after moving to a distant mobile home park with her daughter. At the time of the interview, the woman was alive but largely housebound. Two months later, she had passed. Her daughter reported in December 2015 that while she feels her mother was already in poor health, she declined quickly after the move.
- A middle-aged man who along with his wife had been one of the first households to move—even before the park was rezoned—committed suicide in September 2015, approximately a year and a half after moving.

Because of small population size, it is difficult to assess whether these numbers reflect an elevated mortality rate, and if so to what extent we can definitively attribute excess deaths to the impacts of forced relocation. What cannot be disputed, however, is that surviving family members understand these deaths not as random or “normal” but rather in the context of, and connected to, what happened at Mission Trails.

This is likewise true for residents discussing other significant health impacts, which they attributed to the stress of the rezoning and displacement:

- **Approximately 1 in 5 residents interviewed or reported by those we interviewed (21.2% or 14/66) experienced life-threatening health impacts requiring hospitalization**, most frequently diabetes complications (2 residents) and stroke (2 residents).
- **1 out of 3 (33.3% or 22/66) experienced a worsening of chronic conditions**, most frequently diabetes (10 residents) and hypertension (8 residents), resulting in these residents having to begin carting oxygen tanks, start insulin treatment after managing diabetes by diet alone, start a second medication for hypertension, and start dialysis when previously stable diabetes became unmanageable.
- **About 1 out of 4 (27.3% or 18/66) developed new physical health conditions they did not have before the rezoning**, most frequently cardiovascular conditions (3 residents) and insomnia (3 residents).
- **Almost 3 out of 5 (57.0% or 45/79) experienced impacts on mental health**, most frequently depression (29 residents) and anxiety (17 residents) but also psychosomatic pain (7 residents) and PTSD-like symptoms (6 residents).
- **Five residents reported severe impacts on mental health** which disabled them in one or more life functions, required hospitalization or resulted in suicidal feelings, in one case leading to actual suicide.
- **About 1 in 5 households (20.4% or 10/49) reported health impacts on children**, mostly mental health impacts (anxiety and depression) severe enough to prompt medical attention (6

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6 The background mortality rate within the general U.S. population is 9.5 deaths per 1000 persons per year. Three deaths out of a total of 178 residents interviewed/reported is equivalent to a mortality rate of 16.9/1000 deaths, which appears to suggest excess mortality. However, it must be noted that this figure includes one death that occurred 17 months after moving (the other two took place within 12 months) and additionally does not adjust for age.
households), but also impacts on pregnancies and newborns (3 households, all Spanish-speaking women). In one case, a mother who had move to a very distant park reported that her son, who had a congenital heart condition, required another surgery after they moved, and wondered if his condition was made worse by the fact that they had to walk to get to school: “Maybe he needed it because he can't walk a lot, and there are no buses here to take him to school like at Mission Trails, so I walk with him to school every morning and afternoon, and he can't do that.”

In addition to the stress of rezoning and displacement, the geographic challenges posed by relocation affected residents' health in other ways:

- Two households described how the move disrupted a previously healthy lifestyle they had enjoyed at Mission Trails, which many recalled as wooded and open, with streets that were safe for children to play in. One single mother who had moved into a rental house observed: "Mi niña, la más chica, subió de peso por los cambios del lugar donde vivimos. Estaba muy acostumbrada a correr y jugar...ahora ya no.” ("My daughter, the littlest one, gained weight from all the changes in where we were living – at Mission Trails she was used to running and playing...now she doesn't.")

- **About 1 in 3 households (34.1% or 15/44) reported that relocation had negative effects on their access to medical care**, mostly because their doctors were now farther away (10 households) or because they had moved to distant parks without vehicles (5 households), but also because:
  - the financial impact of the move had cost them their health insurance (2 households)
  - they had a harder time paying for medical costs because of higher housing burden (1 household)
  - they neglected their health care during the stress of the rezoning (1 household)
  - they needed a new doctor for health conditions arising from the stress of displacement (1 household)
  - their medical bills increased due to new health conditions arising as a result of displacement (1 household)
  - they lost access to full-time care previously provided by family members who lived at Mission Trails but had to move elsewhere after displacement (1 household)

- **Three households (6.8%) reported that the move gave them closer access to their doctors**
- **Two residents (3.2%) reported improved health because of the move, in both cases because they had been made ill by conditions at Mission Trails under the ownership of AFC.

Even those whose health was less impacted, however, acknowledged protective influences that others did not have such as age and savings, and commented on how much anxiety they experienced at the time. As one father stated, “If you ask me how I am now, how do you feel—to be honest, I'm okay. But everything that happened for me to get here—there were a lot of problems. We lost a lot. The sleepless nights—'What happens to my kids?' 'How am I going to get to my job...?'”

3. Economic Security

The main economic impacts revealed by interviews were:
• **Out-of-Pocket Expenses**
  ◦ Around 3 out of 4 households (76.6% or 36/47) reported paying out of pocket for expenses generated by the displacement, with only 6 households of 47 (12.8%) reporting that the relocation assistance they received from the developers covered everything.
  ◦ **Average total moving expenses reported were around $9,000** (range of $8,973-$9,223)
  ◦ **Average out-of-pocket expenses were around $4,250** (range of $4,184-4,302)
  ◦ For a significant majority of households, then, moving expenses were greater than the relocation assistance offered by the developers, which offered the possibility of $7,200 in the ideal scenario that residents kept their home and moved it without incident to one of the six parks approved for assistance.
  ◦ This ideal scenario only applied in a handful of cases (7/51 households or 13.7%), with 76.5% (39/51 households) receiving something less than this, 9.8% (5/51) receiving more than the maximum amount from selling off their home, and 9.8% (5/51) receiving nothing at all.
  ◦ **Average amount of relocation assistance reported across 51 households was $4,451.**
  ◦ Most households (64.6% or 31/48) did not report problems receiving this assistance, but a significant minority (35.4% or 17/48) did. Several of those who answered “no” indicated that if they did not have issues, it was because “ya querían que se salieran” (they just wanted them to get out).
  ◦ For those who answered “yes,” some of the problems they reported included:
    ▪ harassment by developers or Mission Trails management (6)
    ▪ pressure to drop out of lawsuit against AFC to receive assistance (5)
    ▪ delays receiving assistance (4)
    ▪ not receiving assistance until moved out, resulting in out-of-pocket expenses (3)
    ▪ no one in the office to give out assistance checks (3)
    ▪ developers withholding rent owed from assistance, sometimes without telling residents until they were moving out, or in one case withholding more than went unpaid in rent (3)
    ▪ destination park reneging on assistance promised (2)
    ▪ confusion about how much residents would be getting (2)
    ▪ management cheating them out of assistance owed (1)
    ▪ having to completely empty home before assistance given, which was difficult for elders/disabled (1)
  ◦ As to be expected from the average amount residents reported receiving and paying out of pocket, **an overwhelming majority of households (91.3% or 42/46) stated that the relocation assistance was not sufficient.** Only four households stated that it was, with one a tepid yes (“We made it work.”)
  ◦ Most frequently mentioned out-of-pocket expenses were repairs or upgrades needed to make home meet requirement of new location (36.1% or 13/36 households) and repairing damage from move (30.6% or 11/36 households).
  ◦ To pay for out-of-pocket expenses, the majority of households either used up equity they had built up over time or, where they lacked equity, they went into debt:
    ▪ Over 1 in 3 households (35.7% or 15/42) used up equity (8 spent savings, 4 tapped into 401K or retirement funds, 3 pawned or sold belongings)
    ▪ Over 1 in 3 households (35.7% or 15/42) went into debt (7 borrowed from
friends/family; 4 took out a loan, 1 with high interest; 2 used credit cards, 1 took on a new mortgage, and 1 entered into an installment plan with the park

- Over a quarter of households (28.6% or 12/42) reported paying for things little by little with wages
- Five households (11.9%) reported that friends/family gave them money
- Five households (11.9%) reported no out of pocket expenses
- Three households (7.1%) reported increasing work hours, taking on another job, or a spouse having to start working
- Two households (4.8%) reported going without necessities
- One household (2.4%) reported panhandling to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

- **Increases in housing burden**
  - Another major economic impact was the increase in housing burden experienced by many households that did not move their homes, electing instead either to rent or to take on a mortgage for a house or for land. In both cases, residents found themselves paying a substantially larger proportion of their monthly income on housing costs (rent/mortgage + utilities) than they did at Mission Trails:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing costs (rent + utilities) at Mission Trails</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average per month - all residents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average per month - renters and those in lease-to-own contracts</td>
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<table>
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<th>Housing costs (rent + utilities) currently</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average per month - all residents</td>
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<td>Overall housing cost increase per month</td>
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  - Roughly consistent with the number of households that did not keep their homes, nearly half of households interviewed reported increased housing burden following displacement from Mission Trails, with an average increase of 26%:
    - Almost half (46.9% or 23/49) reported increased housing burden (or housing costs, where monthly income not disclosed)
    - About a quarter (26.5% or 13/49) reported decreased housing burden (or housing costs)
    - Another quarter (24.5% or 12/49) reported no change in housing burden (or housing costs)

  - As stated above, most of the reasons for these increases stemmed from former homeowners becoming either renters (paying an average of $665/mo) or taking on new mortgages

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7 Ranges reflect variable utility costs seasonally; residents also made distinction between what they paid when they moved in to Mission Trails and what they paid at the end, due to increases in rent and water after AFC took over.

8 To calculate how many households experienced housing burden increases, we created a table that allowed us to compare each household’s housing burden at Mission Trails (cost of rent and utilities / monthly income) to housing burden at each household’s current location. This allowed us to visualize whether a household had experienced an increase in the proportion of income spent on housing costs, a decrease, or no change. Additionally, we were able to easily assess 1) whether households were housing burdened at Mission Trails (paying 30% or more of monthly income on housing); 2) whether households were currently housing burdened; and 3) how many households were housing burdened currently compared to at Mission Trails. As this chart is very detailed, we have omitted it here; however, it is available on request.
(paying an average of $971/mo). Three households also reported paying double rent on either lots (in one case where the new mobile home park was not equipped for double-wide homes) or homes (in cases where residents had moved their homes to a park but lived and paid rent elsewhere).

- For about a quarter of households (13/49 or 26.5%), housing burden decreased compared to Mission Trails, although in only three of these situations (discounted rent at new park of one year, accessed public housing, or lower mortgage/utilities on own land) was this due to positive developments directly resulting from displacement. In the remainder of these cases, decreased housing burden was either unrelated to displacement (i.e. paying off home) or else the indirect result of other hardships (fewer housing-related expenses because homeless; income higher because taking on additional loans or living off savings).

- Looking before and after displacement, we also see that the number of households considered housing burdened (paying more than 30% of monthly income on rent/mortgage plus utilities) increased significantly, from 52.4% (22/42 households) at Mission Trails to 71.4% (30/42) currently.

- Another way to consider this is to examine what happened to those households that were not housing burdened at Mission Trails. Of 20 households that paid less than 30% of their monthly income on rent and utilities at Mission Trails, 12 of 20 (60.0%) now pay more than 30%. In other words, only 8 households originally not housing burdened are still not housing burdened. Conversely, of those who were housing burdened at Mission Trails, only 4 of 22 households (18.2%) have moved out of this category. Of the rest:
  - 8 of 22 (36.4%) are more housing burdened than before
  - 6 of 22 (27.3%) are equally housing burdened
  - 4 of 22 (18.2%) are less housing burdened than before (but still pay over 30% of monthly income on housing)

• Impacts on Employment, Income, and Equity
  - Over 2 in 3 households (68.0% or 34/50) reported that their job or wages were affected negatively due to:
    - lost income (40.0% of households or 20/50), including three households that reported having to stop working altogether due to the stress and trauma of displacement, in one case for one year and in another indefinitely due to PTSD. Another man had to switch jobs because of the distance, as a result losing $1,600/month in income.
    - Lost equity (20.0% of households or 10/50)
    - Having to get a second job, new job, or increase work hours (12.0% or 6/50 households), including two cases where caregivers of young children or elders had to go back to work
    - Higher transportation costs (12.0% of households or 6/50)
    - Stress affecting job performance (6.0% of households or 3/50), in one case causing a woman to be turned down for a raise
    - Loss of benefits (children's health insurance, food stamps) due to changes in income/assets related to move (1 household)
    - Having to buy water because home is not yet connected to utilities (1 household)
  - Two households described positive impacts on job or income:
    - for one family, the year of discounted rent included in the relocation assistance package
has enabled them to have more of a cushion from month-to-month and save up more money, especially given that her husband's work in construction is not steady.

- another family stated that their job was now closer after they moved a second time to a house.

- Overall, however, the picture that emerges is of displacement as destruction of community wealth/equity built up over time in place. Indeed, a few residents interviewed described living at Mission Trails as a wealth/equity-building strategy: "We lived at Mission Trails because we were saving for retirement," explained one woman, "because the rent was cheap." Likewise, a woman who had lived at Mission Trails for 38 years explained that they had originally moved there because "we tried to live in our means. We bought the trailer because it was what we could afford. But also we placed more value on our kids' education [than an expensive house]. The little surplus we had for emergencies, travel money...got eaten up."

- **Transportation Impacts**
  - While one elderly resident who relied on the bus reported that her new location was more accessible as the bus stop was closer to her front door, **over half of households interviewed (56.3% or 27/48) reported that the displacement negatively impacted their ability to get around.** Some of these impacts included:
    - Higher transportation costs (9 households)
    - Greater difficulty living without a car or relying on the bus (8)
    - Greater difficulty getting children to and from school (7)
    - Being farther away from daily necessities (doctor, groceries, pharmacy) (7)
    - Psychological impacts of traffic of distance (5)
    - Longer commute to work (3)
    - Disruption of family support networks—greater difficulty caring for elderly parents or receiving needed support from family (3)
    - Being forced to purchase a vehicle (2)
    - Elders becoming more homebound (2)
    - Health impacts arising from transportation difficulties (having to walk more) (2)
  - Beyond the narrowly financial, then, transportation impacts affected residents' lives more globally and multidimensionally—from their health to their psychological wellbeing to the integrity of family relationships. For instance, one adult daughter and her elderly mother, moving to the far Southside of the city has had severe impacts on their quality of life, given that they lack a working vehicle, her mother uses a wheelchair, and the closest bus stop is half a mile away. Whereas at Mission Trails they could walk or take the bus, they are forced to rely on taxis to get around at their present location. This is more expensive and as a result has led the older woman to become more homebound. Transportation impacts have also exacerbated underlying health conditions for the daughter, which has in turn made getting around even more difficult, in a vicious circle:

  "I already had the [underlying] conditions, but they were not as bad. And I think now the toll that it's taking on me...you know, the walking [farther to/from bus stop]...it's getting worse." At one point she injured her back, which made getting around almost impossible, such that she had to call a former neighbor from Mission Trails to take her shopping: “My back went out. And I needed groceries, and I had no one. … So I called [my friend]. ‘Could
“Do me a favor and take me to the grocery store?” Cuz she lives way out there. ... She took me, and ... she ended up putting the groceries into the cart. I could not move at all. I couldn't get in or out of her van. I'm like, oh my God... I couldn't even stand the potholes sometimes. ... It was bad. My back went out really bad.”

Two months after this interview, her mother passed away, and a couple months later she got a job near the medical center. She still relies on the bus to get to and from work, in a commute that adds four hours to her work day.

4. Social/Family Wellbeing

- **Just over half of households (54.2% or 26/48) reported negative impacts on their children,** across various aspects of their daily lives:
  - On schooling (37.5% or 18/48 households)
    - Had to change schools—did not want to (5 households)
    - Grades dropped (5), in one case due to English-only instruction at new school
    - Stayed at old school, resulting in long commute (5)
    - Difficulty adjusting to new school (3)
    - Lost motivation to succeed in school (3)
    - Had to miss school or increased absences (2)
    - Pulled out of school because homeless (2)
    - Difficulties enrolling in early college program (1)
  - On mental health (35.4% or 17/48 households)
    - Reporting children were/are sad, upset, hurt or unhappy (11)
    - Reporting children were/are stressed (3)
    - Reporting children experienced mental health symptoms severe enough to seek medical evaluation and treatment (two cases anxiety, one depression) (3)
    - Reporting children affected by parental stress/problems (2)
    - Reporting children were/are angry (2)
    - Reporting children were/are scared (1)
    - Reporting children felt “kicked out” (1)
  - On social wellbeing (27.1% or 13/48 households)
    - Lost friends (11)
    - Lost play space, leading to greater social isolation or impacts on physical health (4)
  - On physical health (10.4% or 5/48 households)
    - Children sick more often (2)
    - Sleep disrupted (1)
    - Impacts of having no water (1)
    - Heart surgery due to condition made worse by having to walk to school (1)
  - On pregnancy and newborns
    - Neonatal weight loss due to stress of displacement affecting mother's milk supply (2)
    - Extended hospitalization after birth, possibly linked to stress of mother during displacement (1)
  - Two households (of 48, or 4.2%) reported positive impacts on children:
    - For one high school-aged boy, displacement ended up taking him away from problems
at his old school.
- Another mother reported that there were more special needs services at their new school for her dyslexic son.

- Nearly a quarter of households (22.9% or 11/48) reported negative impacts on family dynamics more broadly:
  - Half of these (6) were cases of family separation on account of the displacement
  - While comprising a small group numerically, some of the most severe impacts on housing and health nonetheless occurred among these households:
    - In the case of one extended family headed by an older couple, two adult children and their children who had been living with them became homeless when the displacement broke up the household.
    - In another case, a grandmother adopting her two traumatized grandchildren from foster care had just moved into Mission Trails as a renter when the park was rezoned, and as a result the adoption fell through.
  - Other impacts on family dynamics include:
    - Stress and trauma affecting ability to care for children, grandchildren, and elderly parents (3)
    - Marital strain (3)
    - Extended family farther away (3)
    - Strain on relationship with adult children (2)

- Whereas family impacts were less frequent but more severe, social impacts were incredibly pervasive. Just over 3 in 4 households (38 of 50 or 76.0%) reported disruptions to friendships, social networks, and broader sense of community, with “everyone that we knew … now scattered everywhere”:
  - 2 in 5 residents lost friends or lost touch with people (40.0% or 20/50)
  - Over 1 in 5 reported social isolation, loneliness or not knowing anyone at new location (22.0% or 11/50)
    - and consequently becoming more homebound (5)
    - leading to depression/anxiety (3)
  - Over 1 in 5 reported that their sense of community had been disrupted (22.0% or 11/50)
    - describing particular difficulty with losing a community centered on children and families (4)
    - recalling that their neighbors at Mission Trails had been “like a family” (3)
    - describing the move from a mobile home park to a neighborhood as isolating (1)
    - reporting no longer feeling safe to be outside in their new park (1)
  - Seven households (14.0%) reported a loss of protective social networks:
    - leading to family violence (1)
    - leading to loss of employment (1)
  - Three (6.0%) reported that their new park was “not friendly”
  - Finally, one elderly resident who had lived alone at Mission Trails had to abandon a dog he had rescued as a companion.
While the loss of friendships and social networks may seem trivial compared to other impacts on housing and health, in at least one case the disruption of these networks was the difference between life and death, as in the case of the older woman who died not long after moving to another mobile home park with an abusive housemate, separated from a close friend and adoptive daughter who had always protected her. In fact, for two residents interviewed, watching the break up of a tight-knit community was the worst aspect of what happened at Mission Trails. As stated by one woman who had lived at Mission Trails for 37 years, the biggest impact out of everything that happened was “seeing everybody pack up and leave...all them trucks in and out, houses going out by the dozens. 'There goes another one—oh, there goes another one, there goes three—oh, did you see that one? Did you see that one parked over there?' That was a big blow to us. Sometimes standing at the windows and crying. [Crying a little, remembering.] People have their...their axels and their houses were halfway broken...for what? And for what? For this? Nothing's being done about anything?”

**Biggest Overall Impacts**

In addition to asking about the very specific impacts described above (housing, health, etc.), we ended each interview with an open-ended question about what residents felt had the biggest impact on them ultimately. While many of them named things covered in previous sections (break up of the community, increased housing burden, homelessness, depression), several additional themes not covered in these sections came up here:

- **More than 1 in 5 households (22.9% or 11/48) stated that the biggest impact for them was the suddenness of displacement**—“having to move without notice,” and “the way they went about it, how fast it went.”
- **Equally often mentioned by 1 in 5 households (22.9% or 11/48) was the displacement having been “for nothing,”** given that nothing had been done to the land since their removal.
- **Almost as frequently, almost 1 in 5 households (18.8% or 9/48) mentioned that the biggest impact was feeling betrayed by or not listened to by city leaders.**
- **Relatedly, 5 of 48 households (10.4%) expressed that the biggest impact was the realization that “none of us mattered to any of the people on the council... even people crying, babies.”** While this was closely related to feelings of betrayal by the city, it rent a deeper wound—what we would call the “intimate impacts of trauma.” Beyond mental health, these were the subtle, hidden, and deeply internal effects of displacement on residents' sense of identity, dignity or self-worth, and core feeling of stability and security (see full report for direct quotes and examples from residents' testimony).
- **Four households (8.3%) reported that the biggest impact was how the displacement affected their children. “For me,” said one mother, “the most stressful time was I was worried for my kids. I didn't know how they would react, feel. We don't worry for us, we worry for our kids.” Another mother said, simply, “La tristeza de mis hijos es lo que más me dolió.” (“The sadness of my children is what hurt me the most.”)”

**Positives and Protective Influences**

While we have taken care to highlight any positives mentioned in sections on specific impacts (housing, health, etc), in this section we consider the issue in a more general sense: when everything is said and done, are residents happy in their new locations?
Among those who answered this question directly, responses were fairly evenly split:

- 52.8% (19/36 households) said no
- 47.2% (17/36 households) said yes

However, open-ended responses and analysis of individual interviews in their entirety reveal a more complicated picture:

- About 2 in 5 (41.2% or 21/51) gave a qualified yes
- Another 2 in 5 (39.2% or 20/51) gave an unequivocal no
- Four (7.8%) reported mixed feelings or stated that current conditions were complicated
- Four (7.8%) gave an unequivocal yes, reporting happiness or good living conditions currently, without dealing at the same time with other major impacts from the move
- Two (3.9%) reported not much change from Mission Trails.

Some of the positive things residents mentioned about their present living conditions included:

- House/apartment in better condition than Mission Trails (5 households)
- New park well-maintained or in good condition (4)
- Neighborhood good—quiet, friendly (4)
- Liking apartment complex or house itself (3)
- Owning house/land – more security (3)
- Change of schools benefitting children (3)
- Liking living in an apartment more than a mobile home (2)
- Neighborhood or new park safer than Mission Trails (1)
- New place more affordable (1)
- Discounted rent has helped (1)

However, it would be a mistake to take these responses as evidence that the new location represented an overall improvement in living conditions or that the displacement helped "make their lives better," as developers and their representatives assured us they were doing. Only four households stated that they were happy at their new location AND were not also dealing with other major impacts of displacement (economic, health, family). Many more (40% or 20/50) gave some version of "yes but," or else their yes had to be qualified by situating it within the context of what they had shared in their overall interview. These residents liked some aspects of their new location but also discussed how:

- They could not afford their rent or mortgage, causing significant hardship and stress (9/20)
- They or someone in their family had experienced or was still experiencing severe mental and/or physical health impacts triggered by displacement (5/20)
- They became homeless at some point or experienced multiple moves (5/20)
- They wound up with nothing to their name (1/20)
- They experienced a traumatic family separation (1/20)
- They sustained significant damage to their trailer that they could not afford to repair (1/20)
If some residents reported improvements, then, this was not necessarily proof of net beneficial impact as much as it was testament to the protective role played by various mitigating factors. In other words, those who were doing well did so in spite of what happened and not necessarily because of what happened. Some of these factors referenced directly by residents included:

- Assets (savings). "Basically, for me, I had been saving money the time I was living [at Mission Trails]."
- Age. "I just feel bad for lotta people out there, especially like the older people that had to move. Me, I can survive—I'm younger."
- Employment versus fixed income: "Them that have fixed incomes, it's a big step. I work with a lot of elderly people, so I know where—I pick up people that are on dialysis. And I take them to the vascular clinic. And they'll wanna—'Oh, I'm hungry, but I don't have no money'—you know, their check only reaches so far for them and stuff like that. That's the thing I didn't really like. I struggled, but they're probably struggling worse. Because rents are really high out there."
- Good job/steady income.

Other factors that we would assume shaped outcomes (race/ethnicity, gender, legal status, disability, owner vs renter) are harder to quantify given the small sample size. However, looking just at one basic outcome—whether households were settled or not at the time of the interview (and omitting a third, complicated category of those who were settled after long struggles with homelessness), we can see that race, gender, and primary language all seemed to be significant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White Settled</th>
<th>16.7% (3/18) vs 11.3% total</th>
<th>People of Color Settled</th>
<th>83.3% (15/18) vs 87.1% total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Settled</td>
<td>10.8% (4/37) vs 11.3% total</td>
<td>89.2% (33/37) vs 87.1% total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race conferred slight advantages and disadvantages, but not much. Among those settled at the time of interview, white interviewees were slightly overrepresented compared to their proportion of total interviewees, while people of color (Mexicana/o, Black or mixed-race) were slightly underrepresented. Among those not settled, white interviewees were roughly proportionate, while people of color were slightly overrepresented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male Settled</th>
<th>33% (6/18) vs 29% total</th>
<th>Female Settled</th>
<th>66% (12/18) vs 71% total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Settled</td>
<td>21.6% (8/37) vs 29% total</td>
<td>81.1% (30/37) vs 71% total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender conferred slight advantages and more significant disadvantages. Men were slightly overrepresented among those settled and underrepresented among those non-settled, relative to their representation within interviewees at large. Conversely, women were slightly underrepresented among those settled and significantly overrepresented among those not settled. Also notable is the fact that, of the four interviewees who were settled housing-wise AND who stated most unequivocally that they were doing well, with no ongoing health, family, or economic impacts of displacement, three (75%) were men (all Brown, two Spanish-dominant and one English-dominant/bilingual), though men made
up only 18/62 respondents (29%). By contrast, only 1 of those 4 was a woman (White), although women made up 71% of respondents in total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Language</th>
<th>English-Dominant or Bilingual Households</th>
<th>Spanish-Dominant Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settled</td>
<td>66% (10/15) vs 59.6% total</td>
<td>33% (5/15) vs 43.1% total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Settled</td>
<td>51.6% (16/31) vs 59.6% total</td>
<td>48.4% (15/31) vs 43.1% total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary language was fairly strongly associated with being unsettled at the time of interview, with English-dominant/Bilingual households overrepresented among those who were settled and Spanish-dominant households significantly underrepresented compared to their proportion of overall interviewees. Among those not settled, English-dominant/Bilingual households were underrepresented, while Spanish-dominant households were slightly overrepresented.

While difficult to precisely quantify the protective impact of gender, race, age, economic circumstance and other factors, what was more plain was that those revealed by the interviews to be faring best after displacement tended to be male and able-bodied (whatever their race/ethnicity or primary language) with stable employment and few dependents. By contrast, the final families, those who had no choice but to stay until the legal deadline and consequently who were most devastated by the displacement, were almost entirely headed by Brown, Spanish-speaking women with children.

**Policy Implications**

In addition to documenting the lived impacts of displacement, another important goal of the interviews was to collect information we can use to strengthen policy protections for mobile home residents and prevent another Mission Trails.

One of the main questions we asked that indirectly revealed residents' policy ideas was, “When you heard that the park would be rezoned and closed, what would have been the ideal outcome? What should have happened?” Out of 41 total responses, some of these included:

- Not having to move in the first place (29.3% or 12/41).
- To be able to move somewhere free from threat of further displacement (26.8% or 11/41)
  - To be able to afford to move into a house, especially in the same area (6)
  - To be able to buy land and move trailer there (3)
  - To be able to move trailers into neighborhoods.
- Notification – be told up front (12.2% or 5/41).
- More time to move out, so that residents could move out on their own timeline (12.2% or 5/41)
  - At least a year
  - Six months to a year
- Fix the park (7.3% or 3/41).
- Just relocation assistance that covered the true costs of moving (7.3% or 3/41)
  - City supplement amount given by developers so that residents not forced into debt
  - Enough to buy land
- Better assistance from local government (7.3% or 3/41)
  - City representatives who actually responded to residents (1)
Better assistance locating stable housing, and same level of assistance for everyone
(including renters, undocumented) (2)

- Developers find land or another park in good condition where residents could move together as
  a community (4.9% or 2/41).
- Allow residents to stay in the same area (4.9% or 2/41)
- Return equity residents had built up (4.9% or 2/41)
  - in their trailer (1)
  - in the land itself (1).
- Not have to continuing paying rent once park was rezoned (1/41).

With regard to the relocation assistance, when asked, “What would have been a fair amount?”
36 households gave an amount averaging $8,828, with most residents clustered somewhere either in the
$4-8,000 range (likely an estimate of assistance required in addition to the $2,500 or $4,600 received)
or in the $10-15,000 range (likely an estimate of total expenses for moving and resettling). This
suggests that a fair minimum benchmark for estimating total costs to relocate per household would be
$10,000, compared to the developer package that in theory totaled $7,200 but was experienced as
something less than this amount by 76.5% of households responding (39/51), with an average amount
of $4,451.

Several residents could not assign a dollar value to the question of what amount would have been fair
(or gave a dollar value but qualified their response), for a number of reasons:

- Because what was fair depended on the person/household/situation (4 households).
  - Those who lived there longer should have gotten more, because they helped maintain the
    land over time.
  - Giving $3,000 per person would have been better than giving a set amount per household,
    because some families were larger.
  - Those who were more vulnerable should have gotten more assistance.
  - Developers should have taken into consideration the reality that some households consisted
    of multiple families that got split up and required their own assistance package.
- Because costs were unquantifiable (3)
- Because what they were given wasn’t the problem so much as lack of follow up by the city and
  follow through by developers/parks on what was promised (2).

However, beyond ideas about ideal outcomes once the park was proposed for rezoning and closure, the
most frequent response of all twas not having to move in the first place—in other words, for the city to
enact preventative rather than reactive policy solutions. Often when we asked residents directly what
that would look like concretely, they didn’t know how to respond immediately. However, we can work
our way upstream from the responses highlighted here to sketch out some beginning points. Three in
particular merit mention:

- The right to simply be notified. Local and state laws should change to recognize mobile home
  residents as homeowners with legal rights to notification and comment in the event of rezoning.
- Being able to move mobile homes into neighborhoods. The City of San Antonio is currently
  considering how to change the Unified Development Code to allow “tiny houses” and granny
flats. Why not mobile homes?

- **Fixing the park.** This one takes a little more unpacking, because it was not straightforwardly the case that Mission Trails was the eyesore it was depicted as in media accounts and public discussions, which used living conditions at the park as justification for arguing that rezoning was for residents’ own good as much as for property values. However, data we collected challenges this.

Recall that when we asked residents to rate conditions at Mission Trails on move-in, the average score was 4.03 out of 5 (pretty good—a few issues, but overall liked living there), with about 3 in 4 households rating conditions as either 4 or 5 (pretty good or good). Of those who rated conditions as 2 (not great—lots of issues) or 1 (terrible), about half had lived there 2-3 years or less, coinciding with the purchase of the park by AFC.

In our preliminary analysis from 2016, we took these findings to mean that conditions only got bad when American Family Communities took over. And based on residents' testimonios, conditions certainly did seem to deteriorate quickly when AFC came in, with many feeling the final owners had purchased the park intending to cash in on rising land values and consequently abandoned maintenance responsibilities. However, looking across all 51 interviews, a more nuanced picture emerges, particularly from those who had lived there longer and had witnessed conditions improve and decline and improve again over many years as managers came and went.

Policy-wise, then, the takeaways from residents’ suggestion that the ideal situation would have been to fix up the park are three-fold:

1) Living conditions at Mission Trails did not decline uniformly until sale became inevitable, but rather rose and fell depending on who was running the park at the time.

2) Good management was and is possible, when we look empirically at the history of Mission Trails. For instance, residents almost unanimously praised a husband-and-wife manager team who took care of things before AFC came in.

3) To focus entirely on quality of management, however, is to miss an important point, which is that the real vulnerability in the case of Mission Trails, and the real policy issue if we want to take a preventative rather than reactive approach to displacement, is not necessarily landlords who do not maintain good conditions at their parks—although, to be sure, this is the crux of the issue in another recent case of residential displacement from Oak Hollow Mobile Home Park. In the case of Mission Trails, however, the real issue was land speculation, and the lack of public policy protections that have accompanied public investments in economically depressed areas. This in turn triggered the predatory activity of investor owners like American Family Communities, whose very business model is to acquire parks—not to maintain them in good condition, but to run them down so that they can be flipped. Local government perhaps cannot prevent owners from buying and selling, but it can create a policy context that mitigates against and discourages the worst forms of speculation that nip at the heels of public investment and redevelopment.

For that reason, we continue to insist—as we did in April and May 2014 when begging City Council to deny White-Conlee’s rezoning request—that the real and lasting solution is resident ownership. On the state level, this means changing laws to allow resident right of first refusal in the case of a proposed rezoning/sale. On a local level, it means cities partnering with organizations established to provide the
kind of technical assistance and access to capital to allow mobile home residents to acquire and collectively manage their parks. It also means that the city's Housing Commission, formed in 2015 specifically to develop policies for preventing displacement, needs to be directly accountable to the experiences of mobile home residents, making special effort to have these residents—as well as others vulnerable to various forms of displacement pressure—at the table when they draft solutions.

As those who witnessed firsthand the chaos, trauma, and human rights violations that occurred in the absence of good public policy, Vecinos de Mission Trails presents these findings to city leadership and to the wider community in the hope that they may assist in identifying policies to prevent another Mission Trails from ever happening again. However, as those who also witnessed the power of resident organizing, the most important lesson for the city, beyond anything we might recommend, is that those most impacted by gentrification and displacement already have many of the policy solutions. The real question is: Do policy-makers have the political will not simply to listen, but to seek them out as advisors?