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Nov 8th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

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Emerging cultural place-keeping initiatives in historic communities threatened by gentrification and displacement

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Research Focus - Urban studies, gentrification, arts & culture, cultural placekeeping

Amid unprecedented economic pressures, the distinct cultural landscape of urban neighborhoods is increasingly threatened. Low income communities of color are feeling the impacts of urban redevelopment, rising rents, and incompatible adjacent uses most acutely. Affordable housing, light manufacturing, bodegas, barbershops, and community organizations are rapidly being replaced with luxury condos, co-work offices, urban spas, art galleries, and high-end restaurants.

My research situates decades of these types of neighborhood change dynamics within historical trends of urban planning, calls attention to the expressions of neighborhood cultural identity at risk of erasure, and highlights emerging practices of cultural placekeeping within the community development field. It is designed to connect urban planners with innovative place-based planning strategies, policies, and programs which are being used to promote neighborhood revitalization and cultural resilience in historic neighborhoods threatened by gentrification and displacement.

I draw on literature review, demographic analysis, case study research and stakeholder interviews to create neighborhood change narratives in four historic neighborhoods around the United States. The case studies stretch across diverse regions of the country as well as cities and neighborhoods of various scales from Wynwood, Miami to Mission District, San Francisco and from Pilsen, Chicago to La Alma Lincoln, Denver. Neighborhood change narratives examine the roles of various stakeholders in shaping urban redevelopment, reveal the dynamic balance of power between these stakeholders, and point to emerging pathways towards community leadership in neighborhood revitalization.