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Transportation and Gentrification: Impacts on Low-income Black Households in Portland

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Transportation and Gentrification: Impacts on Low-Income Black Households in Portland

Friday Transportation Seminar

May 7, 2021

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The presentation today represents the views of the presenter and not those of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
or those of the Federal Reserve System

Outline

- Research Questions
- Methods
- Portland Context
- Transportation
- Places and People
- Conclusions

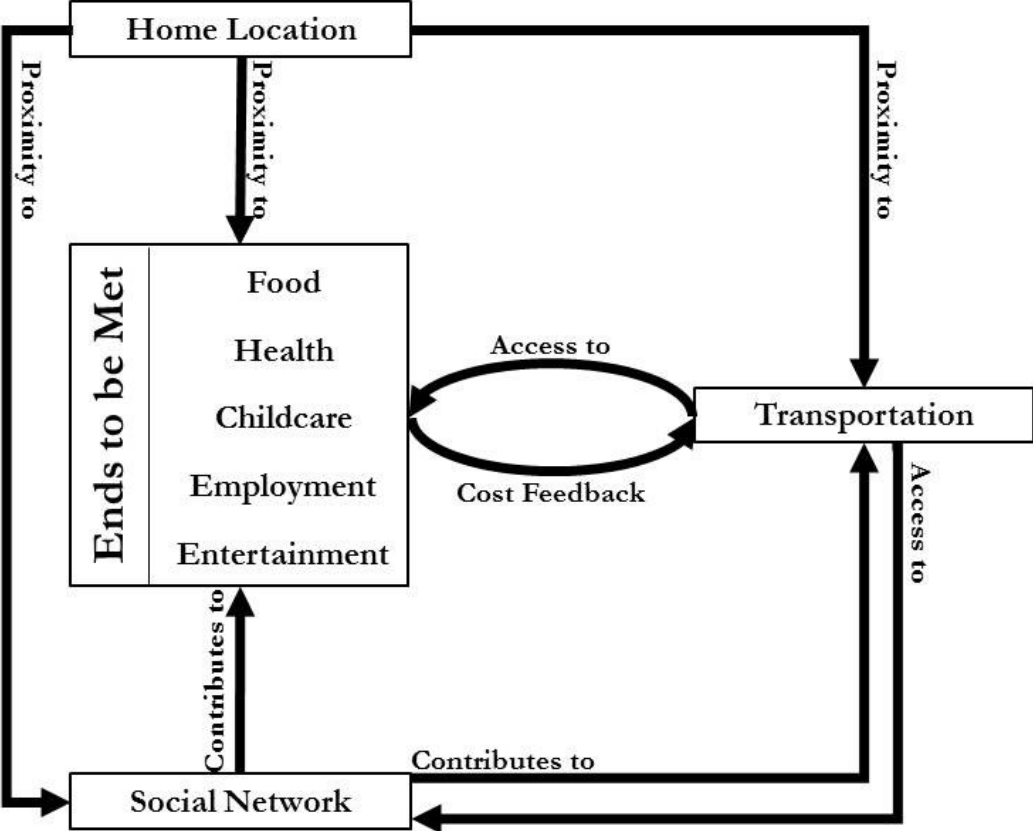
Research Questions

- How does access to their daily needs and services and their transportation choices affect low-income Black households' strategies to make ends meet?
 - What transportation choices are they making? Why?
 - How do those choices affect their daily life?
 - What tradeoffs do they make in deciding to use one mode over another?
- How has gentrification and displacement affected their strategies to make ends meet?
 - How has access to services and daily needs been impacted by gentrification?
 - How has their interaction with and the composition of their social support network been impacted by gentrification?

Findings Overview

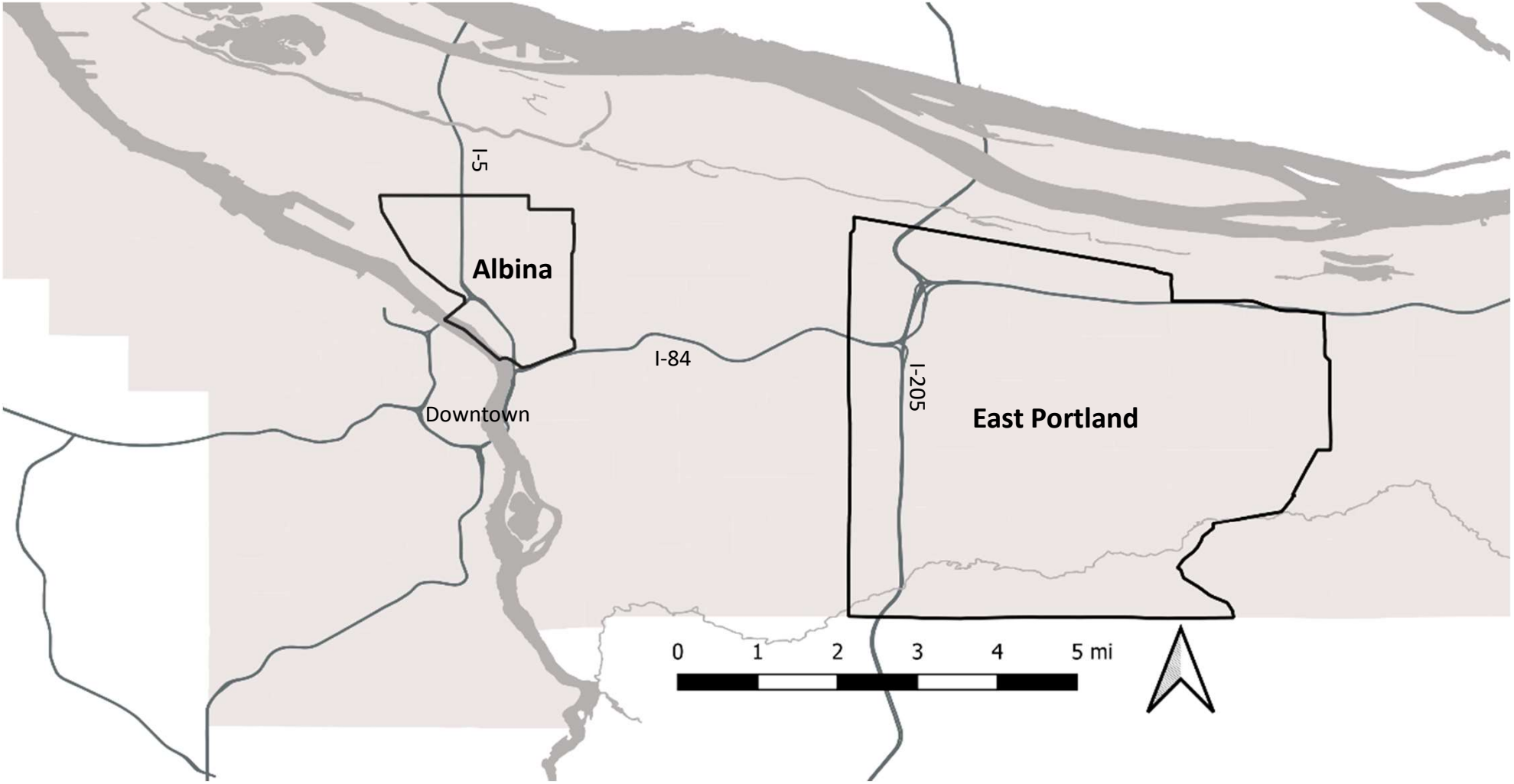
- East Portlanders struggled much more than Albina residents
 - The distances they had to go were much further
 - Contributed to curtailed travel
 - Their social support networks were less fruitful in East Portland and relied much more on those still in Albina
 - Higher reliance on transit which made the situation more difficult
- Albina residents had an easier time making ends meet
 - Many were still paying full rent
 - Low cost food was difficult to get
 - Their support networks being nearby helped tremendously
 - Rarely turned to or even visited people in East Portland

Conceptual Model



Research Methods

- Qualitative case study in 2017
- Interviews with 27 low-income Black people of working age with a child in their household
 - Sample was split about evenly between Albina (13) and East Portland (14)
- Recruitment
 - Flyers in Albina (soon abandoned)
 - Churches with primarily Black congregations (low participation)
 - Non-profit orgs (Rosewood, Urban League)
 - Affordable housing provider
 - Snowball sampling
- Interviews averaged about an hour and were audio recorded.
- Participants were compensated \$50 for their time



Study Demographics

East Portland was younger

Albina residents were more likely to have a housing subsidy of some kind

Albina residents were more likely to have always lived in Albina

East Portlanders had more kids and generally more younger kids

East Portlanders were more likely to be unemployed, but it was typically due to life changes (births, deaths, health)

Albina residents were more likely to have a car

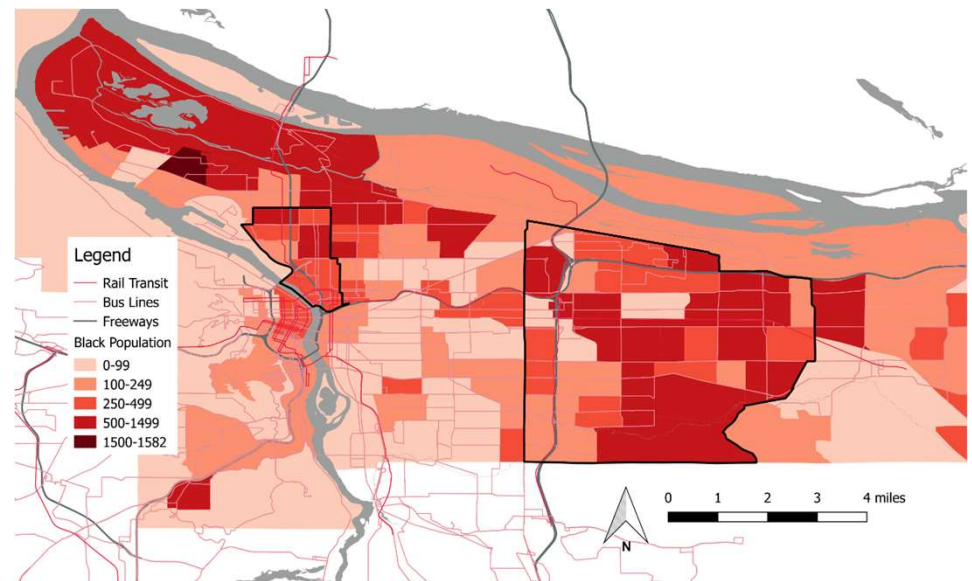
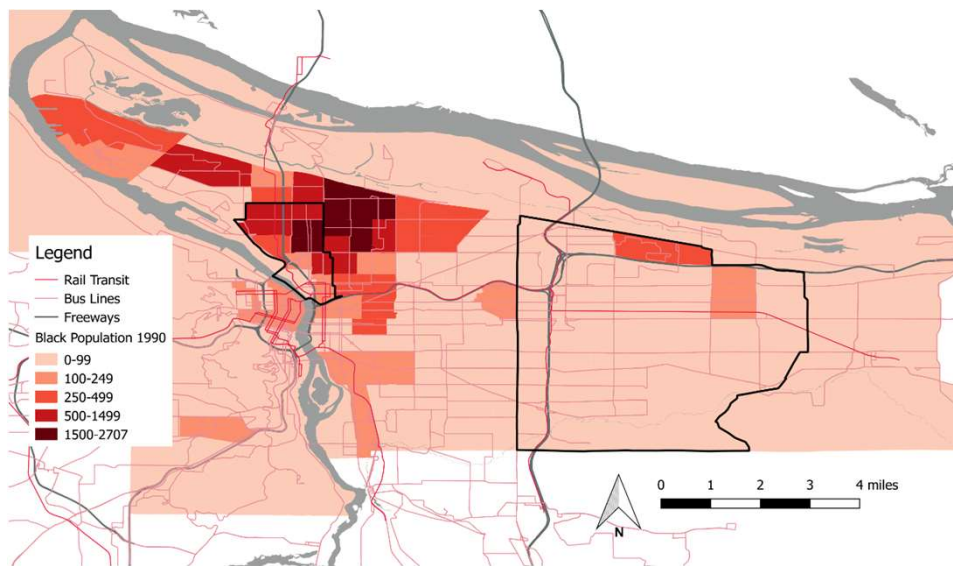
	Portland Region	
	N/NE	East
Age		
...18-24	7%	7%
...25-34	29%	47%
...35-44	14%	27%
...45+	50%	20%
Gender		
...Female	79%	67%
Employed		
	85%	64%
Mobility Ownership		
...Car	64%	47%
...Bicycle (Adult)	7%	33%
Subsidized Housing¹		
	62%	43%
How Long have you lived in Portland?		
..."All my life"	64%	60%
Always lived in current Portland Region²		
	38%	29%
Child Ages		
...Infant/Toddler (<6)	21%	40%
...Young Child (6-10)	36%	67%
...Pre-teen (11-14)	21%	40%
...Teenager (15+)	21%	20%
Total	13	14

Notes: 1: Subsidized housing is either Section 8, income based, or other community supported housing

2: Portland Regions = Southwest, Northwest, North/Northeast, East (East of 82nd Avenue), Southeast, Western Suburbs.

Portland Context

Black Population Geographic Shift, 1990-2017

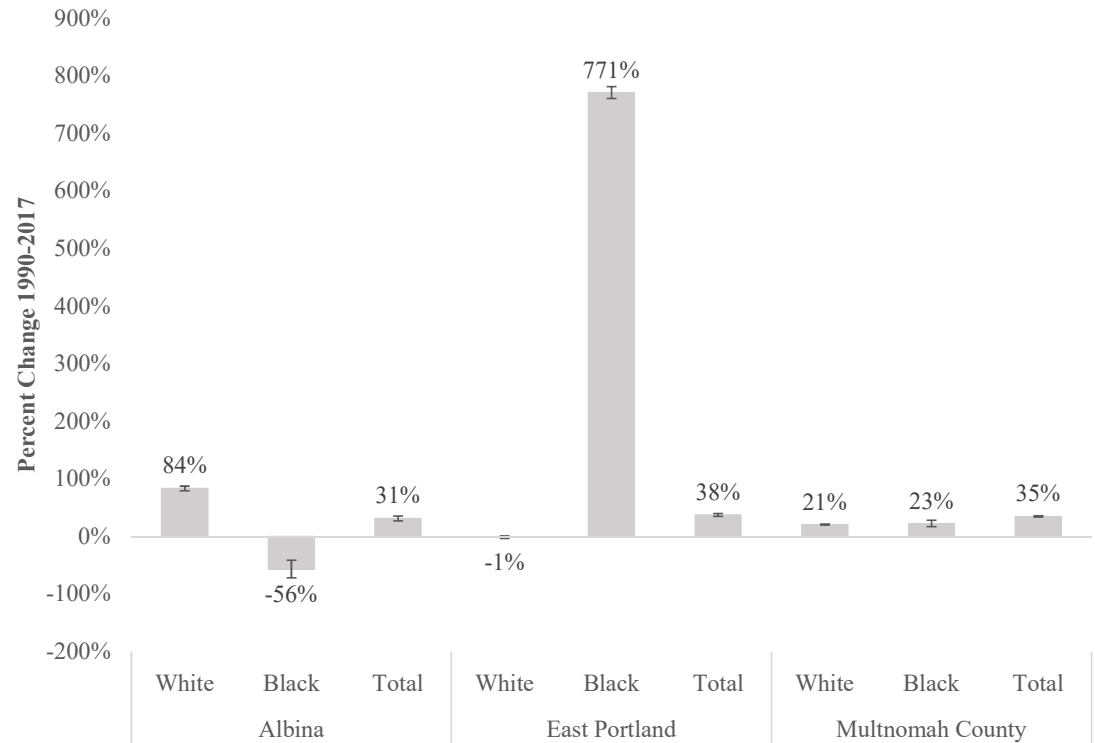


Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 1990; American Community Survey 5-year estimate 2013-2017

Portland Context

- Albina has gone through a racial flip in population
- East Portland had about 2,000 Black people in 1990
- Grew to over 16,000 Black people by 2017
 - Representing nearly 40% of Multnomah County's Black population

Population Change by Race by Area 1990-2017

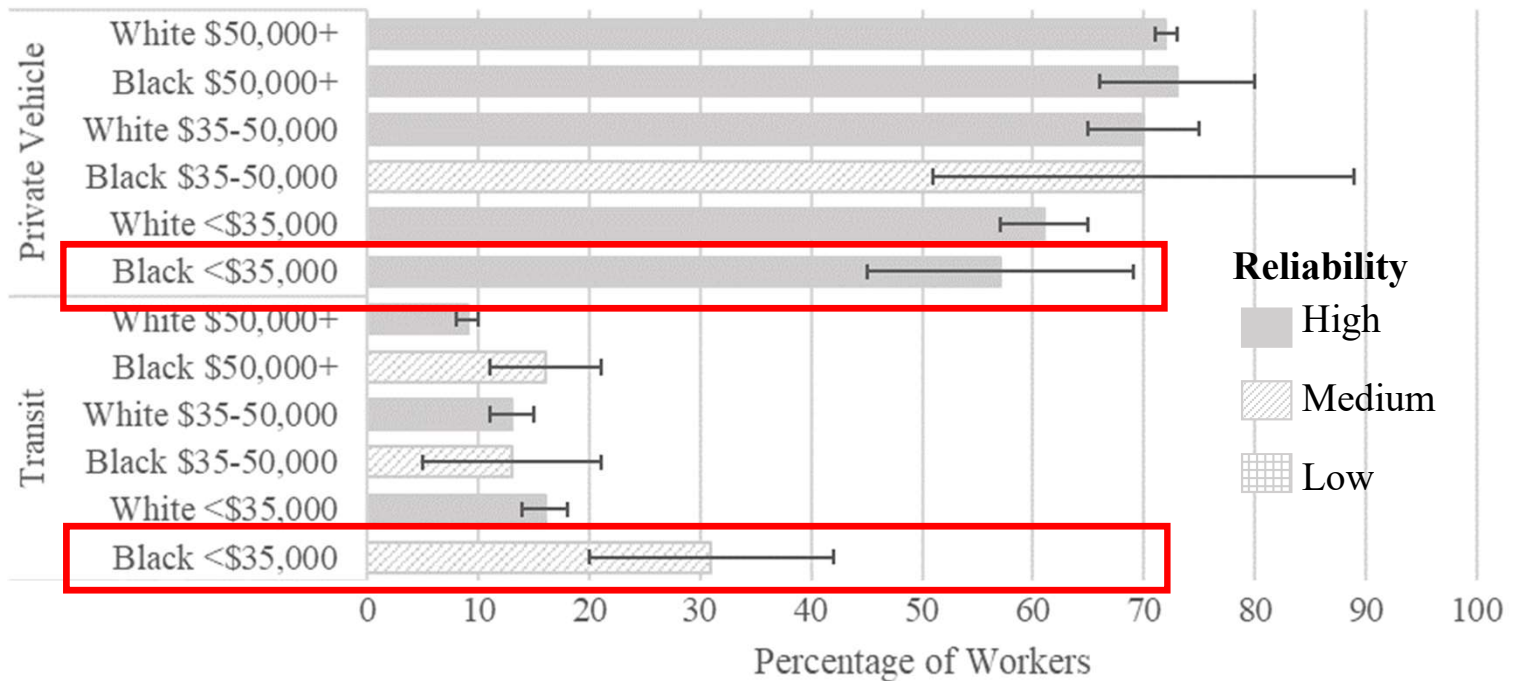


Population by Race by Area

Source: IPUMS NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 1990; American Community Survey 5-year estimate 2013-2017

Portland Context

Commute Mode by Race and Household Income, Multnomah County 2017



Note: Reliability is the coefficient of variation where Low $\geq 40+$, Medium 12-40, High ≤ 12 (ESRI, 2014)

Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org. ACS 2017, 5-year estimates

Transportation: Drivers

Transportation

Findings Highlights:

- Albina Residents were more likely to drive (62% vs 36%).
 - Nearly universal dislike of Tri-Met.
 - Nearly everyone had safety concerns taking transit. No drivers expressed safety issues driving.
 - Albina residents struggled less in their daily life maintenance giving them more means to own a car.
 - East Portland residents gained marginally more benefit from car ownership, but struggled more to own.
 - Drivers were more likely to use transit as an alternative.
 - Transit riders were more likely to turn to getting rides as an alternative.
 - East Portland residents had more difficulty getting rides.
 - Albina residents had positive associations with walking.
 - East Portland residents would walk, but with higher cost due to distances and multiple safety issues.
 - Very few people rode a bike, but it was more common for their kids - mostly limited to Albina.
 - In sacrificing to afford their mobility, East Portland residents cut deeper because of lack of alternatives.
-

Driving

Positives	Negatives
Convenient Fast Flexible Dependable (at least more-so than transit) Was not transit Expands range of travel Good for grocery shopping Gets kids around easier for extra-curriculars	Costly Added stressors of Traffic Parking Sacrifices to afford gas/other car expenses Sacrificing travel because of driving expense Getting pulled over Inconvenience/cost if car does break down

Car Convenience

“If I’m going to do laundry like I said, I’m going to drive because there’s no way I’m going to catch the bus with baskets of clothes...If it’s summer then I’ll catch MAX to the grocery store because it’s pretty simple. If it’s like this rainy and cold I’m going to drive more than likely. If I’m going someplace different than WinCo, I’m probably going to drive because the bargain grocery store I go to over on Sandy, I’m not going to catch 2 or 3 buses to get there. I’m going to more than likely drive there.” – Jacqueline, Albina

Cars and Employment

“...there was certain jobs that weren’t along a transit line. Maybe a mile or 2 miles off the line. I didn’t have a car to get there so I couldn’t take the job” – Don, Albina

Car Cost

- Average was about \$300/month (~16% of monthly income)
 - Low was \$70/month
 - Traveled very little, had no insurance
 - High was \$500/month
 - Traveled a lot (mostly for work), had car payments
 - None accounted for regular maintenance or emergency fixes in their budget
- Cost was mitigated by cutting travel, staying close to home
 - Dependence on the car hurt if they were struggling with money
 - “Don’t go no where.”
 - Cut back elsewhere

Car Cost

“I try! It ain’t like it work. I try to put money away to save. I try to limit driving you know, but it’s like you know. Something always comes up! Daughter has gymnastic practice. Oh, you got to pick them up from grandma’s. It’s always something. It’s always something. Doctor’s appointments. Something like that. Damn I can’t take public transportation to all that. So I got to drive. I’ve cut off packages on cable. I’ve cut off a whole lot of shit. A whole lot of shit. Even my smoking habit. I’ve gone from buying packs to getting singles. Shit like that. None of that shit even taking effect yet. Hopefully one of these days something will go right.” Derrick, East Portland

Loss of Car

“It’s real difficult. Just have to rearrange my whole life pretty much. Because I’m dependent on that car to get there [work and kids’ school] on a certain time...Most the time I don’t have the funds to get it fixed right away.” – Don, Albina

“...I haven’t mapped that out but I would have to get up pretty early to get them [her kids] to school by 9 and my shift starts at 9. So, it’s cutting it close. And I get off at 4:30 and I have get her [daughter] by 5. I would probably have to cut hours, become part time, and become homeless again because I wouldn’t be able to pay rent.” – Amber, Albina

Was not Transit

“It’s scary. And it takes too long. Even when my car broke down I would just ask somebody for a ride. It takes too long and the situations...the circumstances they having now on buses is scary. I have a fear for my kids riding the bus so I very seldom let them ride the bus. There’s too much going on and with them being girls...no. no. Public transportation isn’t safe like it used to be.” Margaret, Albina

Transportation: Transit Users

Transit Riders

Positives	Negatives
Could get everywhere they wanted to go Could find housing near transit lines	Unsafe Could not get everywhere they wanted to go Expensive Slow, unreliable, restrictive Unable to reach better paying jobs Exposed to the weather Difficult to take with kids

Transit Reliability

"It's about 50/50. To be honest. Like when I really need to get somewhere, it could get me on time, but I'm not going to be on time because of the bus. I'm going to be on time because I leave early. And the bus is always late. And the bus may not come at all sometimes. Says three minutes and it doesn't come for 16 minutes. I've had that happen multiple times." Troy, Albina

Transit Safety

It's worse when you get up here [on Burnside]. I don't feel safe walking up here, that's why I carry mace. But from Powell to Mill is cool, but from Mill all the way up to here [Burnside] is terrible.
Destiny, East Portland

Transit Safety

"...One day we were coming off the MAX, white dude gets on the MAX "oh you're a dumb n_____ " this that and what not. I'm looking around like "who you talking to?" This other white lady across from him is like "is he talking to you guys?" I don't know this guy. Either he's high off something or he's completely lost his mind. And then he comes up closer. And finally calls me out "yea you super ignorant bastard something this that there." I'm like "hold on bro. First, chill out you're not going to sit here and disrespect me in front of my kids and my family. If you want to say something or feel you have something against me we can step off the MAX and talk it out like men." He kept it going...I threw him off the MAX. And I handled it out there...it's Portland, you have so many experimental drugs out here. But you got people just completely losing it." Darius, East Portland

Transit and Employment

I get a job they say is way out there, and the bus ain't available after 12 or 10 at night I'm probably not going to take that job. Unless it's really good money and I can afford to pay it. I can't pay every day. I've been in jobs like that. Where I was working at 257th in Gresham. The bus didn't go all the way out there. I had to walk from Mt Hood CC around this bend that was almost a mile. Every day. Just to get to work. And after work, they had this little private cab company I had to pay this dude to pick me up and take me to the MAX. He'd charge me \$5 just to take me to the MAX. Every day. So that's \$25 a week just to get home [on top of transit fare]. That only lasted like 2 months. Couldn't afford it no more. Troy, Albina

Transit and Destinations

"I come here [Safeway] because it's the closest. I appreciate the fact that they offer...if you spend so much you can get delivery service. But even if I spent \$100 that hundred dollars I spend here that's not even 50% if I would have went to a Winco or a Costco or just somewhere else. So, I don't win." Vanessa, East Portland

Transit Cost

I've definitely had to cut things out of my budget to make sure I could afford to catch the bus to even go to the park. And things like that. You don't even really think about it. You think it's something you'd do for free. Just like eating out. And entertainment. Things I would do for entertainment I would cut back. Because you have to incorporate...everywhere you go is \$5. I'm just glad my son doesn't have to pay yet. – Joseph, Albina

Getting Rides

Basically, I'm hoping they say yes. Hopefully the times I'm giving them they agree to it. But the main thing when you don't have a car, it comes down to I don't know if asking they can say no, but then you're on their time. Like they'll say they can't come at the time you want, but they can come sooner. It's just more being on somebody's time when you ask them. But you're not sure they're going to agree on your time. But they'll still come and get you. Because their car is up to them. - Tawnya, Albina

Social Exclusion by Mode and Place

		Exclusion Factors							Social Network
		Physical	Geographic	Facility	Economic	Time	Fear	Space	
East Portland	Car								
	Transit								
	Get Ride								

		Exclusion Factors							Social Network
		Physical	Geographic	Facility	Economic	Time	Fear	Space	
Albina	Car								
	Transit								
	Get Ride								

Places and People

Were there any restaurants you grew up with that are no longer there that you really miss?

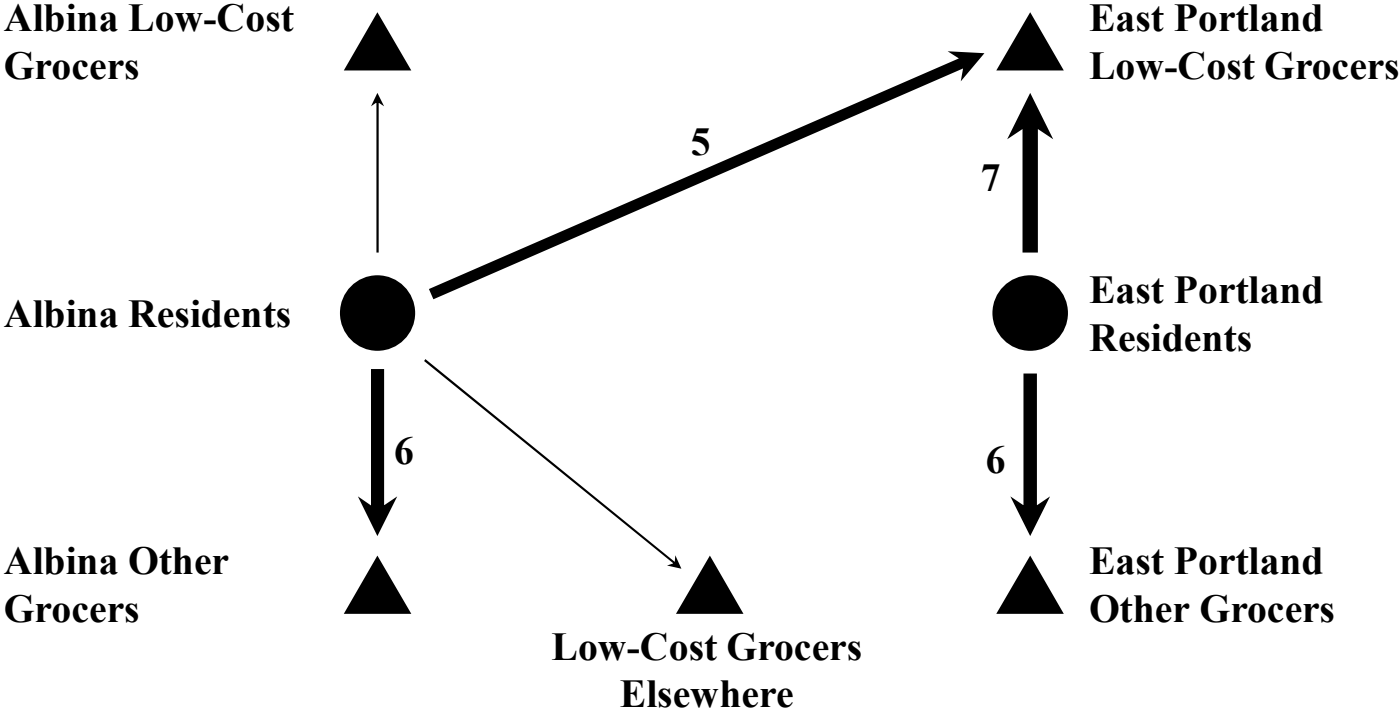
Carol: Mhmm. Like Ferrells. Right here it was on Broadway. An ice cream shop. Pietro's was right next to that. There was like you know a couple black owned businesses that's gone now. All of them basically are gone now. There was quite a few places I had gone that aren't there. – Carol, Albina

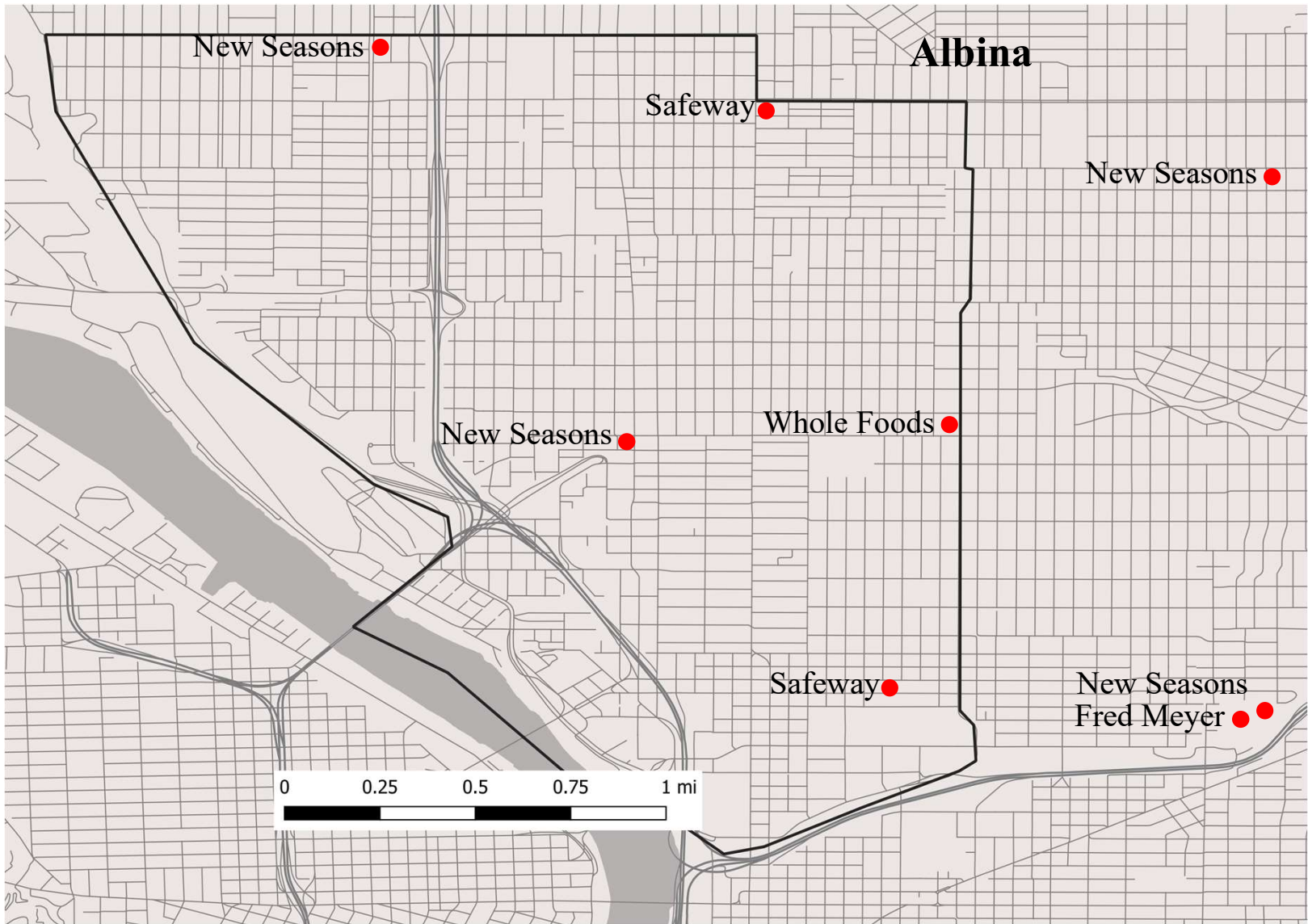
Places and People

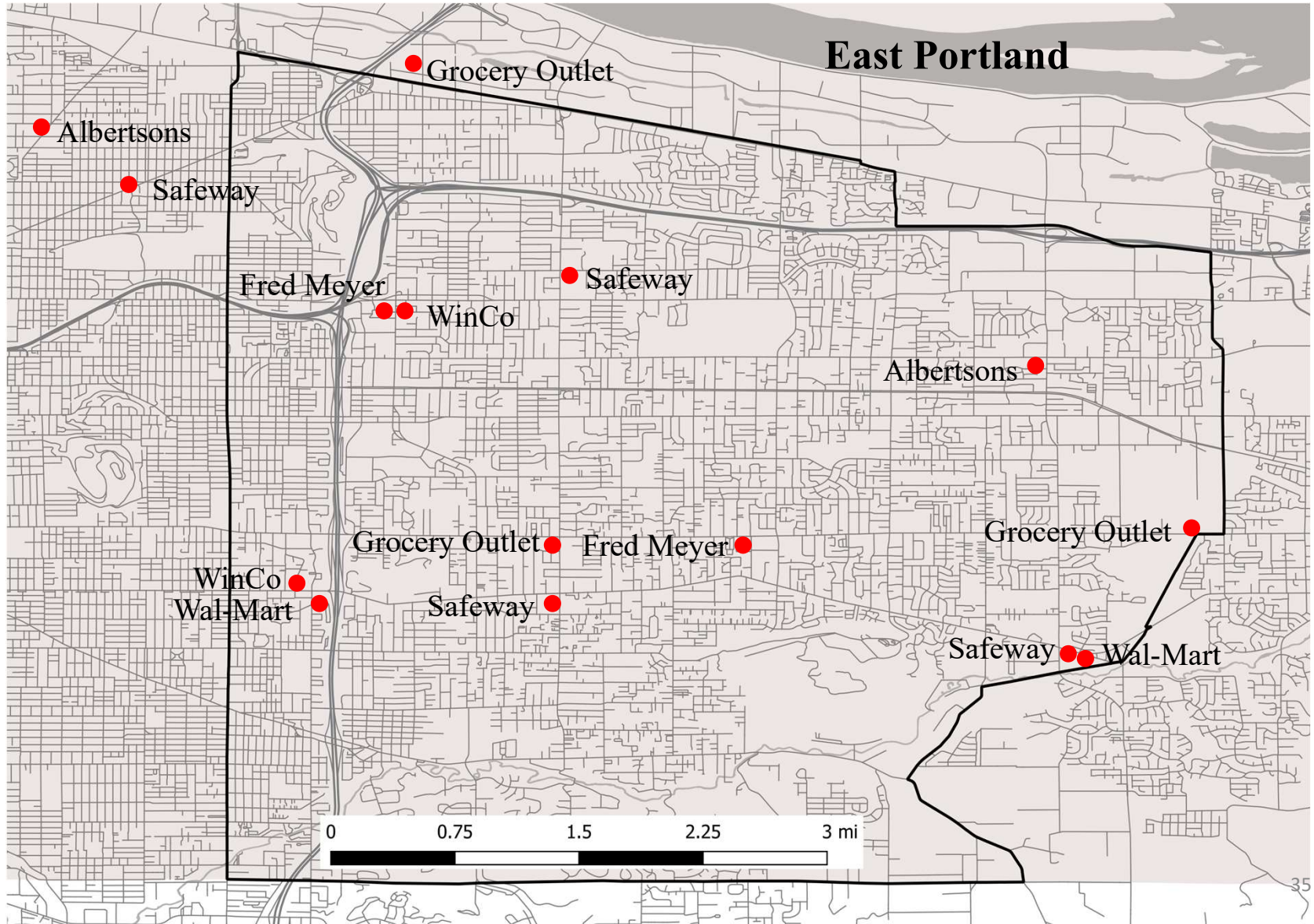
Findings Highlights

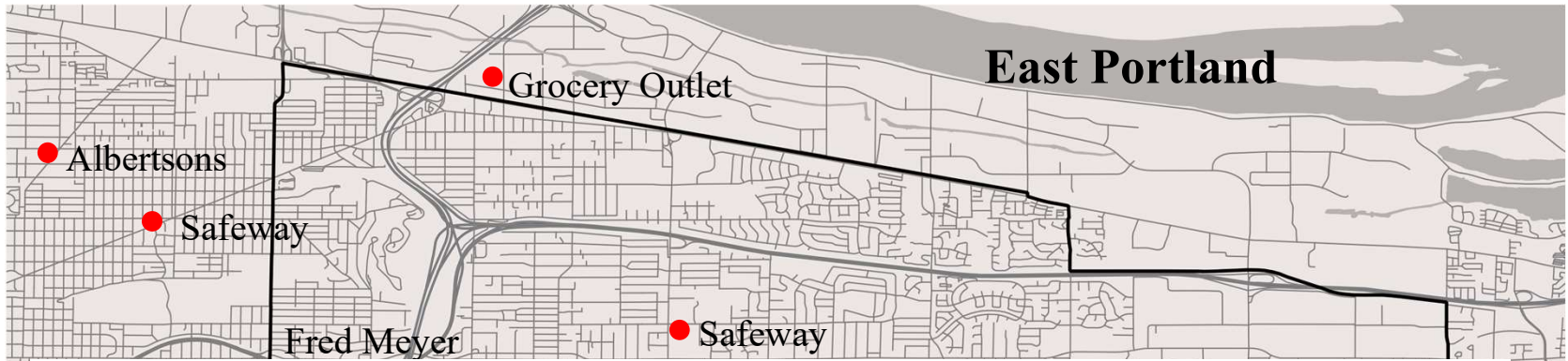
- Erosion of rootedness for Black populations still living in Albina.
 - Losing elements of Black Albina was changing the feel of Albina for Black residents
 - Nearly 1/3 of Albina residents traveled to East Portland for groceries.
 - Most East Portlanders still had to travel long distances for low-cost groceries.
 - 1/4 of East Portland residents traveled to Albina for church regularly.
 - Declining role of barbershops in community building: nearly 80% got their hair done at home.
 - Parks and restaurants did not have substantial geographic overlap like grocers/churches/hair.
 - East Portlanders were not leaving home as much indicating possible isolation.
 - Albina residents were most reliant on other Albina people and relied on nearly no one else.
 - Nearly half of East Portlanders had some reliance on people in Albina.
 - Support networks located in Albina most helpful for critical needs like childcare and rides.
 - The distance barrier for East Portlanders meant critical needs were harder to get fulfilled.
-

Groceries





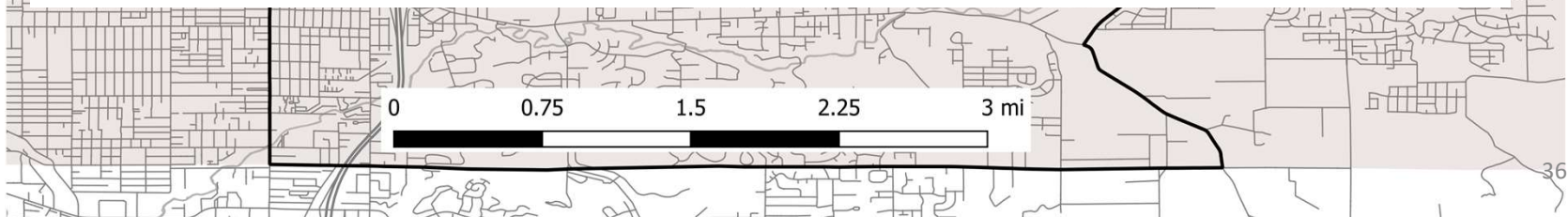




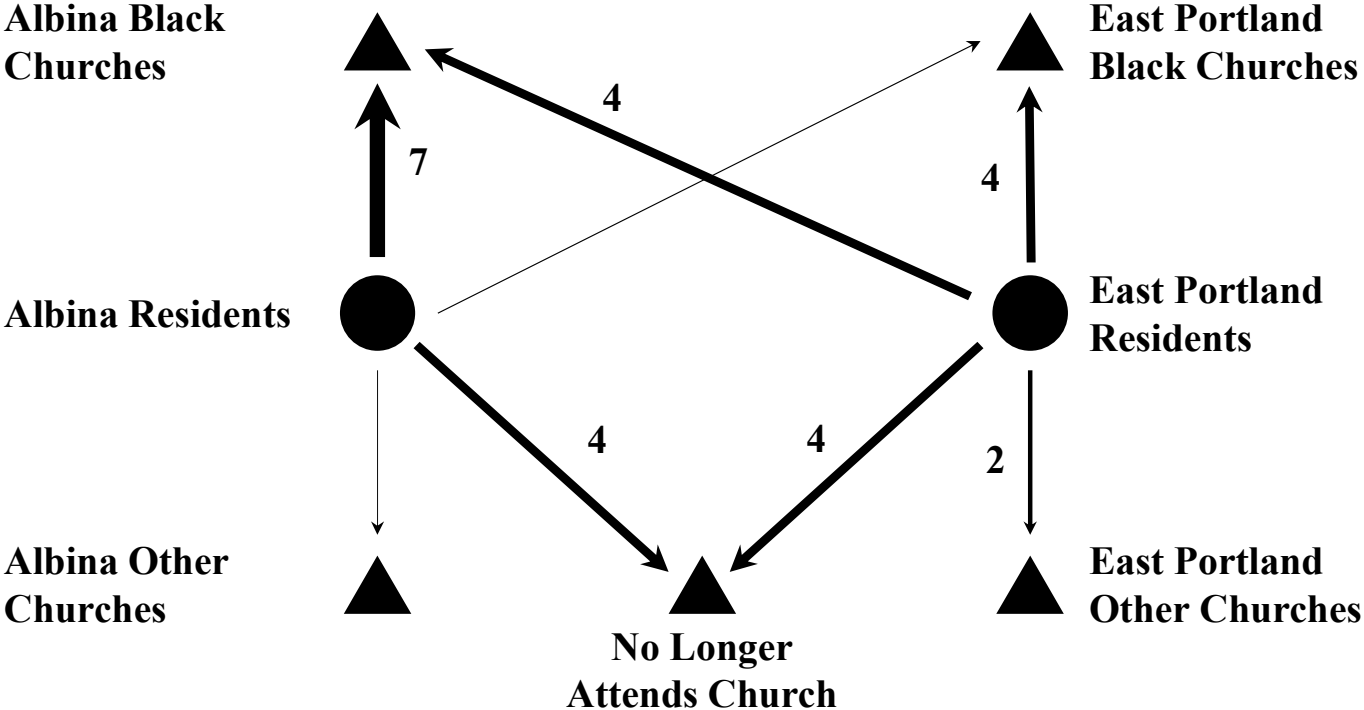
Derrick: *"Like I would like to go to some cheaper grocery stores. Like if they got some cheaper stores than Safeway, I would like to go there."*

"Like if WinCo were 30 blocks closer?"

Derrick: *"Hell yea! If it were closer, I would go there. Even Wal-Mart. I'd go to Wal-Mart if it were closer."*



Churches



Neighborhood People

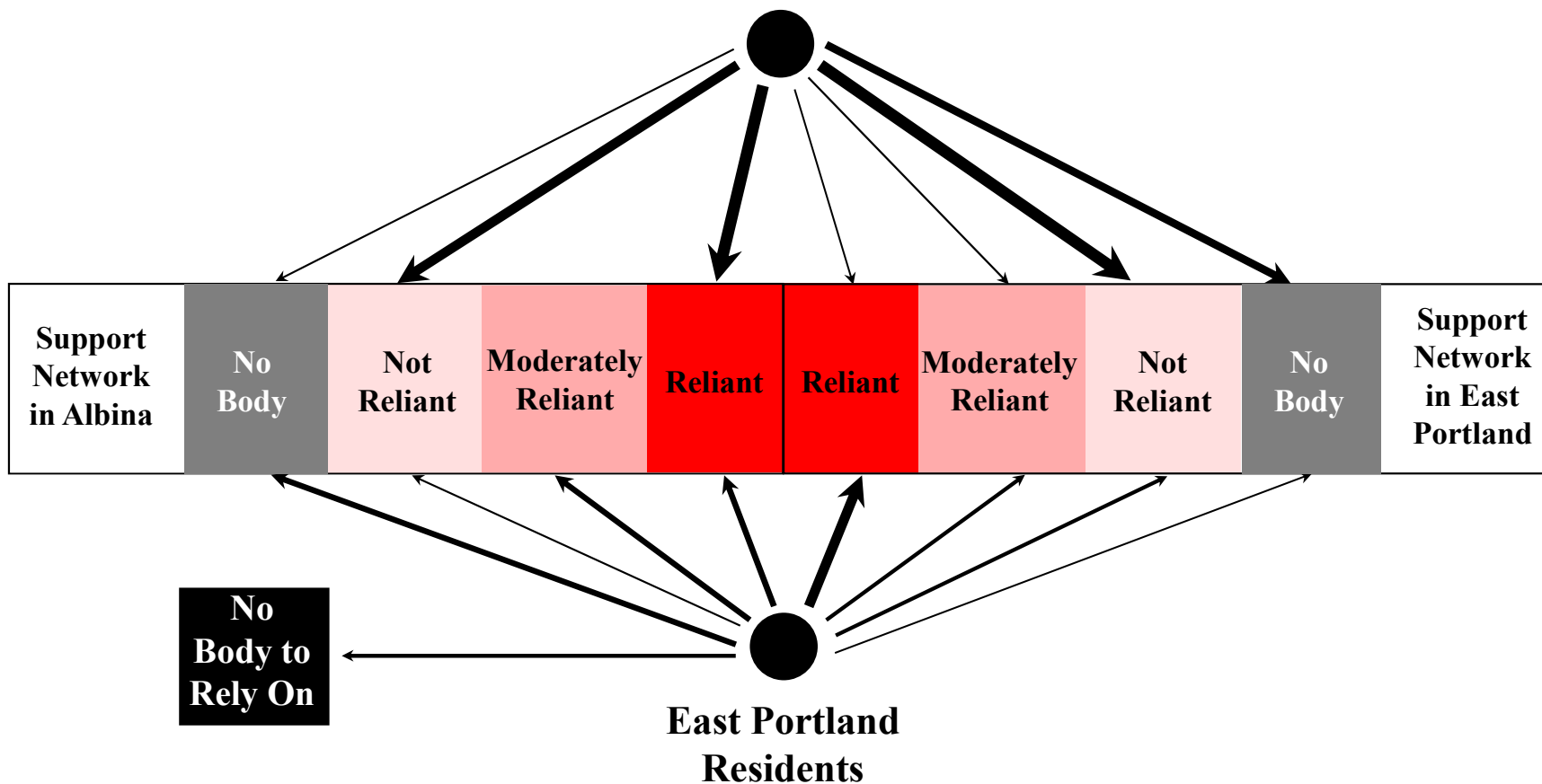
"I feel like an alien now. I feel weird. Like I'm not supposed to be here anymore. Like especially on Alberta sometimes when I do deliveries for Postmates. It's weird. Because the whole area is not what it used to be. And so now I'm an alien. When it used to be vice versa. And now it just, I just look around and I feel like I'm in some other place. Like it don't even feel like where I grew up anymore. It's weird. Just weird. And I feel like it wouldn't be so bad maybe if these white people were maybe more friendly and would say "Hi, how are you" But they just act like I don't exist. [crying] I felt like this is my area. Why do I feel...why do you come here...at least say hi. Or I don't know. It's just weird. So yea, it's just crazy. I feel sad. And you know, it used to be when I would go up to the store or different places or something like that, I would always see people I know. But now, it's nobody. Nobody. It's just sad. You know sometimes here and there. But it's not really like it used to be. It's just weird." Carol, Albina

Neighborhood People

"It's very bad. The crime is up. It's very dangerous out there. Because they done pushed everybody out there. Every one's just angry. All the drug addicts. Every body's mad. Mad black people. Not even just black people. Everybody." Gail, East Portland

Social Support Network Reliance

Albina Residents



Social Support Network and Gentrification

"Do you feel like that distance does impact the amount that they're able to help you out?"

Carol: Uhhhhh...maybe. Never really thought about it. Actually, you know it does. Because I like I said, I don't be going over there anymore. I'd be taking my son to see her more. If I had something to do, I could take him to her. I'm [not] going to take him way way over there for that. So, it does impact. Because he's missing out. Like I said, when grandma was there on 8th and Killingsworth, we could go over there anytime. Eat. Whatever. But now can't just stop in anymore. So, it does impact. Definitely." Carol, Albina

Importance of Social Support Networks

- Someone to get a ride from
- Someone to watch their kids
- Someone to ask for a little bit of money to get by
- Someone to talk to on the phone

- This reality mostly only existed for those in Albina
- East Portlanders still relied on people in Albina to a great extent
 - But they could utilize less often and with much more effort

Places and People

- Albina residents had a much easier time getting by
 - Most their needs were available nearby
 - The people they relied on were accommodating and nearby
- East Portlanders struggled the most
 - Destinations were much further away
 - The people they could rely on took too much effort to rely on regularly to any benefit
- Being able to get to destinations and people easily means more time, less frustration, and much more flexibility in how they could accomplish their daily needs. Without that, East Portlanders were not just at a geographic disadvantage, they were financially hampered too

Limitations

1. Concentrated recruitment limited the geographic understanding of East Portland;
2. I did not interview people within the same social network, limiting my understanding of how their networks function;
3. Racist activities were in a heightened state as I was conducting interviews affecting both transit use, activity levels, and experiences with White people.
4. TriMet made many changes to the system during and after this study. Most the changes would have positive effects on the participants in this study.

Implications for Policy

- Dispersal of poverty policies need a re-evaluation.
 - Dispersing people without a choice exhibits clear negative impacts.
- Gentrification is violence against people of color.
- Housing policy has to account for the lived experience of the people affected by it
- Transportation for jobs
 - Transit needs to be improved to get people to warehouse and manufacturing jobs on the outskirts of the metro
 - Transit in the city needs to be sped up, especially in East Portland where the vast distances can be unbearable
- Supporting people with cars can be possible, but it's incredibly tricky, costly, and controversial.
- Transit safety needs to be addressed in a way that considers the harm and fear that policing also brings.