

Exploring the Connections Between School Integration and Housing, Land Use and Transportation

By the Poverty & Race Research Action Council for the IDRA EAC-South

This literature review summarizes research and policy considerations regarding the connection between housing and school segregation. This relationship was an early and consistent theme in civil rights law, emerging in key school desegregation cases in the 1970s and in implementation of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. But since that time, the divide between school and housing policy has only grown wider, with little effort to formally link these policy areas. The review begins by surveying historical accounts of discriminatory housing, school, land use, and transportation policies. It then details social science research into reciprocal effects – in other words the ways that housing and school policies interact to reinforce segregation. Finally, we discuss policy proposals – past and present – to coordinate housing, school and transportation policy in support of integration.

Historical Analyses

A long legacy of racially explicit *de jure* housing, educational, land use and transportation policies interact to reproduce segregation. For instance, recent historical accounts illustrate various ways in which governments at all levels coordinated school and housing policies to produce segregation. These policies included locating schools serving predominantly Black student populations in specific targeted neighborhoods without offering student transportation and siting new white schools in new suburban areas ahead of housing development. Other historical research describes in detail the wide variety of tactics (e.g., redlining, segregation of public housing, exclusionary zoning) used by government entities to spatially isolate black families, among other minority families, and separate them from employment opportunities, high performing schools and other resources. Finally, we note the history of transportation policies – e.g., highway and road construction and the refusal to adequately fund public transportation – that were integral strategies to create housing and school segregation and also perpetuated racial gaps in access to fair housing, good schools and jobs.

Reciprocal Effects

Considerable social science research highlights the impacts – benefits and costs – arising from interacting housing and school policies. First, recent work shows

the effects of school district and assignment boundaries on residential segregation. By contrast, other research suggests beneficial long-term outcomes for individuals from school and housing integration, such as integrated schools appearing to predict racially integrated neighborhoods in adulthood. Finally, the review reflects research into: (i) income inequality and segregation, (ii) housing and school impacts of educational finance reforms, (iii) gentrification and school integration, and (iv) housing impacts of school integration plans.

Policy Prescriptions – Coordinating Housing, School and Transportation Policy in Support of Integration

Recommendations for joint housing, education and transportation span at least the past 35 years, from the Orfield & Taylor proposals of the early 1980s to the Obama administration guidance letter encouraging state housing, education and transportation agencies to collaborate to promote housing and school integration. The review details the history and development of these efforts and enumerates specific proposals. For instance, a 2016 HUD report includes recommendations, such as coordinated school, housing, and transportation planning; place-based housing-education partnerships; encouraging affordable housing development near high quality schools; and considering schools when designating opportunity areas for housing voucher mobility programs.

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