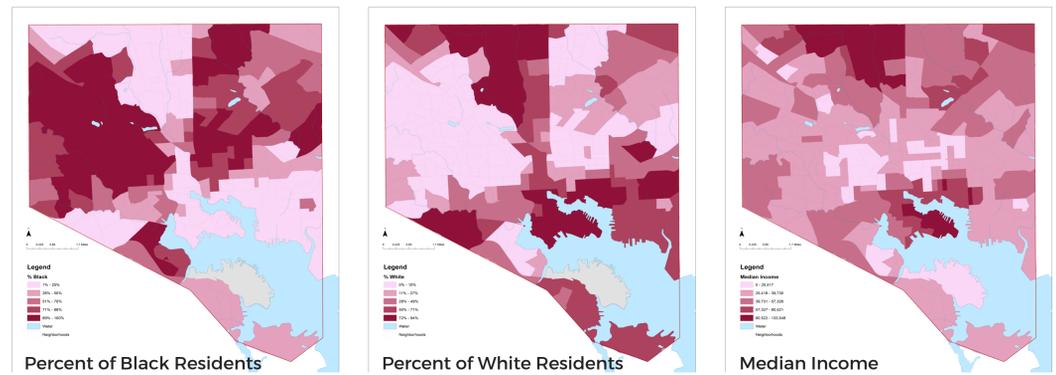
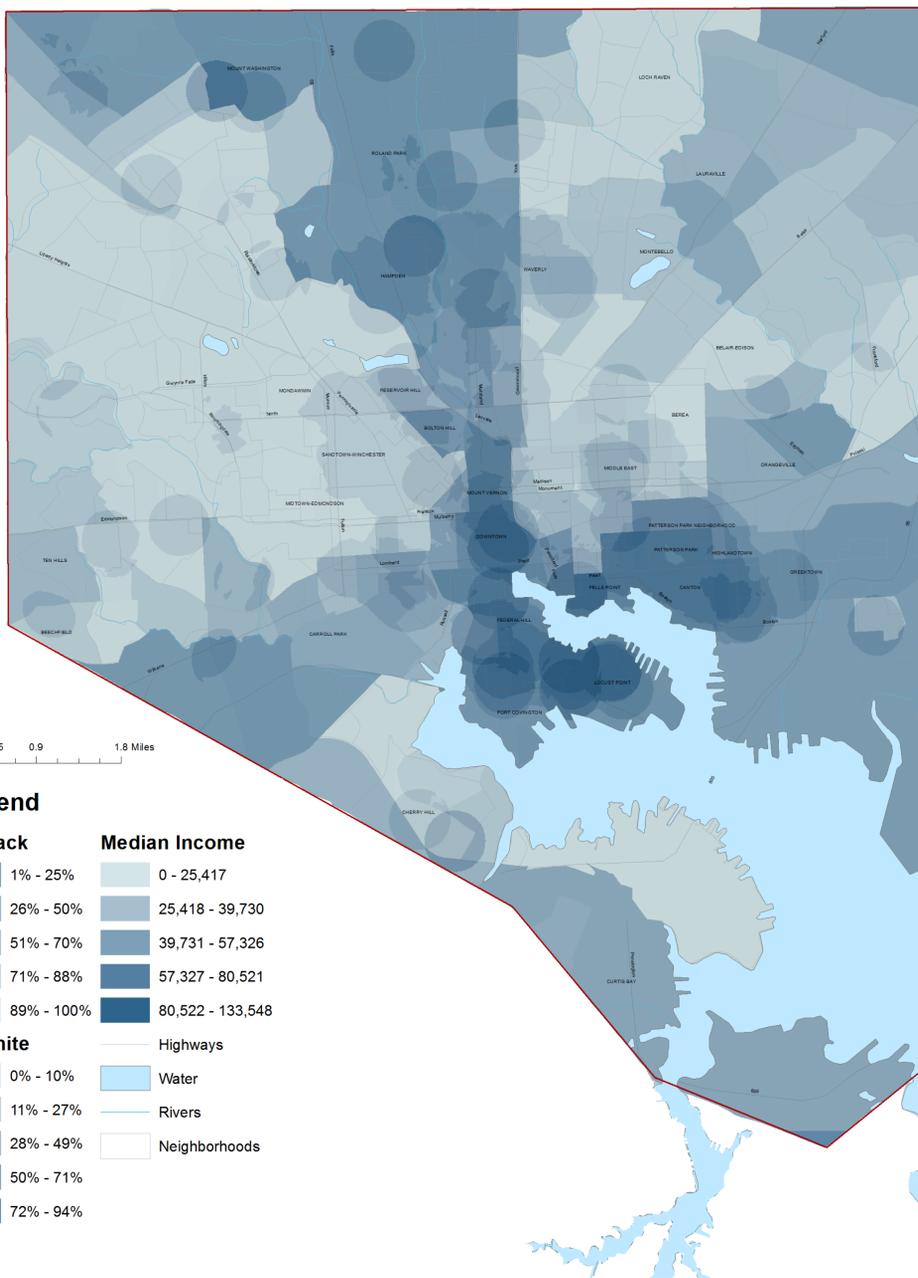


Investment and Disinvestment in Baltimore City:

Residential renovation permits as an indicator of gentrification



Context:

These three maps show the racial and economic segregation that is an every day reality in Baltimore City. Professor Lawrence Brown, a public health professor at Morgan State University in Baltimore and a public intellectual leading fair development organizing, has identified this clear spatial pattern and has termed it the “White L” and the “Black Butterfly” of Baltimore. These three maps use 2010 US Census Data to illustrate these spatial patterns. The first map shows the percentage of Black residents per census tract and clearly shows the Black population segregated into the West Side and East Side of the City. The second map percentage of White residents per census tract- when compared to the first map, we can see that there are between 0-10% White residents in the places with the highest concentration of Black residents. The third map shows the average income per census tract, showing that much of the wealth in the city is concentrated in the north-central area, and right around the Inner Harbor in the south-central waterfront area.

All neighborhoods in Baltimore are worth investing in, and all neighborhoods contribute through paying taxes, and yet there are significant wealth disparities that correlate strongly with the racial segregation. These disparities are reinforced through public policy and the speculative housing market: schools in these areas are underfunded and failing, community recreation centers are shut down, and roads and other public services remain subpar. Development projects using city, state, and/or federal money occur in places that the City decides are “safe” investments: likely to show returns. Similar to redlining, this means that poor and Black neighborhoods, declared “risky” investments, never see the public funding for development projects, and therefore the private capital investments never reach these parts of the city. A consistent historical trend in Baltimore (and nationwide) is of Black displacement and dispossession for the concentration of capital. This era is no different. At the same moment that evictions, vacant houses, and homelessness are at an all-time high, there are large development projects that build luxury homes or shopping centers.

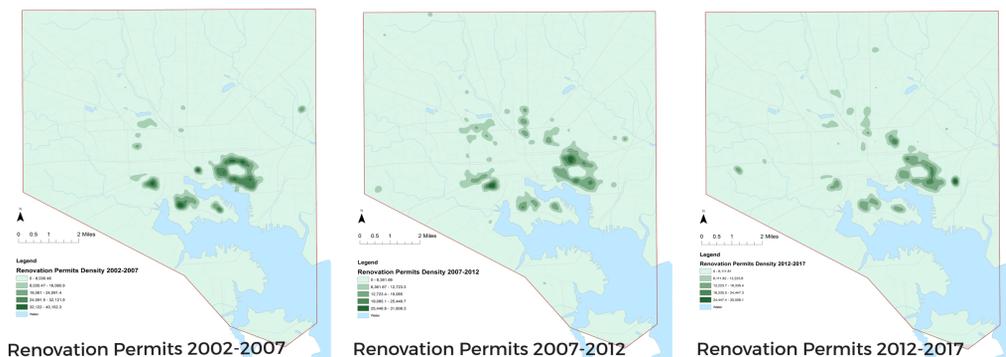
Looking Ahead:

These maps illustrate the spatial patterns of redevelopment from 2002-2017. The map below illustrates areas that are potentially vulnerable to gentrification in 2017 and beyond. This map shows parcel data for the City, and the color of the parcel represents a ratio of the value of the improvement on the land (residential buildings) and the value of the land itself. Areas that are dark purple have a ratio below zero, meaning that the land is more valuable than the house. This puts the parcel in danger of “scrapping,” where developers buy the land and tear down the existing housing to build more valuable housing on the land. This new housing is most often market-rate, meaning that affordable housing stock of the city is depleted and the new housing is more than many people can afford. The darkest purple area in central-south Baltimore on the water is the Port Covington neighborhood, where a large parcel was recently sold to a developer for a revitalization project with insufficient affordable housing. Sagamore Development was granted billions in public funding through TIFs, and illustrates the ways that the speculative housing market does not meet the needs of most people in Baltimore.

Introduction:

This project uses permits granted for the renovation of residential properties to examine where redevelopment is concentrated spatially in the City. I argue that by examining which neighborhoods are experiencing more residential renovations, we can illustrate where much of the gentrification and displacement of the last fifteen years has been, as well as make predictions for the next fifteen years. This map is a composite map, made up of layers showing the percent of Black residents per census tract, the percent of White residents per census tract, the median income per census tract, and a layer showing a raster density surface illustrating the hotspots of renovation permits for residential properties from 2002-2017. Taken together, we see a clear spatial trend of segregation: where investment in the form of residential renovations has been happening. Below, I have broken down the renovation permits by five-year periods, where we can get a better sense of when and how this investment pattern has occurred.

These maps illustrate interesting patterns in residential renovations over the last fifteen years. For example, there were significantly more renovation permits granted in the 2002-2007 period than in 2007-2012, most likely as a result of the 2008 recession that hit the housing market especially hard. The spatial patterns illuminate what areas of the City are seeing the most renovations. The circular hotspot apparent in all three maps covers Highlandtown and Canton, and encircles Patterson Park, a large park in East Baltimore. This is an area that has seen a lot of redevelopment and ensuing gentrification. A historically Latinx neighborhood, it has grown in population over the last ten years due in part to its proximity to Johns Hopkins Hospital.



Methods:

I sourced my data from the Baltimore Housing’s Office of Permits and Building Inspections. They keep incredibly up to date records, and I was able to find every building permit that had been granted in Baltimore City from April 2002 through April 2017. From there, I selected only the residential building permits, identified as single-family and multi-family homes, and added them to the map. I weighted each permit based on its estimated cost, so as to more accurately illustrate the spatial investment in residential renovations. From there, I created raster density surfaces, experimenting with both point rasters and kernel rasters. There were some real limitations to this project, including the accuracy of the data. There were one or two data points that seemed unreasonable: where a permit was estimating a renovation of a single family home to cost seventeen million dollars. I believe these were mistakenly entered data points, and cause inconsistencies in the mapping and data visualization.

