

Denver Nonprofit Displacement Assessment

Executive Summary

Alicia Leitgeb

University of Colorado Denver | Master of Urban and Regional Planning 2020

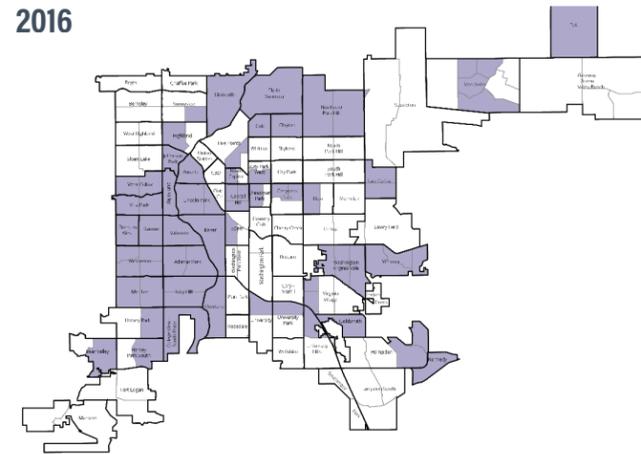
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problem

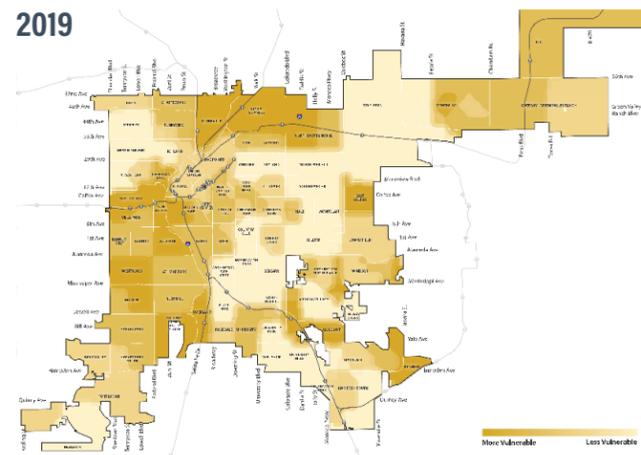
The City and County of Denver has established the need to foster an equitable and inclusive city for its residents. Recent plans produced by the city call for measures to address the lack of affordability of both housing and commercial space. However, gentrification and displacement pressures in Denver threaten to prevent this inclusive city ideal. The city of Denver and the entire metropolitan region need to efficiently and effectively use their resources to combat these pressures and meet their goals. To do so, public entities and other organizations need to know where gentrification is already happening or is likely to happen in the future. Denver's recent plans have included maps that attempt to geographically locate vulnerability to displacement while also shaping collective understanding of where gentrification is occurring.

Although it seems simple to understand anecdotally where gentrification is happening, mapping gentrifying or at-risk areas is an incredibly complex process. Academic researchers and practitioners alike are still working to

Denver's Approach to Mapping Gentrification



Source: Denver Office of Economic Development, 2016.



Source: City and County of Denver, 2019.

Analysis Characteristics

- 1 Median household income is lower than the citywide median income
- 2 Percent of renter-occupied units is higher than Denver as a whole
- 3 Percent of residents with less than a bachelor's degree is higher than Denver as a whole

The same set of characteristics are used in both the 2016 and 2019 vulnerability maps. However, in 2016 the analysis was conducted at census tract level geographies, whereas in 2019 cells of 50-acres were used as the analysis geography.

understand the numerous causes and indicators of gentrification, but the lack of professional agreement on these characteristics translates into a lack of consistency in spatial analysis. Many cities have developed their own methodologies for mapping gentrification, but when four such methods were applied to a common geography, they produced unsurprisingly disparate results (Preis et al., 2020). This is particularly troubling because these maps are created specifically to influence policy and resource decisions made at the city level. Given the need for continued research in this area, mapping efforts should be regularly updated as new research comes to light. Alternative data sources beyond the census should also be explored as they may present an opportunity for inclusion in mapping efforts.

Methods

The primary data collection method for this displacement assessment is a digital survey. ESRI's Survey123 and ArcHub tools are used to create the digital form and create a survey interface for collecting responses. The website created through ArcHub can also be further customized to showcase a comprehensive view of the project. The largest benefit of using tools that are already integrated with GIS is the ease of displaying the survey responses spatially. Additionally, Radian already has an ESRI account with access to the needed tools and staff members with GIS experience.

The survey questions come from a variety of sources including the 2018 Nonprofit Displacement Survey, case studies, and additional research questions from Radian. Keeping many of the same questions from the 2018 Survey allow for a comparison of changes over time. Additionally, one survey question asks about previous places that nonprofits have been located and the years they occupied those locations. This information was converted to point data in GIS and, with enough responses, may reveal trends in the migration of nonprofits in the region.

Creating a Longitudinal Database

2000 Known Nonprofit Locations



2010 Known Nonprofit Locations



2020 Known Nonprofit Locations



Source: Phase I Responses

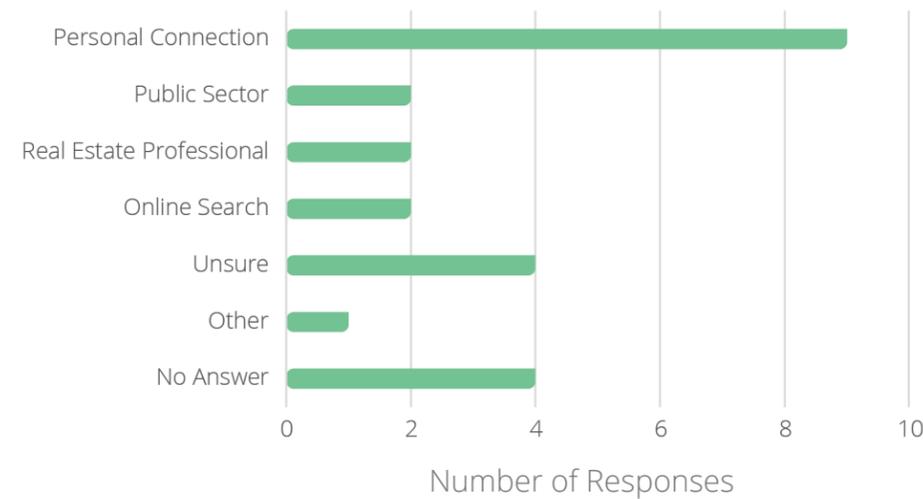
Findings

The preliminary findings from Phase I indicate that organizations are very concerned about finding affordable spaces. This concern ties directly both to a lack of sufficient affordable spaces as well as the need to improve communication around space availability. Several organizations indicated that they were unsure where to find this information and several more indicated that they located their current space through their own personal networks. Although Radian offers a matchmaking service to help bridge this gap, it seems

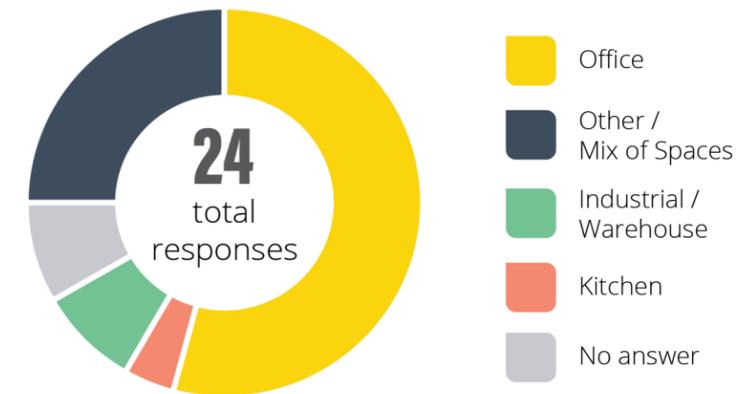
that organizations are unaware of the service or not taking advantage of it for unknown reasons.

At the outset of this survey effort, Radian set a lofty goal of collecting five hundred survey responses. Only twenty-four responses were collected during the first phase of the survey, which represents just 4.8% of the total goal. This can be partially attributed to the timing of heightened concern over coronavirus in the Denver region as this coincided with data collection efforts.

How did you find your current space?



Organizations by Space Type



Looking Ahead

The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional hurdles to the success of this project. As the first phase of the survey was made available online, many Denver businesses and organizations were shifting to remote work. It is possible that this hindered organizations in answering the survey and reduced the number of responses during Phase I. Moving forward into the second phase of data collection, it will likely be incredibly challenging to meet the initial goal of five hundred survey responses by the end of 2020. As organizations continue to deal with the ongoing pandemic crisis and the subsequent fallout, many will not have the capacity or interest to complete a survey in what is becoming a highly survey-saturated environment.

In order to make the survey more appealing to potential respondents, Radian can further refine the existing survey questions, the survey structure, and the survey interface. Currently, there are 54 questions in this survey, many of which went unanswered during Phase I. Reducing the number of survey questions only to those that are essential, ensuring that any overlap between questions is eliminated, and making the questions easier to answer by providing multiple choice options can all help encourage a greater number of responses. Additionally, the survey interface created through ArchHub will allow Radian to create a comprehensive project website. Information about the importance of the project itself and initial results and findings from Phase I can all be added as new pages or callouts on the existing site.

Initially, the second phase of data collection was intended to follow the strategy of a previous nonprofit survey in Denver where in-person presentations were used to encourage additional responses. Given the requirements for physical distancing and the uncertainty regarding when in-person meetings can safely resume, Radian should begin planning to host these conversations virtually. Zoom would be an appropriate platform for easily sharing a presentation. Social media may also be an effective tool for sharing information about the survey effort. Radian's own channels have a more limited audience than some potential partner organizations; therefore, Radian should look to build relationships with like-minded entities that can help to publicize the survey.

The framework established in Phase I of the 2020 Nonprofit Displacement Survey should enable effective data collection and analysis through Phase II and future editions of this survey. With the current pandemic highlighting existing problems with real estate affordability, the Denver region will need data to support policy measures that respond to these trends.