

BLUE LINE EXTENSION ANTI-DISPLACEMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



 **cura** Center for Urban & Regional Affairs



INTRODUCTION

The Blue Line Extension has been in the works for over a decade. For at least that long, Blue Line Extension corridor communities have been challenging governments and private sector actors to be considerate of the local population to ensure that they are not displaced as a result of development. In response to these concerns and to ensure the Blue Line Extension transit investment benefits current corridor residents and businesses, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council initiated an anti-displacement initiative and contracted with the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to work with community to develop anti-displacement policy and strategy recommendations, including the formation of the Blue Line Extension Anti-Displacement Working Group. The full report represents the outcomes of that work.

This work requires thinking more complexly about how histories of redlining, racial covenants, unjust housing practices, and other histories of racialized policies play a role in the outcomes of government investment today. While Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council may view that the Blue Line Extension project is rooted in equity involving investment into a historically disinvested corridor, the community may view that same project differently. Where governments see the Blue Line Extension project as a correction of history, some community members may see it as another thing that leads to their marginalization.

More specifically, community members throughout this corridor see that without strong anti-displacement interventions, the Blue Line Extension project will only serve the population of people that replaces them after they are displaced.

The Blue Line Extension Anti-Displacement work is meant to support and leverage various resources for the benefit of BIPOC communities and other historically marginalized communities that have been left out of Minnesota's prosperity.

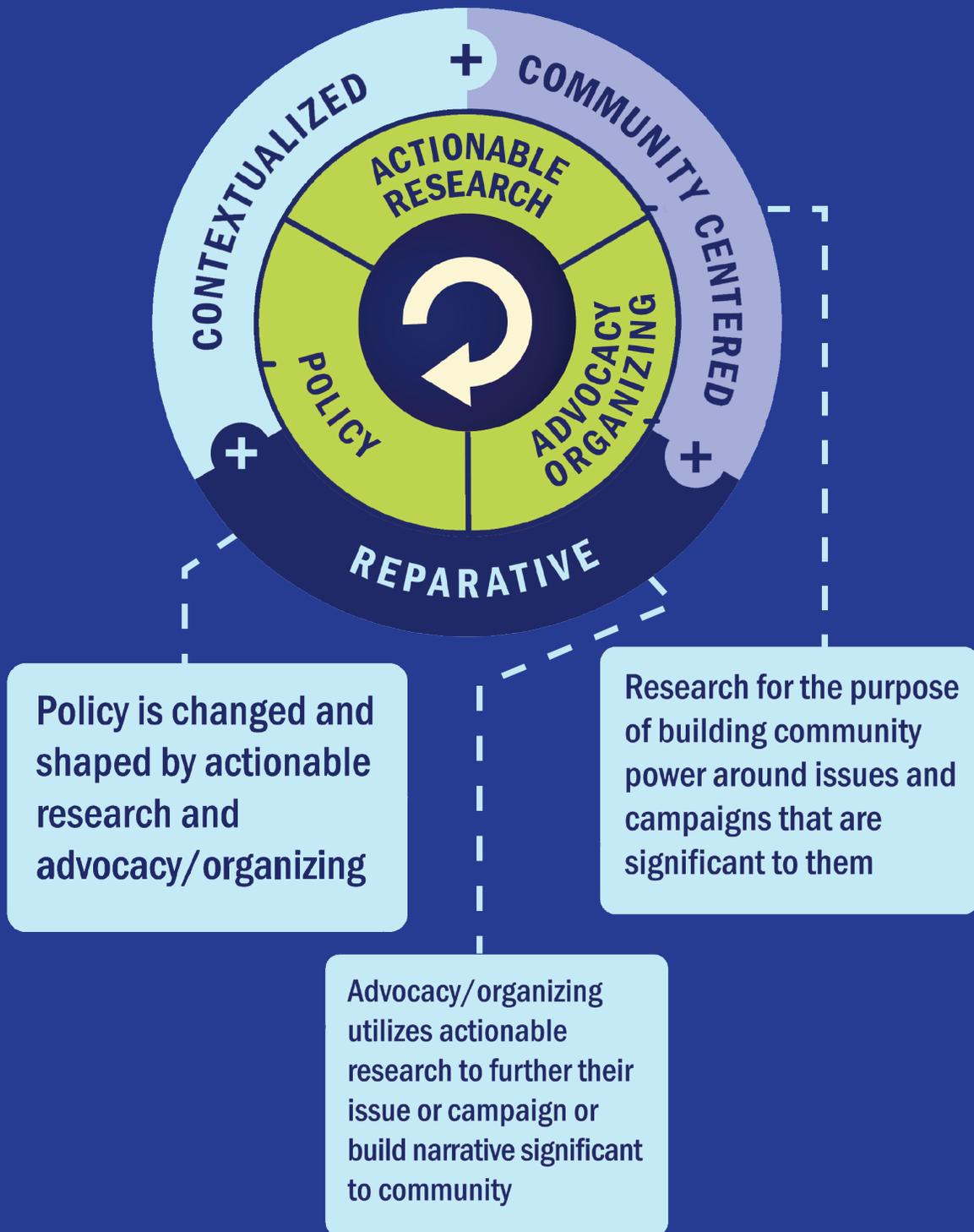
When examining major public infrastructure projects, like the Blue Line Extension, there is a clear pattern that is quite troublesome: public infrastructure investment in vulnerable communities can often exacerbate harm instead of catalyzing repair and prosperity for existing residents in proximity to those projects.

This type of infrastructure investment can increase demand for land and property near light rail corridors. This trend has also been observed locally through implementation of the Blue and Green lines. It is necessary, then, for federal, state, regional, local governments & philanthropic partners and private sector organizations committed to the advancement of equity in this corridor to invest in the communities that the Blue Line Extension will serve through both capital investments and anti-displacement-centered policy.

Primarily, this investment should serve to prevent displacement, repair historical harm in disinvested communities, maximize future community and economic benefits to corridor residents, and build the capacity of marginalized communities to have more agency in public works projects that government agencies pursue.

The project assumes that the Blue Line Extension will be built in the next several years and, therefore, there is urgency to this work and vision that is outlined in the full report. CURA utilized its Reparative Justice Framework and Organizing Philosophy; this philosophy of organizing ensures that stakeholders are treated with dignity and offered agency. With BIPOC participants at the center of reimagined structures, CURA sought to create a project structure that allowed community stakeholders to co-create the questions and solutions. This framework led to a structure that sought to: (1) contextualize displacement in the Twin Cities through research, (2) center community by creating a workgroup that elevated community agency and capacity, and (3) ultimately recommend anti-displacement strategies and policies that would lead to important community-defined outcomes.

CURA'S RESEARCH MODEL



ANTI-DISPLACEMENT WORK GROUP

The Blue Line Anti-Displacement Work Group (ADWG) was formed in February 2022. Central to the theory of engagement for CURA was to unify a vision for anti-displacement among government, residents, businesses and philanthropy.

Through our reparative justice framework, the core goal of the project was to build the capacity of the community to communicate clearly and pointedly about their needs to ensure that they are the primary beneficiaries of the blue line extension.

The creation and facilitation of a new Blue Line Extension Anti-Displacement Work Group was meant to be a vehicle to increase transparency and raise the level of communication between government and community about the complicated topic of preventing displacement as a result of the planning, construction, and operation of the Blue Line Extension.

The Blue Line Anti-Displacement Work Group was formed to achieve the following objectives:

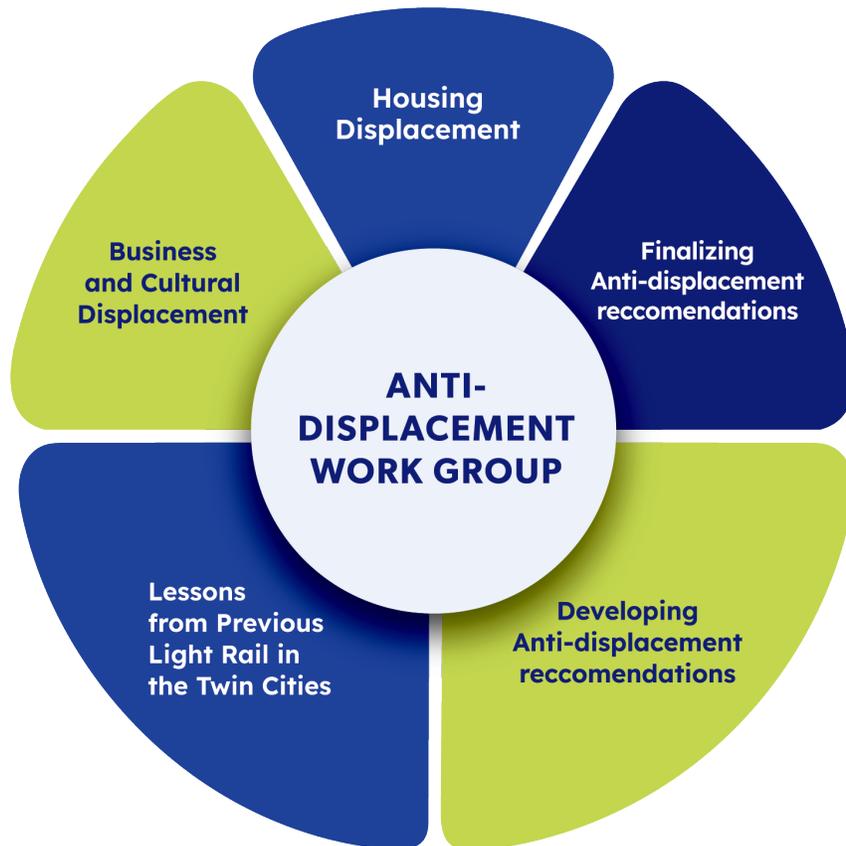
- Present research and community input that would deepen the understanding of displacement for ADWG members
- Identify core concerns from Blue Line Extension corridor communities related to anti-displacement.
- Translate concerns into prioritized outcomes that can be achieved through anti-displacement policies
- Increase transparency between the various stakeholders for preventing displacement
- Demystify barriers to implementing anti-displacement policies
- Improve relationships and alignment on mutual goals between residents, businesses, philanthropy, and government.
- Build the capacity of ADWG members and organizations to understand the various pathways to achieving recommendations

In line with these goals, the ADWG was meant to be a source of knowledge, leadership, and experience around the issue of displacement. In this framework, we envisioned a community connected work group that has various inputs to help them put forward a recommendation for investments and policies to be implemented to prevent displacement in the Blue Line Extension corridor. The work group was also supported by internal working groups that aimed to increase transparency between community and governments, and consultants that supported research and facilitation.

PROCESS

The Anti-Displacement Work Group began meeting in March 2022. The overall structure of the ADWG was designed to center five day-long workshops spread throughout the project timeline, all with different focus areas. The rationale behind this structure was that these day-long workshops would be able to

produce thorough conversations on each subject, high attendance, and space for each participant to connect in small conversations that were not necessarily facilitated. The focuses of the five Saturday meetings were as follows:



Each Saturday meeting included a presentation of research, community input, and group conversation. The goal of the Saturday meetings was to have thorough discussions that had the opportunity to explore the relevant considerations of each Anti-Displacement Work Group member. Project staff utilized a combination of surveys, small groups, and one-to-ones to prepare the discussions for each meeting. A summary of each Saturday meeting is provided in the appendix of the report.

RESEARCH

CURA's team sought to contextualize displacement in the Twin Cities through research that examined lessons learned from the construction of the Green Line, previous research on transit impact in the Twin Cities, a quantitative analysis of Green Line station areas, a baseline study of the Blue Line Extension Corridor, and an inventory of businesses along the Blue Line Extension Corridor.

LESSONS FROM GREEN LINE AND PREVIOUS LIGHT RAIL PROJECTS IN THE TWIN CITIES

A series of interviews was completed with people who directly worked on the efforts to address construction-induced displacement and disruption along the Green Line Central Corridor. The informants had first-person knowledge of how issues of residential and business displacement and disruption were addressed during construction of the Green Line. Several themes emerged from the interviews, including the need for adequate and dedicated funding to help households and businesses; the importance of regular and good communication with business owners along the line, the need for multiple forms of direct support to businesses, and the need for assistance to vulnerable renters and homeowners.

Existing studies on transit impact in the Twin Cities suggest that the opening of the Blue Line and the funding announcement of the Green Line both induced a significant increase in the sales price of residential properties within the station areas (Cao & Lou, 2018; Goetz et al., 2010). Research on the Blue Line indicates that land use patterns may make a difference for the land value impacts of light rail. The Blue Line induced a significant price and value increase for housing on the west side of the line. But a four-lane highway and a corridor of warehousing and industrial uses to the east of the station areas blunted any value increases in that direction (Goetz et al., 2010).

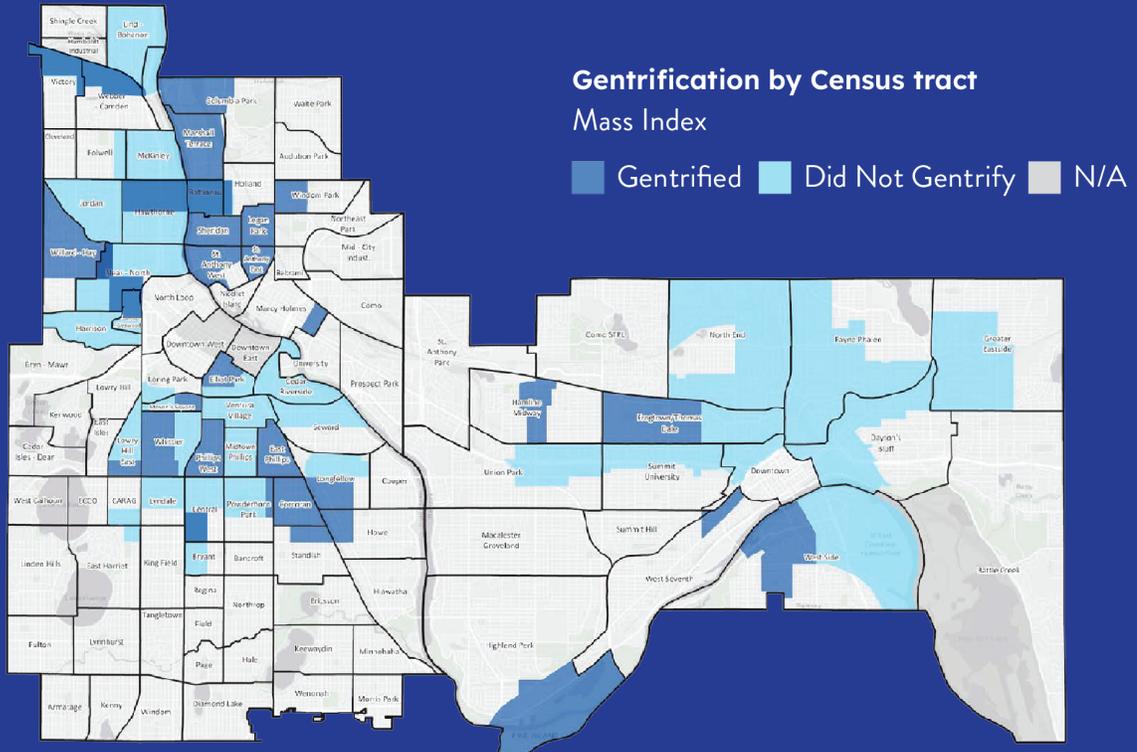
BASELINE STUDY OF BLUE LINE EXTENSION CORRIDOR

In 2018, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) conducted a study of gentrification and gentrification pressures in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The following year, 2019, CURA published an extension of that study covering all of Hennepin County. These studies provide important context for the changes that have been taking place in communities along the Blue Line Extension Corridor. These studies identify first whether a community (studied at the census tract level) is gentrifiable, and then whether housing market and demographic changes in those census tracts are consistent with the pattern of gentrification. These studies identified a number of communities along the Blue Line Extension Corridor that are vulnerable to gentrification and several that have been changing in ways that are consistent with gentrification.

GENTRIFICATION

The map on the following page shows neighborhoods that were vulnerable to gentrification in the two central cities in 2000 and the neighborhoods that changed in ways that are consistent with gentrification between 2000 and 2015. In Minneapolis the Blue Line Extension corridor runs through the Near North, Hawthorne, Jordan, and Willard-Hay neighborhoods. All of this area met the criteria for vulnerability to gentrification and portions of the Near North and Willard-Hay actually exhibited signs of gentrification between 2000 and 2015. Although the CURA studies of the central cities and Hennepin County found that most vulnerable tracts did not, in fact, gentrify during the study period, research nationally has shown that transit investments, such as light rail, are especially notable in leading to gentrification-like change in neighborhoods. The connection between transit investment and gentrification is so pronounced that researchers have created a term for the phenomenon – “transit-induced gentrification”

LESSONS FROM GREEN LINE AND PREVIOUS LIGHT RAIL PROJECTS IN THE TWIN CITIES



STAGES OF GENTRIFICATION



Disinvestment in Neighborhood



Deficit Narrative about Neighborhood



Disinvestment in Neighborhood



Multiple forms of Displacement

FIGHTING AGAINST GENTRIFICATION



Change Policy

- ✓ Laws & Procedures
- ✓ Adopted Plans
- ✓ Public-sector practices

Redirect Resources

- ✓ Cooperative economic models
- ✓ Unsubsidized, new and long-term affordable housing
- ✓ Community-Driven vision

Shift Narrative

- ✓ Truth-telling
- ✓ Neighborhood history
- ✓ Community assets

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout an 18 month process, CURA convened the Blue Line Anti Displacement Work Group (ADWG) as a method to unify vision among community (both businesses and residents), philanthropy, and government for anti-displacement as a result of the planning, constructing, and implementing the Blue Line Extension. ADWG members were empowered to engage research, community input, and their own experiences to recommend policies that would prevent displacement in the Blue Line Extension corridor. Recommendations were intended to be made to various governments, philanthropy, and vested community partners.

The recommendations of the ADWG prioritize outcomes first, which are to be read as desired outcomes as a result of implemented anti-displacement strategies. The recommendation sections fall short of being implement-ready policies and strategies because the ADWG group process does not imitate policy making processes of governments nor does government participation signify commitments of governments or other implementing organizations. The ADWG process was meant to increase transparency and heighten communication between governments and communities. Recommendations are conscious of the various challenges to implementing anti-displacement strategies, but implementing agencies will need to refine recommendations through real budget, political, legal and other realities. Because of this, there are many pathways to achieving the recommended anti-displacement outcomes including the policies named and unnamed in this report.

Outcomes are then meant to be interpreted as the guiding framework for anti-displacement work and policies are encouraged and researched possibilities to achieve those outcomes. The hope is that organizations that receive ADWG recommendations are to first support the outcome recommendations presented in this report.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES:



- All policies need to be accessible to people with different language needs, people with disabilities, and people without social security numbers/documentation



- Every recommendation should be measurable and should have accountability mechanisms.



- Recommendations should be designed to support those most impacted by construction



- Policies and outcomes should target existing residents, not potential ones.

OUTCOMES BY JURISDICTION: BROOKLYN PARK:



- Keeping the rich culture of the corridor in place and enhancing it so it thrive



- Improving the climate for businesses post-construction, and prioritizing the development of spaces for small businesses



- Providing opportunities for existing residents and businesses to stay in place and feel supported



- Supporting the development, preservation, and access of safe and affordable housing and housing choice



- Ensuring that youth feel safe on and around the lightrail, and feel excited and proud to remain in their communities.

MINNEAPOLIS:

-  Providing opportunities for community to connect to BLRT and development in a joyful way
-  Creating opportunities for community ownership and being able to measure levels of community ownership
-  Empowering community to have control over decision making throughout the corridor
-  Providing opportunities for existing residents and businesses to stay in place and feel supported
-  Addressing reparations to the Harrison neighborhood from previous route alignment

-  Creating and enforcing structures of accountability for government agencies along the alignment
-  Ensuring that there are sufficient resources to support policy implementation, organizing efforts, community development and ownership, and other anti-displacement strategies
-  Ensuring that there is access to land, housing and businesses in the corridor throughout all phases of construction
-  Ensuring that 50% of jobs from the Bottineau Light Rail development are held by corridor residents
-  Ensuring that there is a continued role for ADWG members throughout all phases of the project

CRYSTAL/ROBBINSDALE:

-  Addressing indirect construction impacts
-  Improving the climate for businesses post-construction, and prioritizing the development of spaces for small businesses
-  Improving infrastructure around the project
-  Supporting the development, preservation, and access of safe and affordable housing and housing choice
-  Keeping the rich culture of the corridor in place and enhancing it so it thrives
-  Ensuring that there are sufficient resources to support policy implementation, organizing efforts, community development and ownership, and other anti-displacement strategies



TIMELINE

The ADWG was also considerate of the implementation timing of each policy recommendation. Anti-displacement strategies need to consider whether policies should be implemented prior to construction, during construction, or after construction because it is important to know when a particular type of displacement pressure needs to be mitigated. The majority of anti-displacement policies need to be implemented prior to construction. Our research suggests that in a lot of cases, early implementation will lead to more effective displacement mitigation. Each policy in the section below talks about when each policy will be effective as recommended by the Anti-Displacement Work Group.

POLICIES:

- Mandatory Relocation Assistance
- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase
- Limiting Investor Purchasing/
Corporate Ownership
- Land Disposition Policy
- Right to Return
- Rent Stabilization
- Commercial and Residential
Land Trusts
- Financial Resources for Organizing
the Right to Organize
- Zero to Low Interest Loans
- Small Business Grants/Small Business
Support
- Workforce Programs
- NOAH Preservation
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Universal Basic Income/Guaranteed
Basic Income
- Right to Counsel
- Tenant Screening Reform
- Cultural Placekeeping/Placemaking

NEXT STEPS

ADWG recommendations are reflective of the process workgroup members collectively worked through, the hopes and needs of the larger communities they work and live in, a wide body of research, and insight regarding the practicality of implementation. However, policy recommendations are not ready to be implemented; governments, philanthropies, and other private organizations will still need to refine these recommendations and process them through official policy making structures.

While the workgroup discussed possibilities for funding, which include a mixture of local,

regional, and federal funds, making any concrete recommendations or decisions around resources was outside the scope of this phase of the project.

The project imagines that the next phase will make these ideas more concrete as they are received by various stakeholders, who must show high levels of participation and investment in order to see recommendations implemented at their highest value.

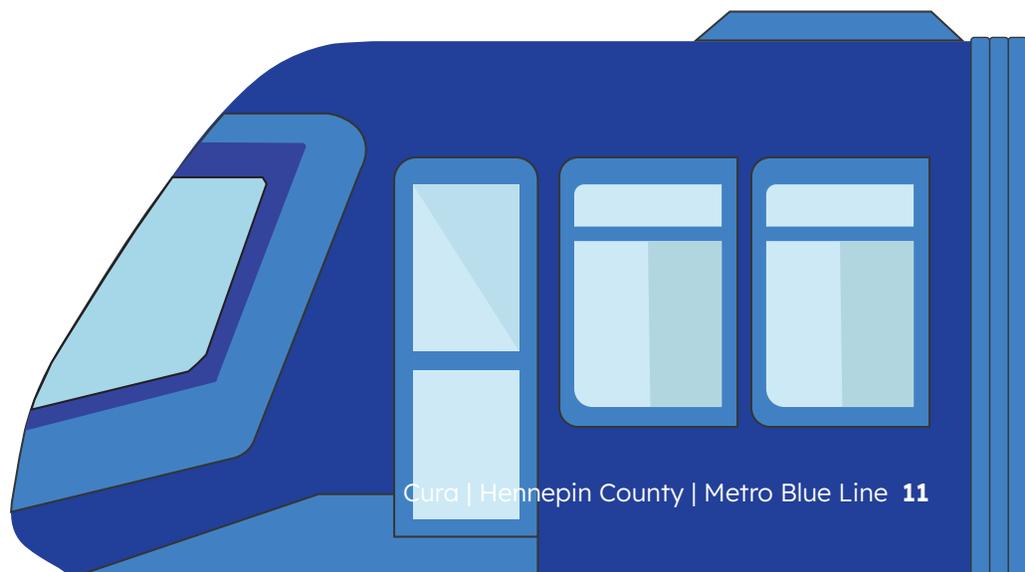
THE ADWG RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE THE END OF 2023 IN ORDER TO ENSURE A TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-DISPLACEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES:

1. The creation of a regional group to continue the conversations about corridor-wide implementation of anti-displacement policies and strategies
2. The creation of local government groups to receive the recommendations of the ADWG and to begin bringing recommended policies through official policy making processes
3. The creation of a dedicated regional anti-displacement funding to support policy implementation, organizing efforts, and other anti-displacement strategies
4. Aligning anti-displacement research and recommendations with Blue Line Extension supplemental environmental impact statement mitigation measures
5. Developing a corridor-wide supported anti-displacement policy agenda for 2024 state legislative session

Structures of accountability to these recommendations are necessary to give community confidence that the Blue Line Extension will come with strong anti-displacement interventions.

One workgroup member used the analogy that the community knows the Blue Line Extension will be built because everything in its structure says it will be built; the Blue Line Extension has a project office that is well funded, has engineers and other relevant staff, and can clearly define its next steps out to the time the line will be completed. In contrast, anti-displacement efforts do not currently have dedicated staff, dedicated funding, and have a lack of clear next steps towards policy implementation.

In order to give communities confidence that anti-displacement interventions will be a guaranteed and central aspect of the Blue Line extension, they need to be accompanied by dedicated and continuous funding, staff support, technical assistance, and enforced accountability mechanisms.



ANTI-DISPLACEMENT WORKGROUP FRAMEWORK

