



ABSTRACT

US cities are abounding with new economic life and energy. Gentrification is a new national norm bringing much needed wealth and commerce back into the heart of our urban centers. The downside of gentrification, however, is the displacement and scattering of the poor to the periphery of the city with little thought or planning to accommodate their needs. If our cities are to re-emerge into thriving centers where business, culture, education and family life flourish, careful attention must be given to the inclusion of those who are needed to perform the lower-paying, essential services required by an optimally functioning city. Affordable housing intelligently woven throughout the city, including in-town gentrifying neighborhoods, is a strategy that requires foresight and visionary leadership. A city that fails to accommodate its diverse workforce will eventually fall victim to its own prosperity.

A combined cadre of visionary leadership from government, business and non-profit sectors offers the best potential for devising and steering an effective mixed-income housing strategy comprehensive enough to encompass an entire city. Each sector brings essential perspectives and resources to the table. Non-profits along with public housing agencies may be best equipped to address the needs of the lowest income residents while the for-profit real estate community understands scale and economic viability. The public sector brings important inducements such as tax credits, density bonuses, tax abatement, bond financing and other incentives that make the bottom line realistic.

Gentrification can be a 21st century movement that transforms our bankrupt cities into healthy, thriving centers that are a blessing to all our citizens. If this to become reality, however, gentrification must be a just and inclusive process. Intelligent, visionary, and statesman-like leadership will be required.



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