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Edged Out: Location Efficient Housing and Low Income Households in the Portland Region

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Edged Out

Location Efficient Housing and Low Income Households in the Portland Region

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Transportation Costs & Built Environment

Where You Live Matters

Location Affordability

Housing + Transportation Costs = The Combined Cost of Place

Source: Federal Highway Administration Livability Initiative
Who Needs Location Affordable Housing?

Households with low incomes have the most to gain from lowering their transportation costs.

Source: Litman, 2013
What Are Housing Choice Vouchers?

• Largest housing subsidy program for low-income Americans.

• Participants find modest, qualifying housing; voucher pays for portion of rent.
  • Participant typically pays 30 – 40% of income for housing costs.

• Approximately 15,000 vouchers in metro area in 2012. But demand **far** exceeds supply.
What Are Housing Choice Vouchers?

- Largest housing subsidy program for low-income Americans.
- Participants find modest, qualifying housing; voucher pays for portion of rent.
  - Participant typically pays 30 – 40% of income for housing costs.
- Approximately 15,000 vouchers in metro area in 2012. But demand far exceeds supply.
- Competing with other renters for available apartments.
Toolkit Design & Evaluation
Project Overview

Goal: To help households with housing vouchers contain or reduce their transportation costs by accessing location efficient housing when they move.
Toolkit Development Process

Interviews with PHA staff

Focus groups with recent movers

Promising practices and model tools

Prototype tools to test & refine
How does housing location figure into the decision-making process of voucher holders who move, if at all?

What role does location efficiency play in moves?

- Location mattered to some movers
- Search methods and tools

- Personally efficient locations
- Location efficiency secondary
Walk Score
Apartment Finder
Introductory Video

Rent

Bye, bye money...

Insurance
Repairs
Bus pass
Gas

Transportation
Toolkit Evaluation

Research Design
- Control & Intervention Groups
- Two-Wave Surveys

What Survey Measured
- Perceptions
- Preferences
- Behaviors

Domains
- Built environment/neighborhood
- Transportation modes
- Factors affecting housing choice

Sample
- 125 paired surveys
- All four housing authorities
Results

• Analysis
  o Few significant differences found between control and intervention group
    • Intervention group had higher transit accessibility and lower housing costs after moving

• Limitations
  o Majority of movers had already decided to where move before intervention

• Conclusions
  o Transportation is not a top-tier concern, for good reasons
  o Toolkit may be more appropriate in other settings
Additional Research
Regional Access to Location Efficient Housing by HCV Participants

A mixed methods study to investigate the differences in location affordability and efficiency among 2,026 voucher recipients who moved within the Portland, Oregon region during 2012-13.

Research Design

• How do the location efficiency and affordability outcomes of voucher holders who move within a city compare to those who move within the suburbs?
• How do the location efficiency and affordability outcomes of movers compare to non-movers?

Study Dataset

• Time Period: 2012-2013
• 13,500 HCV participants from three housing authorities
  o 7,900 Home Forward, 3,200 Washington County, and 2,400 Vancouver
  o 11,000 non-movers and 2,000 movers
    ▪ Movers: 1,100 in Portland and 900 in suburbs
Quantitative Analysis

Variables

• Location Affordability Index (LAI) -- U.S. DOT & U.S. HUD
  o Block-Group Level
  o Models transportation and housing costs
  o Various housing profiles
    • ‘Very-low income individual’ and ‘Single-parent family’ profiles
• Smart Location Database (SLD) – U.S. EPA
  o Location efficiency metrics at the Block-Group Level
    • Density, network connectivity, transit access, & employment
• Walk Score®
  o Address-specific metric
Overview of All 13,500 Voucher Households

Comparing Portland & Suburban Voucher Households

• Portland households lived in much higher location-efficient neighborhoods, all categories:
  
  Residential, Employment, Built Environment, & Transit

• Portland households lived in much higher location-affordable neighborhoods, both profiles:
  
  Very Low Income Individuals & Single Parent Families

• Portland households had higher Walk Scores (63.3 vs. 48.3)
Smart Location Database Density Comparisons
Portland vs. Suburbs

- Residential
- Employment
- Road Network
- Multi-Modal
- Pedestrian

Portland vs. Suburbs: Comparisons for different categories.
Results: Spatial Analysis of Movers

Portland Movers

• Moved to less location-efficient neighborhoods, all categories
  -- Residential
  -- Employment
  -- Built Environment
  -- Transit
• Moved to less location-affordable neighborhoods, both profiles
  -- Very Low Income Individuals
  -- Single Parent Families
• Lower Walk Score (61.3 to 56.7)

Suburban Movers

• No significant difference in location efficiency, all categories & variables
• No significant difference in location affordability, neither profile
• No significant difference in Walk Score (45.3 to 45.7)
Results: Spatial Analysis of Movers vs. Non-Movers

Within Portland

• Movers lived in less location-efficient neighborhoods, all categories
  -- Residential
  -- Employment
  -- Built Environment
  -- Transit
• Movers lived in less location-affordable neighborhoods, both profiles
  -- Very Low Income Individuals
  -- Single Parent Families
• Movers had lower Walk Score (63.6 to 56.7)

Within Suburbs

• Movers lived in slightly less location-efficient neighborhoods, all categories
  -- Employment
  -- Built Environment
  -- Transit
• Movers lived in less location-affordable neighborhoods, one profiles
  -- Very Low Income Individuals
• Movers had lower Walk Score (48.9 to 45.7)
Walk Score Comparisons
Non-Movers vs. Movers, Portland & Suburbs

- Portland
  - Non-Movers
  - Pre-Movers: 60
  - Post-Movers: 55

- Suburbs
  - Non-Movers: 47
  - Pre-Movers: 45
  - Post-Movers: 43
In Summary...

**Movers**

- Moving tends to decrease transportation and employment options for low-income households in Portland.
- Moving may maintain (suburbs) or possibly increase (Portland) automobile dependency for low-income households.

**Movers vs. Non-Movers**

- There are significant differences in transportation and employment options between those who move and those who stay in place throughout the metropolitan area.
Policy Considerations

In a tight real estate market...

• Importance of providing opportunities for residents to stay in place

• Market unaided not likely to produce location-efficient housing for lower income households
  • Those who need location-efficient housing are least likely to access it.

• Importance of supply side subsidies (LIHTC, etc.) and tools like inclusionary zoning to create affordable, lower cost location-efficient housing
Products

• Toolkit: may be effective in housing markets providing greater choice
• Tech transfer: toolkit provided to “partner agencies”
• Rich database: housing and transportation preferences of low-income voucher holders
• Article in forthcoming issue of *Housing Policy Debate* (Spring 2016)
• Research could be used by advocates
Thank You

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