



Cheryl Davila  
Councilmember  
District 2

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

April 30, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmembers Cheryl Davila and Ben Bartlett

Subject: Refer to the Planning Commission and Housing Advisory Commission to Research and Recommend Policies to Prevent Displacement and Gentrification of Berkeley Residents of Color and African Americans

**RECOMMENDATION**

Refer to the Planning Commission and Housing Advisory Commission to research and recommend policies to prevent displacement and gentrification of Berkeley residents of color. Recommended policies should include real solutions. The Commission should do the following:

- Develop a policy to address the erosion of People of Color (POC), including the African American sector of our Berkeley society.
- Develop rules and regulations to halt the loss of People of Color including the African American communities.
- Develop a “right to return” for Berkeley’s People of Color including the African American communities who have been displaced by these economic and social developments, especially those who continue to be employed in our City, even after having to relocate beyond our boundaries.
- Solicit expert and lived experience testimonies regarding displacement and gentrification.
- Recommend alternatives to prevent displacement and gentrification of our valued Berkeley citizens of color and African Americans.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

Minority groups are being pushed out of the neighborhoods in which they live. According to a study from the California Housing Partnership, between 2000 and 2015 the number of low-income households of color in the nine Bay Area counties dropped by 28%. This was matched in time by a 30% increase in rent rates. At the same time, there was no change in the proportion of white households. In Berkeley, from a high of 23.5% in 1970,

the Black population has been more than cut in half. According to the United States Census Bureau, it is now less than 10% of the total composition of the city.

Experts agree that the rising costs of housing in the Bay Area, primarily due to the rising fortunes of Silicon Valley, have priced many of the older residents out of the city. This is especially true of those or their family members who don't own homes.

In short, displacement has had a large negative effect on long-term black residents of Berkeley, both as a community and as a fate suffered by individual persons and families at the hands of rent increases by landlords.

### **BACKGROUND**

Berkeley's neighborhoods were historically segregated based upon custom, as well as, contracts. Prior to 1948, so-called restrictive covenants by neighborhood groups blocked African American's and People of Color's access to "white communities". After the Supreme Court ruling *Shelley vs. Kraemer*, redlining or placing color codes on city maps to indicate where minorities could and could not live became the scheme to enforce housing discrimination. The result of this discrimination was that almost all Asian and Black Berkeleyans had to live south of Dwight Way and west of Martin Luther King Jr. Way (aka Grove Street) according to Charles Wollenberg, author of *Berkeley: A City in History*. Under these discriminatory conditions, "redlining" excluded Asian and Black Berkeleyans from most other parts of the City, thousands of Black families moved to South Berkeley during and after WWII.

According to *Redlining: The history of Berkeley's Segregated Neighborhoods*, by Jesse Barber, *Berkeleyside.com*, September 20, 2018, which stated, "They (Black residents after WWII) were cordoned off, not allowed to move to the north or to the east, so they built their own lives right there where they could find housing. Opening shops, stores, cobblers, food, etc. they prospered." The thriving *Lorin Station* business community in what is now called the "Adeline Corridor" developed organically to serve the needs of the growing South Berkeley African-American and Japanese citizenry. Fast forward to the 2000s: Minorities were being pushed out of the very neighborhoods in which they had been formerly compelled to live. According to a study from the California Housing Partnership, between 2000 and 2015 the number of poor households of color in the nine Bay Area counties dropped by 28%. This was matched in time by a 30% increase in rent rates. At the same time, there was no change in the proportion of white households.

In Berkeley, from a high of 23.5% in 1970, the African American population has decreased, significantly. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, it is now less than 10% of the total composition of the City, approximately 7%, currently.

Experts agree that the rising costs of housing in the Bay Area, primarily due to the rising fortunes of Silicon Valley, have priced many of the older residents out of our City. This is especially true of those or their family members who don't own homes.

In short, displacement has had a large negative effect on long-term African American and POC residents of Berkeley, both as a community and as a fate suffered by individual persons and families at the hands of rent increases by the unscrupulous.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Our community will be made whole again by having a diverse community filled with people of color including African Americans who will no longer be displaced. Possible reduction in Green House Gas (GHG's) since commute times may be eliminated or reduced.

### **REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS, PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND LAWS**

There are currently few, if any, protections against the effects of gentrification; this, in conjunction with uncontrollably rising housing costs, makes it probable that Berkeley's declining Black population will continue to decrease. Therefore, the creation of this workshop will be the first steps towards creating legislation and policies to decrease or stop gentrification.

### **ACTIONS/ ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

There are very few alternatives that the City can consider, as creating legislation with the guidance of experts on gentrification and displacement may be the best action to combat such issues.

### **OUTREACH OVERVIEW AND RESULTS**

This legislation is designed to enable the Berkeley City Planning Commission and Housing Advisory Commission to create a workshop in which it will partner with multiple experts towards finding solutions for the causes and effects of gentrification and displacement.

### **RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

As the cost of housing and rent continue to rise in the Bay Area and Berkeley especially, low-income populations are struggling greatly to remain in their homes and many have already been displaced. A large proportion of this displaced population are from the black community. This recommendation will serve to protect those who are most vulnerable to the detrimental effects of development and rising housing costs as well as find a more equitable path of development.

### **IMPLEMENTATION, ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

The workshop will be created and facilitated by the Berkeley City Planning and Housing Advisory Commissions and will work alongside experts and advisors on displacement and gentrification.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff time will be necessary to implement this workshop. The anticipated date for such a workshop is June 2019.

### **CONTACTS:**

Cheryl Davila, Councilmember District 2	510.981.7120
Ben Bartlett, Councilmember District 3	510.981.7130

