



Suburban Gentrification: Change, Stasis, and TOD along the Purple Line

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Abstract

The Washington Metropolitan area has been growing rapidly and experiencing gentrification since the 1980s. Contemporaneously, a light rail corridor in the inner suburbs was planned and is currently being constructed. This light rail, Maryland's Purple Line, travels through dense urban areas, post-war era suburbs, and through a series of dense low-income immigrant gateway neighborhoods. Through a case study of the Purple Line during the construction phase, this paper examines the costs and benefits of the modern paradigm of transit-oriented development. Qualitative evidence suggests that the benefits of the line may be imbalanced against its costs in the short run, especially with respect to housing stability and affordability, displacement, and neighborhood change. Furthermore, this paper argues that displacement due to transit investment can occur prior to the opening of new transit lines. In light of this, the tenuous political coalitions that support construction of light rail will have to adjust to be more inclusive of equity, vulnerable populations, and provision of affordable housing.

Keywords

transit-oriented development, gentrification, light rail, displacement

Introduction

For decades, planners in North American metropolitan areas have advanced the construction of light rail transit (LRT) systems as a more viable, cost-effective alternative to further investment in heavy rail. In the 1980s, these systems were seen as a less expensive and more easily constructed way to carry more people than bus transit, provide higher quality service, relieve highway congestion, and focus urban growth (Cervero 1984). These factors, coupled with a lack of political support for more expensive heavy rail, resulted in a significant expansion of systems, new lines, and extensions. From 1978¹ to 2022, thirty cities or metropolitan areas have built over 100 unique light rail lines. Just under half of those have opened since 2010 and a further twenty-four are currently under construction, all with estimated completion dates by 2030 (Freemark and Vance, 2023). Dozens more are in the planning process or in early proposal stages.

These systems have in aggregate cost tens of billions of dollars and have had dynamic impacts on their home regions. Their myriad effects on the built environment and travel patterns have spawned entire subfields of urban studies research on ridership, land use and transit-oriented development (TOD), gentrification, sustainability, housing and land prices, and more. In the Washington, DC metropolitan area, a shifting coalition of political support

succeeded, despite numerous setbacks, in approving and funding the currently under-construction Purple Line. The Purple Line is the DC area's first addition of light rail, due to open in 2027 in Maryland's inner suburbs. The Purple Line Corridor,² or the area roughly one mile around the line, has become a local flashpoint in political battles over provision of affordable housing, gentrification, displacement, densification, and economic growth.

In this qualitative, case study-based research, the Purple Line serves a case study to analyze the impacts of light rail construction and TOD on residents in the preoperative, construction phase. Residents in the Corridor were already dealing with twenty-first-century challenges of urban growth and change in this rapidly growing, and gentrifying, metropolitan area. Speculative action in the real estate market, attributable to the Purple Line, is already causing higher home and rent prices (Peng and Knaap 2023; Peng, Knaap, and Finio 2024). Purple Line neighborhoods are already

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gentrifying, and small businesses are being impacted by speculation and construction (Finio 2023). Just a few miles away in the community of Wheaton, suburban redevelopment and gentrification around a redeveloping TOD node has resulted in uneven growth and vulnerability for immigrant-owned businesses (Lung-Amam 2021). As residents avoid the obstacles created by construction, they also must confront neighborhood change, avoid risks to housing stability, and go about daily life in a battleground of the complex politics of TOD and transit investment. Through participatory action and qualitative research, this paper addresses the following research questions: how do residents in a potentially gentrifying neighborhood perceive this investment in the Purple Line in the context of potential gentrification and displacement, how is the pre-construction phase affecting them, and how do they think it will change their neighborhood?

These questions are of importance as political and societal attention has turned increasingly toward equity. Questions over real estate development, provision of transit, and more have been increasingly linked to housing stability and the ongoing debate over housing supply, making the nexus of planning issues around transit and land use a focal point for these equity debates. Construction of LRT has, with some conflicting evidence and dependence on neighborhood context, been linked to gentrification of adjacent neighborhoods (Baker and Lee 2019; Chava and Renne 2022; Nilsson and Delmelle 2018). In the modern era, scholars generally agree that gentrification is the influx of new investment and new residents with higher incomes and educational attainment into a neighborhood (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris 2019). There is a growing body of evidence that displacement, a component of gentrification, can have deleterious effects on the well-being of people who are displaced (Brown-Saracino 2017; Dawkins 2023). Furthermore, recent evidence from Vancouver, BC shows that vulnerable residents near a new TOD node have been both indirectly and directly displaced because of development processes (Jones 2023). On the other hand, some long-term quantitative work has found that low-income individuals in transit neighborhoods are no more likely to be displaced than peers elsewhere, and that transit stations do not necessarily worsen income segregation once they are operational (Delmelle and Nilsson 2020; Nilsson and Delmelle 2020).

This article explores these issues and addresses a critical research gap. As Ellis-Young and Doucet (2024) note, gentrification's forms and impacts on individuals cannot be understood solely through quantitative analysis. The lived experiences of residents navigating planning for light rail, TOD, gentrification, and displacement have only been explored in a few metropolitan regions. Furthermore, there is a relative lack of work in the preoperative (construction phase) qualitative work showing if and how residents perceive and experience gentrification and displacement, despite quantitative evidence which shows that rail transit

construction can have preoperational economic and social impacts. This paper is organized as follows. In the first section, there is a review of literature on the effects of light rail construction on cities and communities; this literature review also connects this body of work to recent work on suburban redevelopment. The second section presents geographic and historical context for the Washington metropolitan area, the Purple Line itself, and the Long Branch neighborhood in Montgomery County, which is the focus of qualitative research for this article. The next section describes the qualitative methodology, and the following section synthesizes results from the qualitative data. The results are placed in context with the literature review in the penultimate section through discussion. The final section concludes and offers directions for further research.

Literature Review

This article references transit-induced gentrification and displacement in an epistemological framework following Dawkins and Moeckel (2016) and Marcuse (1985). Dawkins and Moeckel (2016) define transit-induced gentrification as displacement of low-income populations likely to benefit from transit access due to the capitalization effects of increased accessibility stemming from new transit. This framework is nested within Marcuse's (1985) conceptualization of displacement, which he describes occurring via several potential means. Direct displacement is when residents are forced to move due to situations outside their control, like rent increases or building sales; exclusionary displacement is the process through which former residents or other low-income residents may be unable to move into gentrified areas due to increased costs. Last is the concept of displacement pressure, or the combined effect of physical and cultural changes on incumbent residents in gentrifying neighborhoods. In this work, we theorize that transit-induced gentrification, and corresponding displacement, can take each of those three forms in the preoperative phase. This literature review discusses how LRT fits into this paradigm of transit-induced gentrification and displacement, both in the preoperative and postoperative phases, and identifies a research gap in the construction phase.

LRT has become the dominant mode of new investment in public transit in North America. Its role as a potential driver of land use change is an oft-cited justification for its construction (Higgins, Ferguson, and Kanaroglou 2014). While investment in LRT may assist cities in reaching climate goals, promote sustainable travel, and revitalize underused urban areas, these improvements and catalyzation of land use change can come at a cost. Echoing the mistakes of planners in past generations, investment in public transportation in the modern context may transform the cultural identity of neighborhoods and force disadvantaged residents to move elsewhere due to increasing land costs (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris 2019).

Mounting evidence over the past several decades has made it clear that with the right conditions, light rail can have significant impacts on nearby land values, driving up commercial and residential property prices and rents (Tehrani, Wu and Roberts 2019). These effects can be anticipatory, with values increasing as soon as station locations have been announced (Knaap, Ding and Hopkins 2001).

Evidence on the economic and social impacts of light rail is murkier. Ferbrache and Knowles (2017) note that while light rail systems may be advertised and justified with their ability to bridge social divides, provide economic development, and connect disadvantaged areas, their practical effects can continue to reproduce social inequalities. In a review, Delmelle (2021) discusses the state of research on impacts of rail transit to residential mobility and neighborhood change. Several studies have tested the theory that low-income residents will move out of transit neighborhoods at higher rates and broadly found that low-income residents are no more likely to move than their peers elsewhere. These studies (and others in the broader gentrification literature outside of the transit context) have argued, with quantitative datasets, that gentrification does not drive displacement of existing residents at disproportionate rates compared to what would be expected elsewhere. This body of quantitative work, however, relies on a narrow definition of displacement, uses data that does not fully illustrate residential moving reasons or decisions, and because of that it remains contested (Rayle 2015; Slater 2009).

There has been less research on the extent of exclusionary displacement as a result of investment in transit, though Delmelle (2021) acknowledges that transit may serve as an accelerator for exclusionary displacement. While some studies have found that social class shifts upward and home prices increase near new transit stations—potential indicators of exclusionary displacement—others have found little evidence of gentrification (Baker and Lee 2019; Chava and Renne 2022). Jones (2023), using Vancouver BC as a case, argues that TOD-based densification unfairly distributes costs onto those least able to pay for the benefits TOD may provide, resulting in displacement. While metropolitan Atlanta has not constructed light rail, numerous new-urbanist style developments, which share a basis in logic and fundamental tenets with TOD, have been found to correlate with increasing populations of high-income white residents (Markley 2018).

The literature on light rail's effects on cities via gentrification and displacement is still relatively new. Delmelle (2021) notes a dearth of qualitative studies on the impacts of new transit on local residents and calls for further research on the topic. This article builds on a body of work, mostly established outside the United States, which has addressed this call. Several papers have provided resident perspectives on the addition of LRT through interviews and focus groups. In Bangkok, Moore (2015) found that mixed extension of mass transit there caused gentrification and displacement, and

residents had mixed opinions on the changes; but negative opinions were prevalent among displaced populations. Jones and Ley (2016) found that transit-accessible neighborhoods near LRT in Vancouver are highly valued by residents, but these residents are at significant risk of displacement. Mayers et al. (2023) conducted interviews prior to the construction of the Hamilton LRT line in Ontario and find high levels of concern about the affordability of housing, which the LRT is viewed to potentially worsen, coupled with disappointment in a lack of community engagement in the LRT planning process. Ellis-Young and Doucet (2024) analyzed the Waterloo region's LRT corridor and conducted interviews immediately after construction, before the system opened. They found that residents associated LRT investment with gentrification, increased housing costs, exclusion, and transformation of smaller-city urban landscapes to a different, more capitalized framework. Ellis-Young and Doucet end their work with a call for more research on TOD, gentrification, and displacement beyond large cities. This article responds to that and Delmelle's (2021) call by analyzing a new LRT system, still under construction, located entirely in a suburban context.

The Purple Line Corridor is a geographic nexus of scholarly attention on neighborhood change, displacement, and gentrification in the suburbs. The community of Langley Park, through which the Purple Line will cross, has received attention for its nexus of planning problems and for active political resistance to neighborhood change (Lung-Amam, Pendall, and Knaap 2019). Suspicions of heavy public investment in transit, due to potential for displacement, exist there among the largely disadvantaged Latinx immigrant communities. This has also been found in other locations receiving LRT investment, like Denver, Oakland, San Diego, and Los Angeles (Jackson and Buckman 2020; Sandoval 2021). Along the Purple Line's path, many low-income residents are skeptical they will be able to benefit from the line, are disappointed with the route it takes, and believe it will benefit outsiders (Wu and Roberts 2022). Recent quantitative research has found that anticipation price effects are already measurable for single-family homes, and more uniquely, for multifamily rents (Peng and Knaap 2023; Peng, Knaap, and Finio 2024). This burdens low-income tenants who have few other transit-accessible choices and who likely face high moving costs, indicating that direct displacement and exclusionary displacement may already be occurring. The Washington metropolitan area has been growing extensively for decades, which is a necessary precondition for new development near urban rail stations (Huang 1996). Hanlon and Airgood-Obyrcki (2018) argue through an investigation of nearby Baltimore's suburbs that redevelopment and infill in inner-ring suburban contexts can result in displacement of low-income residents. The entire path of the Purple Line travels through a similar inner-ring environment. This article adds important context on these issues through focus on one particular part of the Corridor: the Long Branch neighborhood.

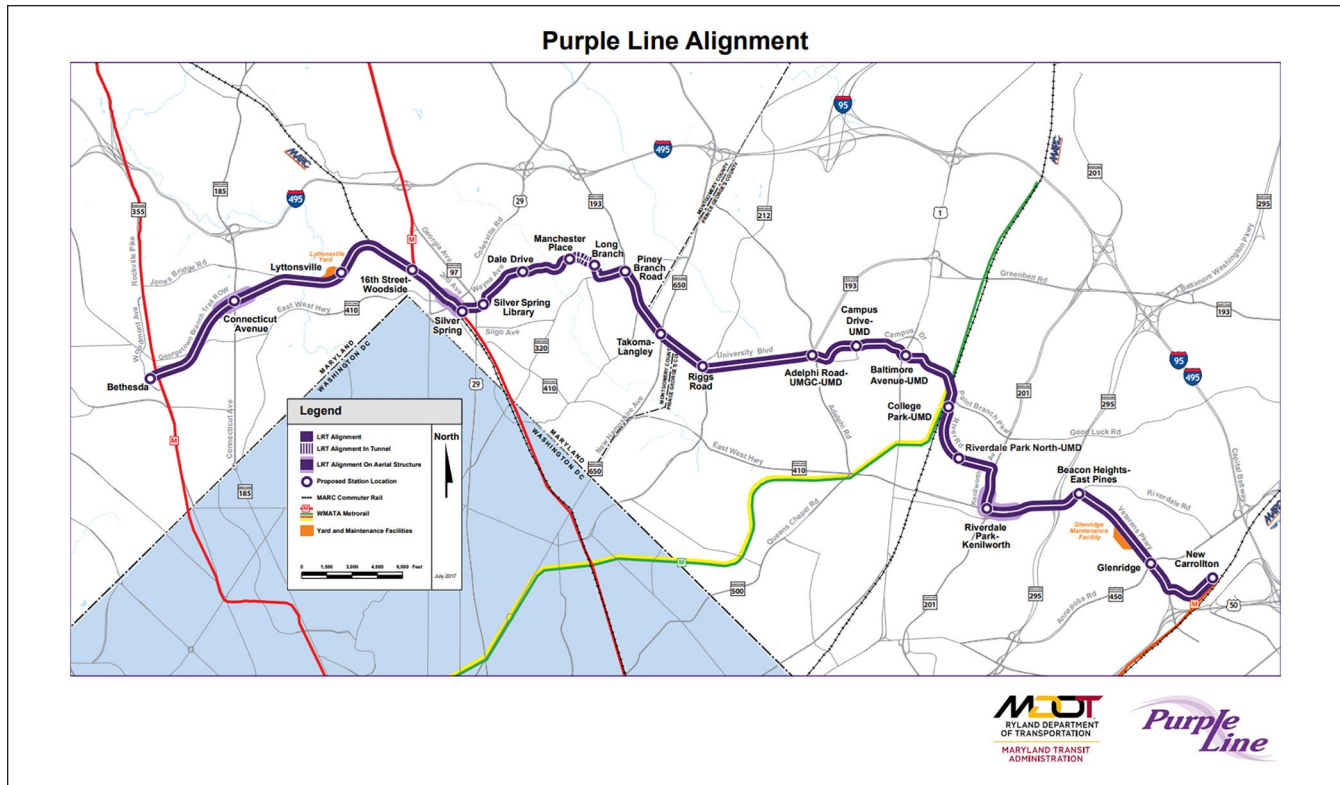


Figure 1. The alignment of the Purple Line.

Source: Maryland Department of Transportation.

Geographic Context: The Washington Metropolitan Area, The Purple Line, and Long Branch

How Did the Purple Line Arrive on the Scene?

The Washington, DC metropolitan area was, for many years, an exception to the trend of increasing investment in light rail. Being one of only a few major American metropolitan areas to invest in a wholly new heavy rail subway system in the post-war era, light rail was largely ignored as a potential public transit mode.³ As recently as the early 2000s, the original Metrorail system was still being expanded along its originally designed spokes into the suburbs, with the completion of the green and extension of the blue line further into Maryland.⁴ Until the late 2010s, no investments to light rail in the Washington Metropolitan area had been made, except for a short streetcar line within the city of Washington itself.

Maryland's Purple Line changed the region's heavy-rail paradigm. This dual-track and mostly at-grade light rail line due to open in 2027 is being funded and built through a public-private partnership. The route has been conceptually planned since the 1980s and runs entirely in the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's (Figure 1). These counties, which surround Washington, DC to the north, east, and southeast, are

home to approximately two million people, making them home to roughly a third of the metropolitan population (United States Census Bureau 2023). While these counties grew by leaps and bounds during the freeway-catalyzed post-war suburban and later exurban expansions, they are also home to a network of dense urban subcenters. To the eyes of most, these inner-ring mixed-use subcenters through which the Purple Line will run—Bethesda, Silver Spring, College Park, and New Carrollton—look like small cities.

These urban areas, which are mostly unincorporated and controlled by the County governments, have grown extensively along Metrorail's Red, Green, and Orange lines. These rail investments provided fixed nodes of dedicated rapid transit and were matched by coordinated planning of dense land uses to capture growth in the office and residential markets. These activity centers have no fixed transit between them from east to west, restricting motorized inter-suburban connectivity to buses and automobiles. Enterprising planners and activists had long noted the potential for a direct, separated transit connection between Bethesda and Silver Spring along a decommissioned branch freight railroad right of way (ROW). This ROW was purchased by Montgomery County in the late 1980s with a future use for public transit envisioned.⁵

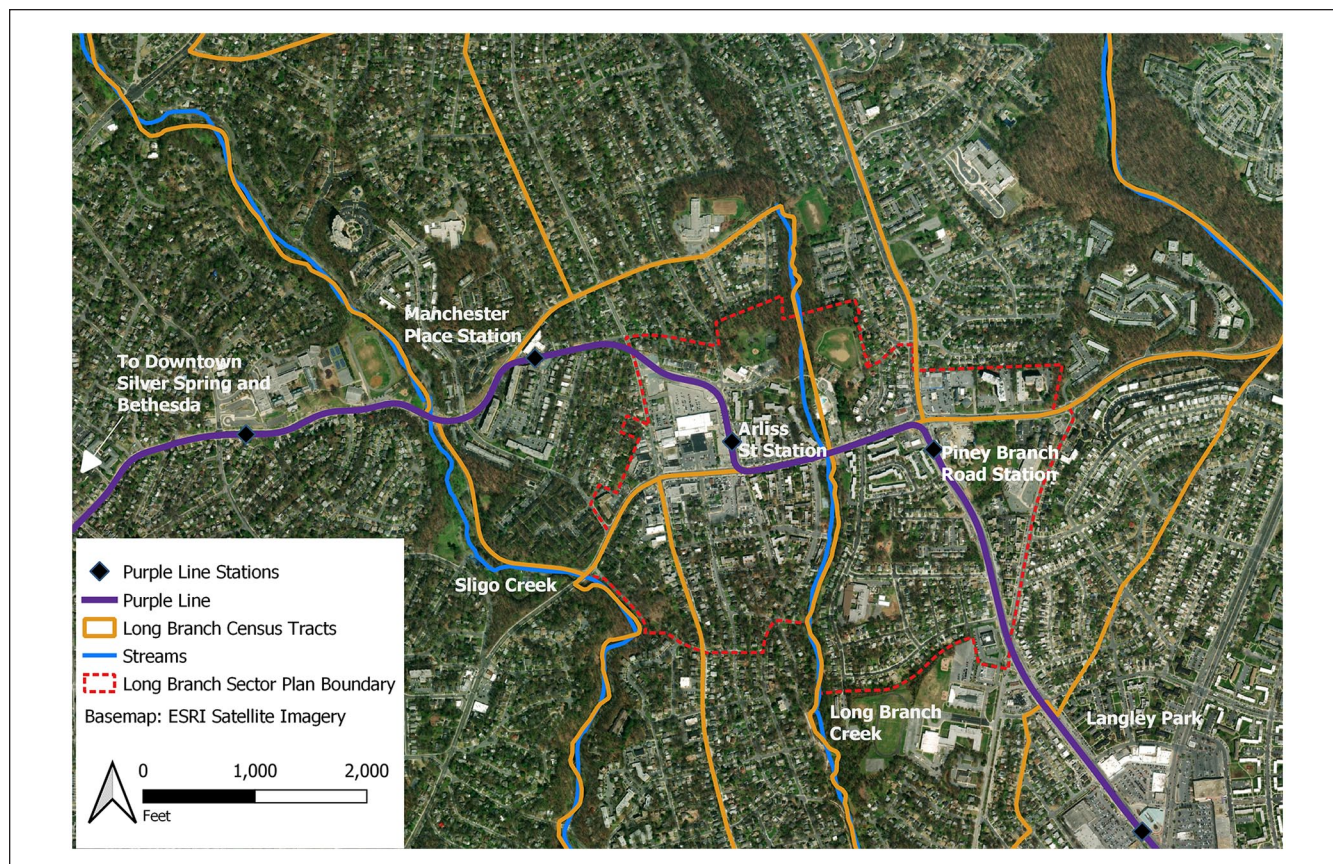


Figure 2. Long branch context map.

As regional frustration with traffic reached a breaking point in the late 1990s and early 2000s, smart growth planning, with a focus on transit and concentration of land use and density, became politically popular in Maryland. East-west travel through the suburbs has few alternatives to the I-495 beltway, and transportation plans in this era considered alternative options for fixed transit that would serve projected dramatic growth in commuting along that path. These early efforts took nearly twenty years to coalesce, as it was not until Governor Martin O'Malley committed capital funding for design and environmental impact studies after his election in 2006 that the Purple Line's planning began in earnest (Action Committee for Transit 2023).

After federal approvals and preliminary engineering were completed, it seemed that the Purple Line was ready to proceed in 2014. A republican governor's unexpected election that year, however, brought uncertainty to the project. Cost-cutting negotiations took months, but the new governor Larry Hogan eventually approved the project. Groundbreaking on the project officially occurred several years later in 2017, after further delays due to lawsuits from nearby landowners. In the intervening years, construction proceeded, but was beset by further delays between 2020 and 2022 as the lead contractors on the project sued the state over cost and

timeline conflicts, and eventually walked away. While work began with a new management team in 2022, the estimated completion date is now projected to be 2027, which would mark ten years of construction, and a delay of five years past initial projected completion dates (Murillo 2023).

Light Rail in the Suburbs

The Purple Line's path carries it through a number of inner-ring suburban neighborhoods circumferential to the region's urban core. In eastern Montgomery County, several stations will serve the unincorporated area unofficially known as "Long Branch." These stations serve a densely populated residential and commercial area that follows several secondary and arterial roads, as illustrated in Figure 2. The community is eponymously named for a small local creek which runs north to south bifurcating the area, itself a tributary of the Anacostia River, which meets the much larger Potomac to the south in Washington, DC. A route through this area, and neighboring Langley Park to the east, was the most direct spatial path for the Purple Line to traverse from the urban core of Silver Spring eastward to the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park (connecting the WMATA red line to the green line). This part of the region, including Long

Table 1. Long Branch Demographics and Socioeconomics, 1970-2019.

	Population	% Non-Hispanic white	Share foreign born	Share BA+	Share HS or less	Share in poverty	Median household income	Housing units	Median home value	Median rent
1970	25,787	81.4%	10.6%	12.6%	32.8%	7.0%	\$70,320	9,391	\$163,966	\$889
1980	24,207	60.4%	21.0%	21.0%	29.9%	10.8%	\$59,652	10,133	\$232,434	\$779
1990	26,418	41.5%	34.6%	25.3%	24.1%	10.6%	\$70,960	10,532	\$308,016	\$1,146
2000	28,650	29.5%	41.9%	25.3%	25.6%	12.1%	\$72,421	10,492	\$243,726	\$973
2008-2012	29,633	27.1%	45.1%	25.5%	27.5%	13.0%	\$76,648	10,524	\$413,206	\$1,175
2015-2019	30,097	26.3%	43.1%	25.8%	26.1%	15.8%	\$76,772	10,401	\$433,657	\$1,324

Source: Brown University Longitudinal Tract Database analysis of 1970-2000 full count and sample data decennial censuses, and 2008-2012 and 2015-2019 ACS Data (Logan et al. 2023).

Note: The 1970 full count census did not account for Hispanic populations, thus the non-Hispanic white figure may include Hispanic populations for that year. Cash values are inflation adjusted to 2019 dollars, using BLS CPI.

Branch, sits roughly along a well-observed regional divide between prosperity to the west and disadvantage to the east (Brookings Institution 1999).

The census tracts that compose Long Branch are part of the Census Designated Place of Silver Spring, which is an unincorporated part of Montgomery County. Population densities in this area are around ten thousand people per square mile, with variation locally based on the composition, placement, and densities of residential buildings. Thus, Long Branch, nominally a suburb, has a population density that rivals that of many cities. This density is grounded in numerous garden-style and small high-rise apartment buildings, which have unit densities around fifty per acre. While most of the area is restricted to residential zoning, the central part of the neighborhood at the intersection of Flower Avenue and Piney Branch Road, though zoned for mixed use, has extensive single-use commercial activity, including grocery stores, restaurants, and numerous other services. Between these apartments and commercial areas which are oriented on the major roads, there are dozens of acres of residential streets with single-family homes on lots ranging from 1/10th to 1/4th acre in size.

The Purple Line will cross the heart of Long Branch, connecting wealthier communities to the west to low-income communities to the east. Two stations—one at the heart of Long Branch at Arliss St. and one on Piney Branch Road—are potentially future nodes of TOD style growth, given permissive TOD-oriented zoning on large nearby lots of land with sole commercial uses. While development at a large scale has not come to Long Branch for decades, just a mile or two to the west in downtown Silver Spring, significant densification and conversion to mixed-use similar parcels has occurred near rail transit.

Long Branch—A Changing Place

The demographic and economic composition of the neighborhoods around the future Purple Line stations in Long Branch has shifted considerably since the 1980s. In those

years, older inner-ring suburbs like Long Branch were eclipsed in preferability by newer homes on larger lots in new suburbs to the north. Home prices in the 1960s through early 1990s were thus relatively stagnant, and rents were cheap. As the Washington, DC region experienced a long economic boom since that period, and affordable and proximate land for new suburbs at the urban fringe was chewed up by the march of sprawl, inner suburbs regained favorability after their period of devalorization (Hanlon and Airgood-Obrycki 2018; Rowlands 2019). This is especially true for transit-accessible inner suburbs like Silver Spring and its sub-neighborhoods like Long Branch, which have high-quality public schools, proximity to public transportation to access the region's core, quick access to highways for automobile travel, parks and trails, walkable commercial amenities, and a varied housing stock. While Long Branch was never wealthy, its favorable geographic location and the Washington region's rapid growth has positioned it to begin to be re-valorized, even as suburban poverty has increased broadly in the region (Hanlon and Airgood-Obrycki 2018).

In Table 1, this increased desirability can be noticed via the increases in median income, home prices, and the share of the population with a bachelor's degree over recent years. Long Branch has seen essentially no housing construction since the 1980s, but its population has steadily increased, primarily due to immigration and an influx of larger families (Table 1).

Also notable in that table is the escalating percentage of residents who are foreign born. Such agglomerations of immigrants are not uncommon locally. Roughly 40 percent of the entire suburban population in the DC metro area lives in immigrant suburbs, where at least 25 percent of the population is foreign born, like Long Branch (Hanlon, Vicino, and Short 2006). Long Branch is adjacent to and less than a mile from Langley Park, a recognized immigrant gateway into the Washington Metropolitan area, particularly for immigrants from Central America (Price et al. 2005). While Long Branch has lower poverty rates than Langley Park, its built environment, demographics, and social context are similar to this

major center for the region's Latino community (Lung-Amam and Dawkins 2020). Accordingly, local challenges with crime, poor quality housing, and public health are much the same in these two areas. This is reflected in the increasing share of residents who live below the poverty line in Long Branch, which has more than doubled since 1970. Immigrant neighborhoods like these are becoming more common in the U.S. metropolitan context, and they typically have lower educational attainment, lower median incomes, a lower white population, and a greater share of Hispanic residents than other neighborhoods (Wei and Knox 2014).

One critical difference between Langley Park and Long Branch is the border between the counties: Montgomery County is well known for having more public amenities, better safety net resources, and higher performing schools than Prince George's. All these factors push rent and housing costs higher. Despite escalating poverty levels and a dramatically increasing share of the population that is nonwhite and foreign born, median home prices have drastically increased in real terms since 2000, and rents are much higher as well.

Long Branch Today, and Tomorrow

Since construction on the Purple Line began in 2017, life in Long Branch has been disrupted. Easy access to the shopping areas at the center of the neighborhood became restricted, some neighborhood streets became closed to all but local resident traffic, arterial roads have had lanes shifted and blocked with the ebbs and flows of construction, sidewalks are inaccessible, and the din of construction noise continues. Furthermore, in this unique part of the alignment, the Purple Line enters a short tunnel east of the Manchester Place station to reduce a steep grade between two creek valleys before exiting near the Arliss station in Long Branch's commercial core. The blasting for this tunnel construction, and associated noise and vibrations, became a source of conflict between the State and local residents (Lewis 2018). By late 2023, heavy construction was ongoing after years of delays and no track was yet visible on the surface of the arterial roads on which the train will travel. All of the delays, and ongoing construction, have potentially added to an atmosphere of displacement pressure that residents must experience as they anticipate change. Amid this daily grind, a broader set of issues is playing out.

While areas to the west along the Purple Line like Chevy Chase and Silver Spring have seen extensive new multifamily and mixed-use construction, the construction in Long Branch is related only to the train. This has not, however, stopped the area from becoming a political flashpoint over transit-induced gentrification. Montgomery County's Executive, Mark Elrich, the de facto mayor for much of the County's unincorporated area including Long Branch, placed himself in the thick of this debate. At a candidate forum prior in 2017 to his election, Mr. Elrich

recalled his days on the County Council, when he opposed the actions of the County's land use and zoning authority (Park and Planning):

When we did the Long Branch plan, and Park and Planning came in and said we want to rezone all the existing housing in Long Branch, I accused the Planning Board of ethnic cleansing. And I said some people do it with the gun, you guys are doing it with the pen but the truth is those folks would be gone and they would be gone forever. (Tallman 2017)

Mr. Elrich was referring to the 2013 Long Branch Sector Plan, a comprehensive plan for the area immediately surrounding two of the Long Branch Purple Line stations, and he equated transit-induced gentrification and direct and exclusionary displacement of low-income, immigrant residents of Long Branch with ethnic cleansing. This plan was one of the first land use governing sector plans to be completed along the Purple Line's alignment after its approval became more politically guaranteed. During the planning process for the Long Branch Sector Plan, planners considered increasing the zoned density and liberalizing allowed uses on the parcels of many large garden apartment complexes, which rented below market-rate levels. The goal was to increase density around the future stations, following the TOD paradigm.

A successful set of interest groups, arguing against potential displacement of primarily low-income Latinx residents, lobbied the planning board and County Council to block this rezoning of existing residential use and limit any upzoning to higher density mixed-use zoning to existing commercial parcels. A member of the planning board⁶ at the time who was in favor of rezoning most of the multifamily parcels recalled that a powerful faction on the County Council believed that market rate development would drive displacement (C. Anderson, personal communication 2023). The eventually passed sector plan states "the Purple Line could impact real estate values and drive up prices. To prevent the loss of market affordable units and potential displacement of lower-income residents, the Plan recommends retaining the zoning on most of the existing multifamily developments" (Montgomery County Planning Department 2013, 20).

While this compromise signaled a desire to promote housing stability for current residents by restricting future development, it does not prevent the sale, remodel, and/or turnover of existing structures or units at higher prices. The same plan stated it "reconfirm[s] existing single-family residential zones in established single-family neighborhoods to maintain a varied residential character," locking single-family zoning in place (Montgomery County Planning Department 2013, 34). At the time, discussion of liberalization of single-family zoning to allow denser uses was not on the table, despite this land use making up the bulk of the land in the area (C. Anderson, personal communication 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic turned up the volume on these issues in the years after the plan was passed. The affordability of rent became a major political issue in the County, and in 2023, the County passed a rent stabilization bill that impacts all older multifamily buildings in communities like Long Branch. These issues are continuously debated publicly, including at a public rent control forum in Long Branch in 2023 where residents and advocates stressed that hundreds of affordable housing units could be lost in redevelopment processes without greater protections (Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research [CHEER] 2023).

The plight of neighborhoods like Long Branch is visible to a broad group of actors called the Purple Line Corridor Coalition (PLCC) which has focused attention on the Corridor for some time. This Coalition, anchored at the nearby University of Maryland, College Park, works to build a more equitable transit corridor across four goal areas: housing, small business, workforce, and placemaking (Purple Line Corridor Coalition 2019). One affordable housing organization that is part of the PLCC is already working to renovate an existing subsidized apartment complex and build more units on the property, all with income restricted rents. This property is located just east of the Piney Branch road station (Martin 2021).

Given these ongoing debates about displacement, rent increases, the construction, and organizing, many local residents are aware of the context of conflict surrounding the Purple Line. They and their elected leaders may be conflicted over whether the Purple Line will be good or bad on the whole; but it will undoubtedly bring change. In Montgomery County, these debates are not unfamiliar. Just four miles to the northwest, the inner-suburban unincorporated area of Wheaton, a place with similar demographics and socioeconomic conditions to Long Branch, has experienced similar challenges. Wheaton, however, has hosted a station on the WMATA red line since 1990, making it a locus of redevelopment for a much longer period. As Lung-Amam (2021) explained, gentrification and displacement has come to these suburban TOD areas, and community activists are responding, asking suburban government to pair redevelopment plans with equitable growth and anti-displacement policies. In the next section, the methodology for further qualitative analysis of these issues in Long Branch is explained.

Methodology

Empirical research for this article was primarily qualitative, with the main source being focus groups, and the second source being knowledge and experience as a participant scholar. The author has been engaged in the activities of the PLCC for a decade as a researcher and staff member developing reports, applying for grants, and working with stakeholders to achieve the PLCC's goals. That work has been conducted during the author's time as a Master's and PhD

student in Urban Planning at the University of Maryland, College Park, and as an assistant research professor at the same institution. Until this research occurred, the author had not directly engaged in advocacy or neighborhood-level research in the Long Branch area. The author had been engaged in Corridor-wide efforts to support provision and preservation of affordable housing, retention of small businesses, and safe access to Purple Line Stations. The author also lives a mile west of Long Branch in Silver Spring and frequents the area. Given the author's junior position in academia, residents of Long Branch were not familiar with him prior to the research effort.

Information used to contextualize the focus groups and provide background for this article included primary source knowledge from the author's years as a participant and observer in the Purple Line's planning process. The author also reviewed primary and secondary documents related to urban planning in the Corridor, and analyzed data gathered from personal communication through work efforts to support the PLCC.

Focus groups to discuss displacement and the Purple Line were conducted in the spring of 2023 in Long Branch. The focus groups were conducted with the support of a local nonprofit based in Long Branch, Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research (CHEER). CHEER conducts a variety of local community development efforts including public health outreach, food distribution, political organizing, and youth programming, among other activities. CHEER recruited focus group participants via email through several means. First, they recruited via emails they had gathered from neighborhood residents during their health outreach events; second, they reached out to neighborhood residents who had attended a recent planning process organized by CHEER for community visioning in the neighborhood; third, they reached out to their volunteer network. Focus group participants were compensated for their time with local grocery store gift cards.

The first focus group included nine people, the second seven, and the third twelve, for a total of twenty-eight unique participants. All participants were adults (over the age of eighteen) and residents of the Long Branch area shown in Figure 2. While no demographic information was directly collected on immigration status, housing tenure, income, or age, the author did take observational notes. The age mix was broad, skewing older, with only about one third of participants under forty; there was also a relatively even mix of participants by gender. The participants in the first focus group all indicated that they were immigrants, except for the youngest, who was born in the United States to immigrant parents. In the second focus group, no participants were recent immigrants or children of immigrants, but in the last focus group, three were east African immigrants. Thus, just under half the participants were members of the immigrant communities in Long Branch, roughly mirroring the percent of residents who are foreign born

(Table 1). The remaining focus group members were mostly white. About half of the participants were homeowners, and half were renters.

The author observed and took notes while a facilitator, a volunteer with CHEER, moderated the focus group sessions. The first focus group was conducted in Spanish with a native Spanish-speaking facilitator (also a volunteer with CHEER) and native Spanish-speaking participants. Each session took roughly ninety minutes and was audio recorded with a smart phone. These audio transcripts were digitally transcribed using otter.ai transcription software and then manually corrected by a graduate student who cross-referenced the audio against the computer-generated transcripts. These complete, corrected transcripts were coded and analyzed using the NVivo software package.

Focus group participants were asked questions organized into three broad categories. In the first category, focused on the present day, participants were asked about their awareness of the Purple Line project, what people are saying about the project, their feelings on the project, and the impacts of construction. In the second section, which focused on gentrification, displacement, and housing costs, participants were asked about their current perspectives on gentrification, difficulties with housing costs as renters or owners, if they felt they needed to move, and where they would go if they had to leave. These questions sought to bring forward perspectives on direct and exclusionary displacement without using academic language. In the final section, which focused on neighborhood change and the future, participants were asked more broadly about how the neighborhood of Long Branch is changing: are the businesses different, are new people moving in who are different in some way, are certain people leaving. Finally, they were also asked how they think the Purple Line will change the area in the future. These questions were designed to illuminate resident perspectives on displacement pressure, both present and future.

Results

Residents in Long Branch across the economic spectrum are aware of the unique context in which they live. While it is made perhaps more noticeable by the Purple Line construction, those who have been in the neighborhood for a longer period of time have seen significant change in the Washington metropolitan area and are beginning to notice it in their own neighborhood.

Construction and the Line Itself

Across strata of gender, income, age, and housing tenure, residents of Long Branch are frustrated with the slow, nuisance generating progress of construction. While some residents expressed tolerance for this current burden, as they looked forward to eventual service, they were in the minority. Residents are particularly frustrated with the condition of

surface streets, which have been repeatedly torn apart and reconstructed for utility relocation and road widening, with no improvements for pedestrians or train tracks yet visible. One resident said “I’ve been very very frustrated so far with the construction . . . it’s been a horror for anybody with disabilities.” Another agreed and noted “this is extremely dangerous for me, an able-bodied person with no kids.”

Several residents noted they have paid more to repair their cars—including replacing tires—since construction began, blaming difficulties on poorly maintained roads. One resident, in Spanish, noted that “I sometimes have to turn around because there’s a road that isn’t very good,” and another responded “we have to use alternate routes, even if they’re farther, to avoid any damage to the car.”

Others were aggravated by blocked access to sidewalks, parking spaces, their apartment buildings, and shopping centers. The quagmire of delays that befell the project beginning in 2020 was particularly frustrating for these residents, as they saw construction sites sit idle, with streetcorners, empty lots, and pieces of the neighborhood in tatters. Summing up these opinions, one participant in the second focus group stated that “the whole construction process . . . it’s been a stupendously huge disaster.”

More interestingly, more than five years into the construction process, many residents are unaware of the exact details of how the Purple Line will function. The line, except for the small tunnel, will travel at grade on surface streets. Perhaps due to the designation as “the Purple Line”—a color, just like Metrorail lines—a few residents seemed to assume the Purple Line would travel wholly underground (although several nearby metro lines have significant above-ground portions). A few assumed it would go into Washington directly at some point on its route, like all the other metro lines. One Spanish-speaking resident, expressing surprise said “so, it won’t connect to Washington?” Another followed up and asked if it would connect to Wheaton, but others who understood the route corrected them. These findings present an interesting parallel to the work of Mayers et al. (2023), who found extensive frustration with a lack of community engagement in neighborhoods affected by LRT, despite public debate and news media coverage of the project.

Most, however, were aware that it could get them to College Park, Silver Spring, or Bethesda without using the bus. When asked whether or not they would use the line, responses varied. Most indicated that they may use it for short trips or to replace bus travel, but many residents noted it would not replace car trips for shopping or commuting.

Gentrification

Asked to define or relate what gentrification means to them, many residents turned toward local examples. Roughly half the residents in the focus groups had little to say about gentrification, instead preferring to talk about current issues in their neighborhoods rather than abstractly discussing gentrification.

In the Spanish-speaking focus group, when asked if they had heard of the term gentrification or what it means, the first person to speak argued “it [means] like displacing people or something . . . when they kick out the poor.” Another resident in the same focus group said, “it’s already happening.” In an English-speaking focus group, one resident succinctly defined the context: “gentrification has been going on here [the region] for a long time, [and] it has just spread over here [to Long Branch] . . . the Purple Line is going to accelerate it.”

In multiple instances in separate focus groups, some residents brought up gentrification and neighborhood change that has occurred in neighborhoods of northwest Washington, DC, like U Street, Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, and Petworth. One resident said, “I think it [the Purple Line] will exacerbate gentrification like we’ve seen on 14th Street” (a main commercial corridor through several of the above neighborhoods). These neighborhoods have become dramatically more expensive since the 1980s, and since have lost a large part of their diverse populations and culture, though retained affordable subsidized housing (Howell 2016).

One young, white male resident described himself as “a poster child for gentrification” who has moved between gentrifying areas of the DC region, before ending up in Long Branch to find low-cost housing. He feared that what he had seen happen in other neighborhoods, in terms of cost escalation, would happen in his new home. Another older resident related the Mt. Pleasant uprisings of 1991 to what could potentially happen along the Purple Line. Mt. Pleasant is a gentrified neighborhood of the northwest quadrant of Washington, DC, roughly five miles from Long Branch, which has long had a large immigrant population, particularly from Central America. As a resident of that area at that time, he witnessed the explosion of violence and tension that occurred there after a police officer shot a young Salvadoran immigrant, leading to days of unrest (Scallen 2020). The resident connected the Mt. Pleasant uprising to over-policing, rooted in cultural differences between white gentrifiers suspicious of recent immigrants. This resident feared that the Purple Line could catalyze similar cultural displacement and conflict between white gentrifiers and a new wave of immigrants in his current neighborhood in Long Branch. Others related to gentrification via the commercial side, fearing loss of neighborhood businesses and replacement with national chains like Starbucks. A few residents declared that gentrification was already happening because of the Purple Line’s construction, or had already happened, specifically in reference to escalating home price and rental costs and wealthier newcomers.

Housing Costs

While discussion of gentrification was comparatively sparse, residents were eager to share their experiences and worries over housing costs. This was particularly true for renters, though homeowners had their own separate concerns. Renters

uniformly noted that their rent costs had been escalating in recent years, and particularly since the pandemic. Others noted that in addition to rent costs rising, landlords were suddenly charging more for parking, laundry, utilities, and other amenities. Some renters noted that while utilities were previously included in rent, they were now being charged separately for those, increasing total housing costs. One Spanish-speaking renter said, “before, I paid only for electricity, now I have to pay for water and gas. They’ve separated everything.” Another younger participant noted that “I’ve lived with my mom for quite a while now, and that was in large part [due] to housing prices.”

In a few cases, tenants expressed dismay with the state of their apartments and indicated that landlords were reluctant or unable to make basic quality of life repairs to their units, such as for broken cabinetry. One resident said, “many landlords are taking advantage of people . . . they want to get rid of us.” Another followed up and said, “the maintenance service is bad . . . they don’t show up.” While none of these renters mentioned being displaced directly, themselves they are arguably beginning to feel displacement pressure on multiple fronts due to these increased costs.

Several individuals of retirement age expressed a mix of dismay and satisfaction with the escalation in single-family home prices, in separate focus groups. One homeowner noted that these value increases have impacted property taxes, saying “in 2020, I paid \$3,600 in taxes for the house per year, now [2023] it went up to \$4,200.” All agreed that they would be unable to qualify to afford a newly purchased home in the neighborhood today, ignoring their homeownership equity gains. Long-tenured participant homeowners acknowledged their personal gain in terms of real estate asset prices but noted their frustration with a lack of other homeownership options besides single-family homes. If they wanted to stay in the area, downsizing was not a realistic or affordable option, as a senior noted: “I would love to move from my home because it’s getting too much for me to handle, but there is no place for me to move to . . . I can’t afford to sell my house.” Residents are experiencing displacement pressure, but some seniors who have planned well financially are able to stay in their single-family homes so long as they are healthy and mobile.

Others discussed that the types of professionals they knew bought homes in the area twenty or more years ago are no longer able to do so: teachers, public servants, blue-collar workers. These prior types of in-movers have been replaced by a more professional class with higher incomes. As one homeowner noted, “for most of the people that that live [in Long Branch], there is no way they could ever afford to buy.” A few noted the mismatch between their status as retired couples, or singles, in large homes; when they knew young immigrant families in the neighborhood were crowded into smaller apartments. Others noted that their children would be unable to afford to purchase homes in the area, a form of exclusionary displacement.

Displacement

Residents were asked directly about potential displacement. When asked where they would go if they had to move due to increased housing costs, renters had several immediate reactions. A Latinx resident said he would relocate further out in the metropolitan area, to Laurel, a growing exurban community between Washington and Baltimore. Others said they would move in with family, or potentially relocate to an entirely different state where housing costs were lower. One renter said, “I’m considering going to Baltimore,” in search of cheaper housing. Another resident recalled an acquaintance who had full-time employment, but was denied a rental application for a two-bedroom apartment for lack of income. The resident speculated that they were “underscoring the difficulty of being able to maintain living quarters as a renter . . . which is why people are moving out to Frederick” (a neighboring County with lower housing costs).

Homeowners indicated they did not expect to have to move, but noted they were locked in their current house due to dramatic increases in housing prices, and steep current interest rates. Homeowners also noted increases in property taxes because rising assessed values were becoming burdensome.

Renters and homeowners agreed on their preference to stay within Montgomery County if possible. Those with children expressed that they felt the schools were of a much higher quality versus neighboring Prince George’s County. People of all ages said that Montgomery County offered better amenities and services for residents. One Spanish-speaking resident said, “it’s something very difficult and complicated, because one says we’ll move for the rent, to find a cheaper rent. But [we] also have to think about the benefits, the schools [here in Long Branch].” All feared that escalating costs could push them to Prince George’s County, which they viewed more negatively, though some noted slightly more affordable housing costs would be available there.

Although exclusionary displacement was not mentioned directly, the discussion of schools and housing prices was set within this framework. Residents uniformly like the neighborhood and want to stay but are concerned they won’t be able to afford it in the future. One Spanish-speaking resident noted that the Purple Line “would benefit the people who work in offices,” while another agreed and clarified and said “yes . . . the professionals.” The first speaker continued and said “we would essentially be displaced . . . we would have to go to other places on the outskirts of Montgomery [County] or somewhere else.”

One older black resident discussed her fears and perspective as a long-term renter in the Washington, DC region:

As a serial renter . . . since the 70s, I’ve never really wanted the best place I could afford [meaning the most expensive, nicest apartment in the nicest building], but the best community I could help develop. And I see that being less and less possible for people who are current renters . . . There’s just no way to be able to stay here.

Her comments sparked a general discussion about the cost of rent, with many older residents expressing statements like “I just don’t know how y’all do it” in reference to younger people affording high monthly rent prices.

Neighborhood Change and the Future of Long Branch

Residents had varied perspectives on changes they’d seen in the neighborhood, and what the Purple Line could mean for the future. These concerns were broadly divided into two camps, both focused on in-movement of higher income residents: residential change and commercial change. There was immediate agreement, with no dissent, that the Purple Line would serve as a catalyst for these changes. Some noted positively that the Purple Line would bring more foot traffic to businesses, and thus, the area could support more or different retail. It was implied that this would provide more retail options for local residents, which could be a good thing. Others noted it would increase land values, changing the commercial and residential rent market as both people and businesses would want to locate proximate to transit. However, there was general agreement in the focus groups, particularly among the Spanish-speaking community, that the new development would be for newcomers, not the existing community. This was primarily in reference to apartment rents, but also in reference to the services to be offered at new commercial spaces, which were perceived to be more expensive. One resident in the third focus group summed up these opinions and argued that “they rezoned this area [Long Branch] . . . that means they are going to wipe out all this area and turn it into offices and residential units, but they are not going to be for the middle class.”

Many participants in the focus groups were relative newcomers and thus had not seen much change in the community. Older homeowners or long-time tenants noted that the single-family homes were starting to turn over to a more professional class of young homeowners. Some noted that Latinx homeowners were being replaced by white homeowners. Some Latinx residents who had been in the area for a while noted that they saw fewer “Americans” in the commercial areas and ascribed that difference to recent crime increases. Others feared that the presence of transit would bring crime and vagrancy.

Most agreed that Long Branch has not yet seen any form of commercial gentrification, like what has occurred along H St NE in Washington, DC or other nearby neighborhoods like downtown Silver Spring. Some noted that there has been change or turnover in small businesses, but what's currently present in the commercial strip malls caters to a low-income services market. Nearly all present agreed that new development could push out existing mom-and-pop style businesses and favored local establishments like a major grocery store. This was seen as a potential loss, despite some expressing dissatisfaction with the loss of stores years ago, which had since been replaced with more down-market options.

Discussion

While the academy debates the scope and impact of transit-induced gentrification, these concepts are already deeply ingrained in the local conventional wisdom in the Washington metropolitan area. Decades of growth around transit-based activity centers radiating out from the region's core have shown residents—both new and long term—that change can happen fast. The residents who participated in focus groups are aware that this change may come to their community, and they are wary of displacement pressure, direct displacement, and exclusionary displacement (Marcuse 1985). Income sorting near the future Purple Line may already be occurring, and residents implicitly understand that this may accelerate once the line opens. These experiences inform the answer to the first research question about how residents perceive the investment in the Purple Line in the context of potential gentrification and displacement. Residents strongly believe that the Purple Line will be, or indeed already has been, a catalyst for gentrification; Dawkins and Moeckel's (2016) conception of transit-induced gentrification appears to be common knowledge. Most feared displacement for themselves or others, with housing tenure providing nuance. Having to move away due to higher costs would mean loss of schools, amenities, social networks, and home.

Disruptions to daily life, housing costs, and displacement were the primary focus with respect to the second research question on the effects of the construction phase Purple Line. Practical concerns at present focused on the difficulties that a massive construction project brings to a previously quiet corner of a suburban area that had not seen much change for decades. Daily life, in terms of accessing home, school, or services, is simply disrupted by noise, detours, and delays. All residents were concerned about current and future housing prices and how the Purple Line could change the cost of housing in the neighborhood. Others reported dissatisfaction with apartment quality, increasing fees for basic services like laundry, utilities, or parking. These findings align other recent qualitative research on perspectives on LRT's impact on neighborhoods, wherein residents were broadly found to be very concerned about escalating housing costs (Ellis-Young and Doucet 2024; Mayers et al. 2023).

Exclusionary displacement, as defined by Marcuse (1985, 206–07) notes that “exclusionary displacement from gentrification occurs when any household is not permitted to move into a dwelling, by change in conditions that affects the dwelling *or its immediate surroundings*” (emphasis by the author). In the case of the Purple Line—its construction, years in advance of its operation—may be driving exclusionary displacement by changing the quality of the immediate surroundings. This could occur through the noise and disruption of construction, speculative action by landlords (Peng, Knaap and Finio 2023), or a combination of both.

The final research question took these concerns into the future, asking residents how they thought the Purple Line would change their neighborhood. Here, the primary focus was again on housing and development, as residents figured that the Purple Line would eventually attract new commercial and residential development. This was viewed as an amenity for a higher income class, and not for current residents, reflecting findings of Markley (2018) with respect to up-scale development. A feeling permeated across the focus groups, especially from lower income renters, that any change the Purple Line would bring would not be for them. This belief was specifically held in reference to the generation of new residential and commercial space near stations. Residents are already experiencing displacement pressure, they anticipate increased displacement pressure, and predict future exclusionary displacement in these residential and commercial spaces.

More than a decade ago, the Montgomery County Council decided to restrict potential growth by holding zoning constant in certain multifamily parcels near the Long Branch stations, in response to pressure from concerned residents and interest groups. These groups feared that upzoning existing market-rate affordable housing complexes, as suggested in a draft land use plan, would trigger development and displacement. The Council's actions limited potential development capacity around the stations. These actions, however, represent a unique political action against displacement in the short run, answering calls for anti-displacement action made in the contexts of TOD and inner-suburban redevelopment by Jones (2023) and Hanlon and Airgood-Obrycki (2018), respectively. Montgomery County has long had a politically progressive elected leadership that is responsive to voter and interest group desires (Lung-Amam 2021).

In the ensuing years since the plan passed the Elrich administration and County Council increased the size of the affordable housing trust fund, passed a rent stabilization bill, and have used the County's right of first refusal on apartment complex transactions to arrange affordable housing preservation deals. Limited in their ability to preserve affordable housing due to financial constraints, the Council overruled a pro-growth constituency in a long-range plan and instead signaled prioritizing preservation of existing affordable housing. Despite verbal, financial, and policy commitments to increasing the stock of affordable housing, much of the

housing stock in Long Branch remains at or below market-rate and does not have affordability covenants. This leaves the long-term stability of renters in Long Branch in limbo, matching their comments in the focus groups.

While Long Branch has yet to attract new multifamily and commercial development, escalations in single-family home prices that premiums are already being paid for proximity to the Purple Line (Peng and Knaap 2023). These empirical observations are matched by census data and the experiences residents shared in the focus groups with respect to their own homeownership. Such escalations in home prices, coupled with relatively stagnant median household incomes, can be a leading indicator of imminent gentrification as homebuyers are expecting future value increases (Bunten, Preis and Aron-Dine 2024).

Conclusion

This paper, through qualitative analysis, sought to answer several research questions about the effects of transit investment on neighborhood residents. First, how do residents in this potentially gentrifying neighborhood perceive the Purple Line in the context of potential gentrification and displacement? Intriguingly, residents of all walks of life appear to easily place their neighborhood's context into the context of transit-induced gentrification, seeing their neighborhood has a mirror image of similar places in the region that have gentrified (Dawkins and Moeckel 2016). The story, as it were, is the same everywhere: a lower cost place that is diverse and low income receives a significant public investment, the neighborhood receives more private investment in response, and eventually, many higher income people move in and incumbent low-income residents can no longer afford it. Some residents of Long Branch believe this is already happening due to the construction, others that it has already happened, and some that it will happen soon or after the train has opened. None seemed to believe that the Purple Line would make their neighborhood a less desirable place that would receive less investment.

The other two research questions addressed resident opinions on gentrification and displacement, and the potential broader changes coming to the neighborhood. It is clear that residents are not well informed about the details of the operation of the line or its construction process, perhaps due to years of delays, lawsuits, and on-and-off construction. Residents are somewhat eager to use the line but have lost confidence in the delivery of the project. They are realistic about whether it will replace primarily car-oriented commuting or personal trips, with an assumption that it will not. Residents believe they are already paying higher rent and home prices because of the Purple Line coming, and they believe these will continue to go up. Residents are concerned that businesses they patronize and like are at risk of displacement. In short, residents have been experiencing displacement pressure for years (Marcuse 1985). Evidence

gathered here suggests that increases in housing supply and choice are desirable for local residents. Residents expressed confidence that exclusive luxury style housing would be built and feared the housing options between expensive single-family homes and lower quality garden apartments would not be addressed by plans. In short, residents are wary of transit-induced gentrification and experiencing exclusionary displacement.

This study had several limitations. Participants were relatively representative of area demographics and tenure. Only twenty-eight participants were engaged, which may not have captured the full range of opinion in an area with many thousands of residents. More importantly, residents were recruited via contact lists through past participation in events or awareness of a local nonprofit, possibly making them more likely to be politically opinionated and engaged. Participants also skewed toward being older adults with more free time to participate in evening focus groups, perhaps leaving out families with children in the area. Finally, the author of this article is not a neutral observer, as both a resident of the area for more than a decade and a participant scholar in local urban planning.

Future research in Long Branch and other Corridor neighborhoods is essential to expand upon these findings. First, it will prove valuable to contextualize the changes observed by long-term residents over time, including the experiences of renters, and patterns of relocation and movement into and out of the neighborhood. This could be accomplished through qualitative or quantitative means. Second, the experiences of small business owners, particularly minority business owners, were not covered here, though one bodega owner was present in one of the focus groups.

For planners, this qualitative evidence should bolster the growing consensus that the time to plan for affordable housing, and coordinate anti-displacement policy, is well before large public investments begin construction (Ellis-Young and Doucet 2024). The same is true for protecting local small businesses. These conclusions support those of Lung-Amam (2021), in the need to support suburban immigrant-owned businesses, and Hanlon and Airgood-Obrycki (2018), in the call for planners to center anti-displacement planning in inner suburban redevelopment contexts. While the development context in Long Branch has not yet reached the rapid-fire pace of development in Vancouver, BC; the conclusions of Jones (2023) and Jones and Ley (2016) are validated by this work. Vulnerable, low-income residents are already experiencing exclusionary displacement and displacement pressure through construction burdens and speculative rent increases. While the actions of Montgomery County's government in partially limiting upzoning on existing garden-style apartments may reduce incentives for private-sector actors to redevelop parcels, those actions cannot stop market rate-redevelopment at existing densities.

For local politicians and policymakers seeking to find solutions to mitigate transit-induced gentrification, answers

will continue to be hard to find. One path is the unfortunately de rigueur planning response for the need to bridge the gap between transit planning and housing and economic development planning. Increased coordination and advanced planning for equity issues like displacement prior to transit construction, however, will not bring additional resources for affordable housing to the table without serious political commitments and resolution of complex trade-offs. If the experience of the Purple Line is any indication, these problems will continue to make transit investment complex and challenging.

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Notes

1. The Edmonton ETS Capital Line opened in 1978, and it was the first light rail system to open in the post-war era in North America (The Transit Explorer Database 2023).
2. From this point, the Purple Line Corridor will be referred to as "the Corridor" in most places.
3. Analogous and contemporaneous heavy rail rapid transit systems to the DC area's Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail include Atlanta's MARTA, San Francisco's BART, and Miami's Metrorail. All were planned and initially constructed in the 1960s through 1980s.
4. A multi-decade planning and construction process culminated in 2022 with the addition of a new radial line into Northern Virginia, with the major purpose of accessing Dulles International Airport. This line was included in the region's original 1968 plan as an extension, but was not completed until

more than fifty years later.

5. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1988/12/09/rail-spur-purchase-priceless/4eb46847-4cb9-420c-b65e-b4a706a9ebdc/>.
6. Which makes land use recommendations for approval to the County Council, which must approve them through majority votes. The County Executive must approve plans and laws, and retains veto power over the Council (which can be overruled).

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