9-7-2020

Housing Stability, Evictions, and Subsidized Rental Properties: Evidence from Metro Atlanta

Austin Harrison
Georgia State University, atharrisonllc@gmail.com

Daniel Immergluck
Georgia State University, dimmergluck@gsu.edu

Jeff Ernsthausen
ProPublica, Jeff.Ernsthausen@propublica.org

Stephanie Earl
USI - AYSPS

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/urban_studies_institute

Part of the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation

Harrison, Austin; Immergluck, Daniel; Ernsthausen, Jeff; and Earl, Stephanie, "Housing Stability, Evictions, and Subsidized Rental Properties: Evidence from Metro Atlanta" (2020). *USI Publications*. 48.
doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2020.1798487

Housing Stability, Evictions, and Subsidized Rental Properties:
Evidence from Metro Atlanta

Austin Harrison[1]
Dan Immergluck[2]
Jeff Ernsthausen[3]
Stephanie Earl[4]

ABSTRACT: Evictions cause substantial harm to lower-income families. The effects range from homelessness to job loss, school turnover, and deteriorating health. Previously evicted tenants can be pushed down-market and forced to accept substandard housing. Housing subsidy might be expected to reduce eviction rates and provide greater stability. However, little systematic research has examined the eviction rates of subsidized, affordable rental properties and compared them to nonsubsidized, market-rate properties. We examine eviction filings for multifamily rental buildings in five-county metropolitan Atlanta, using a data set of eviction filings, property characteristics, and ownership information. We identify the subset of buildings that are subsidized and distinguish between senior and nonsenior properties. We find that senior, subsidized multifamily properties have substantially lower eviction rates than market-rate properties. A senior-subsidized multifamily rental building is expected to have an annual eviction rate that is 10.7 percentage points below a nonsenior, market-rate property; this result is significant $p < 0.01$, and compares to a mean eviction filing rate of 16.3 percent (16.3 evictions per 100 rental units). On the other hand, a nonsenior-subsidized building is expected to have an eviction rate that is 1.4 percentage points lower than a nonsenior, market-rate building; this result is not statistically significant. It is important to note that we do not have data on the economic characteristics of tenants, and that may account for some of the relatively high eviction rates of the nonsenior-affordable properties. We discuss implications of these findings for further research and housing policy and practice.

---

[1] Urban Studies Institute, Georgia State University
[2] Urban Studies Institute, Georgia State University
[3] Propublica
[4] Urban Studies Institute, Georgia State University (no longer at the Institute)

Introduction

Stable and affordable housing is a key concern to policymakers in the U.S. Much of U.S. housing research has focused on the provision of affordable rental housing, particularly for lower-income families. Until recently, much less attention was focused on forced displacement of tenants through the eviction process. Evictions were viewed by many housing researchers as a "hidden problem" because little systemic data were being collected on a local or national level (Hartman & Robinson, 2003). In recent years, however, research on evictions has grown.

Evictions, both formal and informal, are a key source of housing instability faced by lower-income renters in the U.S. As the number of lower-income renters has swelled, the supply of low-cost rental housing has declined (La Jeunesse at al., 2019). Eviction is a fairly frequent occurrence for renters in the U.S., especially among lower-income families. Approximately 15 percent of children in large U.S. cities born from 1998 to 2000 experienced at least one eviction before age 15 (Lundberg & Donnelly, 2018). One factor behind evictions is the mismatch between the need for low-cost rental units and the supply of such housing. Federal housing support for poor households has not increased in recent decades as demand by lower-income households has grown. As a result, the share of eligible low-income families receiving housing assistance declined from 24 percent to 21 percent from 2005 to 2015 (Kingsley, 2017). From 1999 to 2015, the share of renters that were severely rent-burdened increased from 19 to 25 percent (Kingsley, 2017). The strong competition for affordable units means that more landlords can afford to turn away prospective tenants with evictions on their records, so that evictions can make it even more difficult to find affordable housing.

Substantial literature in recent years has found that evictions are associated with greater family instability, homelessness, job loss, and mental and physical health (Desmond, 2012,

Desmond et al., 2013, Desmond, 2014, Rohe et al., 2016, and Gold, 2016). Tenants who have been evicted can find themselves pushed down-market, compelled to accept worse-quality housing, sometimes in less desirable neighborhoods. Renters experiencing forced moves ended up in neighborhoods with significantly higher poverty and crime rates than renters who moved voluntarily (Desmond & Shollenberger, 2015). Moreover, troubled eviction histories can effectively bar tenants from future eligibility for subsidized housing, making it harder to attain affordable housing (Desmond, 2012). Eviction is associated with subsequent unstable housing situations. Desmond (2012) found that 53 percent of renters being evicted didn't know where they would live next, while only 15 percent had found a new place to rent. Other evicted families relied on friends, hotels, and shelters. Furthermore, after experiencing an eviction, renters are twenty percentage points more likely to have stability issues in their next house or apartment (Desmond, Gershenson, & Kiviat, 2015).

Eviction can also have negative impacts on employment. Tenants in low-wage jobs often have difficulty getting time off of work to search for new housing, and once new housing is found it may become more difficult to keep the same job (Desmond, 2015; Hartman & Robinson, 2003). In a study of Milwaukee renters, Desmond and Gershenson (2016) found that renters who were forced to move were between 11 and 25 percent more likely to lose their jobs than comparable workers with stable housing.

One important aspect of evictions and rental housing dynamics that has received little attention in the research is the relationship between housing subsidies and eviction rates. Subsidized, affordable housing developments are often presumed to provide an environment for stable, low-eviction housing for lower-income renters (Desmond, 2016; Thomas, 2017). This is a reasonable presumption. Greater affordability via lower rents should be expected to result in

lower eviction rates as compared to market-rate housing. This is especially the case where the subsidies require rents to be set at some maximum share of income (e.g. 30 percent). However, there are two issues here. First, renters eligible for subsidized affordable units typically are relatively low-income families, meeting program requirements where incomes are typically no more than 60 percent or less of the metropolitan median income (e.g., in the case of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), the most common type of subsidized multifamily rental unit). These households, especially if not retired or on some sort of fixed income, are often precariously employed and may experience significant income volatility. Tenants who are on fixed incomes may be somewhat less vulnerable to economic downturns and associated income volatility. The second issue is that, in the case of LIHTC units, rents are not limited to 30 percent of the tenant's income but are set to not exceed 30 percent of the income of someone making the maximum allowable income, which is usually 60 percent of the area median income. Thus, if a tenant is making an income that is less than this, their rent burden ratio can be substantially greater than 30 percent of their income.

We have, to date, almost no systematic evidence on the eviction rates of subsidized housing properties. One very recent paper uses a data set of about 1,300 families from 16 cities from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, and finds that public housing, but not other forms of housing subsidy, has a negative impact on eviction rates during the 2000s (Lundberg et al, 2020). Their data data does not distinguish other forms of subsidy outside of public housing, but they imply that most of the "other assistance" families are receiving Housing Choice Vouchers. They suggest that public housing is more effective than other forms of subsidy at reducing eviction rates due to differences in the eviction process for public housing or due to

public housing more effectively reducing rent burdens than other forms of housing subsidy, a point that we will return to later in our discussion.

The largest subsidized housing program in the U.S., the LIHTC, does not regularly track eviction rates of its properties. In this paper, we look to develop some of the first systematic empirical evidence on the eviction rates of supply-side affordable housing subsidies. More specifically we ask the question, controlling for neighborhood, building, and locational characteristics, do subsidized multifamily rental properties have lower eviction rates than market-rate properties? And, if so, what is the degree of difference? We also examine specifically the differences between the eviction rates of senior-subsidized rental properties and nonsenior-subsidized properties. Unfortunately, we do not have data on the economic characteristics of tenants, at the building level, in either subsidized or market-rate properties, so we are unable to fully account for why the eviction rates of the two types of properties differ (or do not) to the extent that they do. Nonetheless, this paper provides some of the first evidence on the differences between the eviction rates of subsidized and market-rate multifamily buildings.

While eviction is only one outcome of concern for those interested in providing affordable housing, the recent accumulation of the evidence that eviction causes makes it an increasingly important consideration for designing housing policies and programs, especially given the substantial amount of evidence we now have on the harms that evictions can cause for families. While, ideally, we would also measure the relationship between tenant-based subsidies (tenant vouchers) and eviction rates, we were not able to obtain address-level data on tenant-based vouchers.

Factors Associated with Higher Eviction Rates

Researchers have found various household neighborhood, building, and tenant characteristics to be associated with higher eviction rates. A number of studies find strong associations between evictions and neighborhood racial composition, with Black neighborhoods often having substantially higher eviction rates (Desmond, 2012; Raymond et al., 2018; Shelton, 2017). Teresa (2018) found that Black neighborhoods in Richmond, Virginia had substantially higher eviction filings, with the eviction filing rate increasing by 1.2 percent for every 10 percent increase in the Black population. At the same time, neighborhood poverty rate and median income were not significant predictors of eviction rates. In Atlanta, Raymond et al. (2018) also found that the Black neighborhoods had higher eviction filings controlling for other neighborhood characteristics. The clustering of evictions in Black neighborhoods is not surprising given that survey-based evidence shows that evictions disproportionately affect Black households. Thirty percent of evicted tenants in Milwaukee were Black women, while Black women comprised only 9.6 percent of the city's population (Desmond, 2012). In King County, Washington, Thomas (2017) found that evictions were filed against Black renters at four times the rate of white renters. In a study of Milwaukee tenants, Greenberg, Gershenson and Desmond (2016) found that Latinos living in neighborhoods where more than two-thirds of the population was white were more likely to suffer an eviction. Additionally, they found that Latino tenants with non-Latino landlords were at an increased risk of eviction.

The number of children in a household in Milwaukee was a significant predictor of eviction (Desmond and Gershon, 2017). Desmond et al. (2013) found that for every one percentage-point increase in the share of the population that were children, there was an associated 6.5% increase in a neighborhood's eviction cases, controlling for race, gender, household composition, and socioeconomic status.

In a study of metropolitan Atlanta, Immergluck et al. (2019) found that nonserial eviction filing rates are associated with several building and neighborhood characteristics.[i] They found that smaller and older multifamily buildings, other things equal, had higher eviction rates. Also, buildings that had been sold recently had higher eviction rates, other things equal. A sale in the prior three years was associated with an eviction filing rate that was between 4.2 and 4.7 percentage points higher, compared to a mean rate of 16 percent for all buildings. The authors also found that the share of cost-burdened renters in a block group was positively associated with the eviction rate of a building and, like some other literature, that the share of neighborhood renters who were Black was strongly and positively associated with the eviction rate. Finally, the block group educational level was also negatively associated with the eviction rate.

Only a small share of the eviction literature examines the relationship between housing subsidy and evictions. This is somewhat surprising given that a chief goal of providing subsidized rental housing is to reduce housing instability and insecurity. One recent study that addressed the relationship between housing subsidy and eviction focused on urban mothers in a 15-year study (Donnelly et al., 2017). Mothers receiving housing assistance were less likely to face an eviction. This paper is one of the few to compare families receiving various types of housing assistance to unsubsidized households and how that seems to affect eviction rates. In another paper, Montgomery et al. (2017) focused on veterans participating in HUD's Veteran Assistance Support Housing (HUD-VASH) program. The authors looked at eviction risk once veterans left the program and found that receiving program assistance resulted in lower eviction rates. In a study of eviction filings in Philadelphia, Goldstein et al. (2019) find that the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) properties accounted for between nine and thirteen

percent of eviction filings since 2010, while accounting for about five percent of the city's rental stock. PHA's tenants are predominantly very low income.

While they did not analyze eviction rates, Brisson and Covert (2015) examined the rental nonpayment rates of tenants of the national nonprofit, Mercy Housing, across the country. They found different rates of lease violations among tenants in their family, supportive and senior housing programs. Unfortunately, this study did not provide direct measures in comparison to otherwise similar, unsubsidized properties. However, the authors did find that tenants in the family housing units had the highest rates of lease violations across the different types of rental housing.

Overall, there has been little research published on the differences in eviction rates between subsidized and unsubsidized, market-rate rental properties. While we expect housing subsidy to reduce eviction rates, most subsidized housing operators have to address nonpayment of rent through some means, often including eviction. The extent to which housing subsidy reduces eviction rates is not well established and should be an important consideration in designing and managing subsidized housing programs.

Examining Differences in Eviction Rates Among Subsidized and Market-Rental Rental Properties in Metropolitan Atlanta

In order to examine factors associated with the eviction activity we utilized a database of address-level data on eviction filings for the five core counties of the Atlanta metropolitan area for 2016. These data were acquired from county court websites for a series of articles in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* on evictions (Joyner, Ernsthausen, and Mariano, 2018). It should be noted that these data strictly cover formal eviction proceedings, which only account for a subset

of all forms of forced residential displacement (Desmond & Shollenberger, 2015). In addition to the eviction court records, data on building characteristics were obtained from tax assessor parcel files for each of the five counties, which enabled us to identify the multifamily (5 units or more) residential buildings and link them to eviction filings. Then, we obtained real estate sales data by parcel number and linked it to the tax assessor parcel and eviction data. We used these data to identify the recent sales history for the multifamily properties.

We also obtained lists of subsidized multifamily rental properties in the region from two sources: the National Housing Preservation Database (https://preservationdatabase.org/) and the HUD multifamily contracts database (https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/exp/mfhdiscl). These included buildings in the following categories of subsidy: LIHTC, Section 8 (project based), Section 202/811, Section 515, HOME, Public Housing, and HUD-subsidized. If a property was indicated as falling into any of these categories during 2016, the property was classified as "subsidized." Because over 85 percent of the subsidized buildings were LIHTC properties (some of these buildings included other subsidies as well), no attempt was made to distinguish the relationship of different types of subsidy and eviction rates, as sample sizes would be too small for most subsidy types. Finally, using building websites, we examined all subsidized properties to determine whether they were age-restricted senior housing. For more information on the data used, a table detailing each data item, source, and variable is located below.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

In order to identify any potential market-rate buildings that were also senior, age-restricted properties, we contacted two experts in the multifamily rental industry in Atlanta. These include a principal with a larger developer of predominantly LIHTC senior-subsidized properties that has just recently begun developing market-rate senior properties, and a principal of a market-research real estate consultancy that does substantial work in the multifamily rental sector. Both experts pointed to just a handful of senior, market-rate multifamily rental developments, although the consultancy principal pointed out that this industry niche was growing in the region (Cooke, 2019; Laube, 2019). Of the 10 projects that these experts pointed to, most were not developed and occupied by 2016. We identified only four senior-market rate buildings out of the 1,712 market-rate buildings in our data set.

Figure 1 provides a map of the location of the multifamily rental properties throughout the 5-county region, with non-senior subsidized, and senior-subsidized properties specially color-coded. The five core counties of the Atlanta region account for 67 percent of the metropolitan area's population and 88 percent of the multifamily rental units in the region. Compared to other large metropolitan areas in the U.S., the Atlanta metropolitan area suffers from high eviction filing and eviction rates (Immergluck et al., 2019).

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Evictions in multifamily buildings in the five-county region accounted for more than 95,000 out of more than 132,000 total eviction filings in 2016, with the difference being filings on single-family (one-to-four unit) properties. Therefore, multifamily filings account for more than 70 percent of all filings in the area. The 95,000 filings occurred in 1,861 multifamily

properties. The average property contained approximately 200 rental units, ranging from 5 to more than 1,700 units. The average annual eviction filing rate per building was 28 filings per 100 rental units.

We distinguish between "serial" and "nonserial" eviction filings. Serial filings are those when a particular tenant in a building receives more than one filing within a one-year period. We focus here, instead, on nonserial eviction filings, which are much more likely to result in the eventual eviction of a tenant (Garboden and Rosen, 2019; Leung et al., 2019). Judgement data from all five counties of interest was not accessible or easily linked to parcel and building data. We calculate an eviction filing rate by simply taking the number of total filings for the year minus the number of serial filings. The nonserial eviction filing rate—the key outcome variable of interest here and from this point referred to as the "eviction rate"—is the annual number of nonserial eviction filings divided by the number of rental units in the building. The average eviction rate for 2016 was 16.3 per 100 units. The interquartile range for the rate was from 6 to 22 per 100 units.

A variety of neighborhood and building characteristics, including location, age, and size of a building may explain away much of the difference in building-level eviction rates. The primary goal here is to identify whether, after controlling for these characteristics, the fact that a building is subsidized for affordable housing purposes is associated with a lower eviction rate. We first look at whether subsidy status, in and of itself, is associated with different eviction rates. Then, in a separate regression, we distinguish between senior-subsidized and nonsenior-subsidized buildings and see if these two different types of subsidized properties are associated with different eviction rates.

We estimate a model for the eviction rate (nonserial eviction filings/rental units) for a building, Y,

$$Y = \alpha + \beta \mathbf{X} + \phi \mathbf{N} + \delta \mathbf{L} + \lambda \mathbf{S} + \mu \qquad (1)$$

where **X** is a set of building characteristics, including the number of units in the building, the appraised value per unit in 2016,[ii] the age of the building, and a set of dummy variables indicating whether the building was sold in the same year, a prior year, or two to three years ago. Our prior is that the sale of a building may result in a rise in eviction filings as some owners raise rents, possibly after upgrading the property. **N** is a set of block group-level characteristics, which are chosen based on the previous literature, including the share of rental households who are housing-cost burdened, median gross rent, poverty rate, the share of households that are female-headed families, the share of adults over 25 who are college-educated, the share of households with children, the share of renters who are 65 or over, the share of renters who are Black, the share of renters who are Latino, and the share of renters who are Asian. **L** is a set of spatial dummy control variables indicating which of the 36 different Atlanta Regional Commission super districts the property is located within. These are included to account for spatial clustering within the five-county metro. Each county contains from 4 (Clayton) to 12 (Fulton) super districts. Finally, **S** is a set of one or two dummy variables (depending on the version of the model employed) that indicate the subsidy status of the property, i.e., whether it is a subsidized housing property and, in another model, whether it is a senior-subsidized or a nonsenior-subsidized rental property. We also include a dummy variable for the small number (4) of properties that are senior, market-rate buildings.

Results and Discussion

We first examine differences in eviction rates across three different subsets of the multifamily rental properties, including nonsenior, market-rate buildings, nonsenior-subsidized buildings, and senior-subsidized buildings. Table 2 provides the means for each of these three subgroups as well as the result of two independent-sample t-tests. The first t-test is between the nonsenior, market-rate buildings (n=1,708) and senior, market-rate buildings (n=4). The second one is between the nonsenior, market-rate buildings and the nonsenior-subsidized properties (n=123). Finally, the third t-test is between the nonsenior, market-rate buildings and the senior-subsidized properties (n=26).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 indicates that the mean eviction rate for the four senior, market-rate buildings (1.54 per 100 units) is far smaller than the mean for nonsenior, market-rate buildings (16.28 per 100 units). However, due to the small number of senior, market-rate buildings, this difference is not significant at $p < 0.05$. The mean eviction rate for nonsenior-subsidized buildings (18.72 per 100 units) is slightly higher than the mean rate for market-rate buildings (16.28 per 100 units). However, the difference of 2.43 per 100 units is not significant at $p < 0.05$. Finally, when comparing senior-subsidized buildings to market-rate properties, the mean eviction rate among senior-subsidized buildings is less than half that of market-rate properties (7.55 versus 16.28 per 100 units), and this difference is statistically significant.

We then turn to estimations of equation 1, which are developed in three stages. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics for the 1,844 properties in the estimations of equation 1. Table 3 then provides the regression results. In the first set of results in Table 4, labeled Model 1, the eviction rate is estimated without any attempt to distinguish between subsidized and market-rate

multifamily buildings. Then, in Model 2, a dummy variable is added to the model to indicate whether the building is subsidized or not. Finally, in Model 3, in place of one single "subsidized" dummy variable, two separate dummies are used, one indicating that the building is a nonsenior-subsidized property, and the second to indicate that it is a senior-subsidized property. We use the three stages to identify the relationship between the subsidy status of a building and the eviction rate, and in particular, whether senior, subsidized buildings seem to have different eviction rates than nonsenior-subsidized buildings.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Clustered-robust standard errors were used and clustered at the block-group level due to the use of block-group-level neighborhood characteristics. No substantial multicollinearity problems were detected. Only two variance inflation factors (VIFs) exceeded 5, and none exceeded 7. These two VIFs were for the share of renters who are Black and the share of adults with a college education. The share of renters who are Black is highly significant, so multicollinearity is not a concern there. The education variable is close to being statistically significant, however, and a larger sample size might result in statistical significance.

The results for most of the variables in the regressions in Table 4 are largely consistent with the existing literature. Three neighborhood characteristics are significantly associated with the eviction rate: the share of those cost burdened, the share of Black renters, and the share of Asian renters. The share of renters who are cost-burdened is positively associated with eviction

rate. A ten percentage-point (or, one-tenth) increase in the share of renters who are cost-burdened is associated, other things equal, with a 0.63 percentage-point increase in the eviction rate, which is a modest amount compared to a mean annual eviction rate of 16.3 percent (16.3 evictions per 100 rental units).

As shown in much of the existing literature, evictions are heavily racialized. Each ten percentage-point increase in the block group share of renters who are Black, other things equal, is associated with a 0.89 percentage point increase in the eviction rate. This means that going from a predominantly nonblack to a predominantly Black tract, other things equal, is associated with a substantial increase in the eviction rate. Also, neighborhoods with larger Asian renter populations, other things equal, are associated with lower eviction rates.

Some building characteristics are significantly associated with eviction rates. Larger buildings, other things equal, are expected to have lower eviction rates than smaller buildings. Every 50 additional units is associated with an eviction rate that is 0.38 percentage points lower. Older buildings are also associated with higher eviction rates. Every 10 years in additional building age is associated with a 0.75 percentage-point higher eviction rate, other things equal. A sale of the building in any of the three prior years is associated with more than a four percentage-point increase in the eviction rate, a relatively large amount.

The key focus of this paper is on the association between subsidy status and evictions. The results of Model 2 suggest that subsidized buildings have significantly lower eviction rates, other things equal, than nonsenior, market-rate buildings. The results suggest that a subsidized property, other things equal, is expected to have a 2.8 percentage-point lower eviction rate. However, Model 2 groups all subsidized properties together and does not distinguish between senior-subsidized and other subsidized properties. Lower-income seniors may be expected to

suffer from lower eviction rates than other lower-income families, especially because low-income seniors are likely to have less volatile income streams consisting of social security or other retirement sources. Meanwhile, lower-income families are more vulnerable to layoffs and fluctuations in family incomes.

Therefore, in Model 3, we distinguish between senior-subsidized and nonsenior-subsidized properties. We also include a dummy variable for the four senior, market-rate buildings. The results show that senior-subsidized buildings, as well as senior, market-rate buildings, have significantly and markedly lower eviction rates than nonsenior, market-rate properties. Other things equal, a senior-subsidized building is expected to have a 10.7 percentage-point lower eviction rate than a market-rate building. This result is highly statistically significant.

The result for nonsenior subsidized property is quite different, however. A nonsenior-subsidized building is expected to have only a 1.4 percentage-point lower eviction rate than a market-rate building, other things equal, and this result is not statistically significant. However, this result might conceivably become statistically significant if the sample size of nonsenior subsidized properties (123 buildings) was substantially larger. This finding may be somewhat counterintuitive if we expect supply-side subsidy, such as the LIHTC, to have a substantial dampening effect on eviction rates. At the same time, as discussed below, we are unable to control for the income and socioeconomic mix of the tenants at the building, and the tenants in subsidized properties, on average, will tend to have lower incomes and likely be more vulnerable to economic shocks than tenants of market-rate buildings.

Conclusion

Previous research demonstrates high multi-family eviction rates in Atlanta, across property types. (Immergluck et al., 2019). The findings in this paper expand our knowledge on eviction rates, specifically looking at the impacts of affordability and senior housing. The finding that senior, subsidized rental properties have substantially lower eviction rates than nonsenior, market-rate buildings, other variables held equal, is perhaps unsurprising. Low-income seniors are likely to have relatively stable, if still low, incomes compared to working-age families. Moreover, the regulated, lower rents of subsidized properties provide tenants with more affordability and some protection from large rent increases.

Interpreting the finding that nonsenior-subsidized buildings do not have substantially lower eviction rates than nonsenior, market-rate buildings is complicated by the fact that, while we are able to control for a great many characteristics about each building, including age, size, location, and racial and economic characteristics of renters at the block group level, we are not able to control directly for the tenant incomes of the properties. One likely contributor to the perhaps unexpectedly high eviction rates of the subsidized properties is that they are income-restricted so that tenants are likely to be more vulnerable to economic shocks and income declines, making them, in turn, more vulnerable to eviction. However, these buildings also have lower, limited rents set at levels that are intended to be subsidized for lower-income tenants. Thus, it may be that the design of the subsidy structure of some or most of these subsidized properties are not terribly effective at addressing the unstable economic lives of many of their tenants. This is consistent with the finding of Lundberg et al. (2020) that found that public housing had a substantial negative effect on eviction probabilities but that other forms of housing assistance did not.

Subsidized properties generally have lower rents than market-rate buildings. The bulk of these properties are LIHTC buildings, where rents are generally set at rents that affordable to those with incomes at or below 60 percent of the metropolitan area median income. At the same time, however, the lower-income families in these properties may be more vulnerable economically than the typical tenant of market-rate rental buildings, which tend to draw from a broader socioeconomic spectrum of tenants. Tenants in subsidized properties, especially nonsenior buildings, are likely to be more vulnerable to layoffs, economic downturns, and a wide variety of economic stressors than are renters overall.

In addition, unlike housing vouchers and some other affordable rental programs, the LIHTC program does not limit gross rent to 30 percent of the tenant's income. This means that tenants with incomes below the 60 percent of area median income threshold will tend to pay greater than 30 percent of their income towards rent. Also, if their incomes decline, their rent is not reduced accordingly, unless they also hold a housing voucher or some other sort of income-sensitive subsidy. These realities point to a systemic response that could look similar to a program that the City of Philadelphia is considering. The new pilot program would provide "gap" rent vouchers of up to $300 per month, to decrease rent burden amongst tenants of tax-credit or other publicly financed properties (Blumgart, 2020).

In terms of further research, there is a need for data that provide information on the tenant characteristics (especially income) of different buildings, including market-rate properties. Subsidized rental properties that are not age-restricted do not have the same mix of tenants that the typical market-rate rental property does. Again, tenants in subsidized properties may be more vulnerable to adversities such as discrimination in labor markets, layoffs, weak wage growth, and cyclical or structural unemployment. Better data on tenants could help isolate the extent to which

housing subsidy programs are effective at buffering residents from eviction pressures. Regardless, the evidence put forward in this paper supports arguments for increased financial supports to enable greater housing stability for tax-credit tenants.

Ideally, future research on this topic would utilize data on income and race for each tenant in all properties, not just LIHTC buildings. There are numerous barriers to getting such data. For one, while such data are collected for LIHTC buildings they are generally not publicly reported at the building level (O'Regan and Horn, 2013). This is partly a legacy of the LIHTC program being administered by the IRS and not by HUD. Moreover, the data on LIHTC tenants that are collected by the state housing finance agencies generally only cover the subsidized units and not any market-rate units in the development. More fundamentally, market-rate properties generally do not collect such information and if property managers tried to do so, they would potentially create privacy concerns among tenants. Further work on this topic, which attempted to control for tenant characteristics. would most likely be accomplished through tenant surveys of both subsidized and market-rate properties, ideally at a scale that could enable generalizability across building type and space. Alternatively, qualitative interview-based research on landlords and tenants may be useful to informing these issues.

Research similar to the work here should be conducted in other metropolitan areas in other states. Metropolitan Atlanta is a high-eviction region in a state with few tenant protections and a landlord-friendly eviction process (Hatch, 2017). Additionally, the difference between market-rate rents and LIHTC rents is unlikely to be as large in the Atlanta market as compared to higher-cost markets such as many on the East and West Coasts. In such metros, LIHTC rents are likely to be lower relative to market rents than in Atlanta. Thus, the program may be relatively

more effective in reducing evictions in higher-cost markets because it offers a relatively greater reduction in rents compared to market rents.

Finally, there is also a need to do more research on the role of tenant-based housing assistance, especially Housing Choice Vouchers, on eviction rates as compared to supply-side subsidies such as the LIHTC. Much of the focus in comparing supply-side versus demand-side programs has focused on the impact on affordability levels and on the production efficiency of the various programs. More attention is needed to the differential impacts of the different subsidized housing approaches and programs on rental stability and, in particular, the incidence of evictions.

Given the evidence on the harms that evictions cause to families and children, the fact that nonsenior-subsidized rental properties have eviction rates similar to the high rates of nonsenior, market-rate buildings is some cause for concern, given the unusually high baseline rates in Atlanta. Of course, providing lower, more affordable rents to low-income families is a laudable outcome of housing subsidy programs. If such programs continue to suffer from relatively high eviction rates, however, policymakers and affordable housing practitioners may want to reexamine the design and implementation of these subsidy programs and consider additional emphasis on reducing evictions and increasing housing stability, as well as affordability. This may mean focusing more on program designs that address the volatility of low-income families' incomes, including favoring programs that lower effective rents as tenant incomes decline.

Beyond any fundamental redesign of affordable housing subsidy programs, these results imply that current supply-side subsidy programs, by themselves, may not be sufficient tools for reducing evictions markedly to address a key aspect of housing stability, at least for nonsenior

families. It may be that LIHTC and other programs should be modified to focus more on providing greater opportunities to mitigate evictions. State housing finance authorities (HFAs) might consider providing points in their Qualified Allocation Plans to developers who promise to maintain eviction mitigation programs, which might include access to short- or medium-term financial support to families undergoing financial hardship. Moreover, states should take existing IRS regulations to enforce "good-cause" eviction requirements in LIHTC buildings seriously. The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) argues that state housing finance agencies should more aggressively enforce this federal requirement (National Housing Law Project, 2018). They point to California's requirement that all LIHTC properties have a good-cause lease rider together with a letter informing tenants of their rights under this regulation. Wisconsin and Massachusetts reference the good-cause requirements in their regulatory agreements. Yet, NHLP argues that many states fail to implement the good-cause requirements in any meaningful way. While the effects of such actions are unknown at this time, and many evictions may be initiated simply for failure to pay rent (generally acceptable under good-cause requirements), this is an additional step that might be considered to improve housing stability in subsidized properties.

During the mortgage crisis, a number of states and localities, sometimes with federal support, provided short- or medium-term assistance to homeowners undergoing financial stress. Some nonprofit programs exist to provide short-term assistance to renters, but they are frequently inadequately funded. Developers might team up with such nonprofits or with local government to provide such assistance. In addition, state HFAs should be careful in their underwriting so as to not encourage such tight operating margins that property owners have little recourse but to evict tenants undergoing temporary distress. HFAs and other affordable housing funders should also examine the eviction practices and eviction filing data for property owners who apply for

tax credits to ensure that they are not subsidizing landlords that engage in damaging serial filing

practices, specifically in cities like Atlanta (Immergluck et al., 2019). Finally, while tenant-

landlord law and variations in eviction processes across states and cities are beyond the scope of

this article, the findings do suggest that some substantial policy reform in this arena might be

necessary if the goal is to substantially reduce evictions and improve housing stability for

working families.

References

Blumgart, J. (2020). Philly is experimenting with a new approach to helping residents pay rent.
January 11. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from https://whyy.org/articles/philly-experiments-
with-new-rent-voucher-aimed-at-keeping-people-in-their-homes/

Brisson, D., & Covert, J. (2015). Housing instability risk among subsidized housing recipients:
Characteristics associated with late or nonpayment of rent. *Social Work Research*, 39(2),
119-128.

Cooke, Thurston. 2019. Email exchange with Thurston Cooke of One Street Residential, Atlanta,
Georgia. October 21.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. Broadway Books.

Desmond, M. (2014). Poor black women are evicted at alarming rates, setting off a chain of
hardship. Policy Research Brief (Chicago: MacArthur Foundation, 2014). https://www.
macfound.org/media/files/HHM_Research_Brief_
_Poor_Black_Women_Are_Evicted_at_ Alarming_Rates. pdf.

Desmond, M., An, W., Winkler, R., & Ferriss, T. (2013). Evicting children. *Social Forces*, *92*(1),
303-327.

Desmond, M. (2012). Eviction and the reproduction of urban poverty. *American Journal of Sociology, 118*(1), 88-133

Desmond, M., & Gershenson, C. (2017). Who gets evicted? Assessing individual, neighborhood, and network factors. *Social Science Research*, 62, 362-377.

Desmond, M., Gershenson, C. & Kiviat, B. (2015) Forced relocations and residential instability among urban renters. *Social Service Review*, 89, 227–262.

Desmond, M., & Shollenberger, T. (2015). Forced displacement from rental housing: Prevalence and neighborhood consequences. *Demography,* 52(5), 1751-1772.

Donnelly, L., Brooks-Gunn, J., McLanahan, S., & Garfinkel, I. (2017). The Protective Effects of Housing Assistance Programs on Eviction (No. wp17-07-ff). Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing.

Garboden, P. & Rosen, E. (2019). Serial filing: How landlords use the threat of eviction. *City & Community*, 18, 638–661.

Gold, A. E. (2016). No home for justice: How eviction perpetuates health inequity among low-income and minority tenants. *Geo. J. on Poverty L. & Pol'y,* 24, 59.

Goldstein, I., Dowdall, E., Weidig, C., Simmons, J., Carney, B. 2019. Evictions in Philadelphia:

    A data & policy update. The Reinvestment Fund. https://www.reinvestment.com/wp-

    content/uploads/2019/10/ReinvestmentFund__PHL-Evictions-Brief-Oct-2019.pdf.

Greenberg, D., Gershenson, C., & Desmond, M. (2016). Discrimination in evictions: Empirical

    evidence and legal challenges. *Harv. CR-CLL Rev.*, *51*, 115.

Hartman, C., & Robinson, D. (2003). Evictions: The hidden housing problem. *Housing Policy*

    Debate, 14(4), 461-501.

Hatch, M.E. (2017) Statutory protection for renters: Classification of state landlord–tenant policy

    approaches. *Housing Policy Debate*, 27, 98–11.

Immergluck, D., Ernsthausen, J., Earl, S., & Powell, A. (2019). Evictions, large owners, and

    serial filings: findings from Atlanta. *Housing Studies*, 1-22.

Joyner, C., Ernsthausen, J. & Mariano, W. (2018). Eviction tactics squeeze renters: AJC analysis

    shows landlords increasingly use filings to collect late rent, Atlanta Journal Constitution,

    June 22. Available at https://www.ajc.com/news/local/stressful-way-live-how-eviction-

    threatsget-used-collect-rent/vDYSUw49bdNqtNPIht9K1O/.

La Jeunesse, E., Hermann, A., McCue, D., and Spader, J. (2019). Documenting the long-run

    decline in low-cost rental units in the U.S. by state. Harvard Joint Center for Housing

Studies. September 17. https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/working-papers/documenting-long-run-decline-low-cost-rental-units-us-state.

Laube, D. (2019). Email exchange with David Laube, Noell Consulting Group, Atlanta, Georgia. October 21.

Leung, L., Hepburn, P. & Desmond, M. (2019). Serial evictions: Property managers, tenants, and civil court sanctions. (Princeton, NJ: Eviction Lab, Princeton University). Princeton, NJ. Unpublished manuscript. January 16.

Lundberg, I. & Donnelly, L. (2018). A research note on the prevalence of housing eviction among children born in US Cities, *Demography*, pp. 1–14.

Lundberg, I., Gold, S. L., Donnelly, L., Brooks-Gunn, J., & McLanahan, S. S. (2020). Government assistance protects low-income families from eviction. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22234.

Kingsley, G.T. (2017). Trends in housing problems and federal housing assistance (Washington, DC: Urban Institute).

Montgomery, A. E., Cusack, M., Szymkowiak, D., Fargo, J., & O'Toole, T. (2017). Factors contributing to eviction from permanent supportive housing: Lessons from HUD-VASH. *Evaluation and program planning*, 61, 55-63.

National Housing Law Project. (2018). LIHTC Tenant Protections. April 27.

    https://www.nhlp.org/tag/low-%c2%adincome-housing-taxcredit/.

O'Regan, K. M., & Horn, K. M. (2013). What can we learn about the low-income housing tax

    credit program by looking at the tenants? *Housing Policy Debate*, *23*(3), 597-613.

Raymond, E.L., Duckworth, R., Miller, B., Lucas, M. & Pokharel, S. (2018). From foreclosure to

    eviction: Housing insecurity in corporate-owned single-family rentals. *Cityscape*, 20,

    159–188.

Rohe, W. M., Webb, M. D., & Frescoln, K. P. (2016). Work requirements in public housing:

    Impacts on tenant employment and evictions. *Housing Policy Debate*, 26(6), 909-927.

Shelton, T. (2017). Locked out: Foreclosure, eviction and housing instability in Lexington,

    2005–2016 (Lexington, KY: Lexington Fair Housing Council). Lexington, KY. Available

    at https://taylorshelton.info/publication/lfhc-locked-out/.

Teresa, B. (2018). The geography of eviction in Richmond: Beyond poverty (RVA Eviction Lab,

    Virginia Commonwealth University). Available at

    https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/pdfs/curadocuments/GeographiesofEviction.pdf.

Thomas, T.A. (2017). Forced out: Race, market, and neighborhood dynamics of evictions.

Doctoral dissertation (University of Washington). Seattle, WA. Available at

https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/40705.

Table 1. Project Data Table

Data Source	Data Item	Variables
Fulton County Magistrate Court	Eviction Court Records Sales Records	Eviction Filing Rate Sale in Same Year Sale in Previous Year Sale 2-3 Years Prior
Gwinnett County Magistrate Court		
Clayton County Magistrate Court		
Cobb County Magistrate Court		
Dekalb County Magistrate Court		
Fulton County Tax Assessor	Building Characteristics Parcel Data	Units in Building Value/Unit ($) Age of Building
Gwinnett County Tax Assessor		
Clayton County Tax Assessor		
Cobb County Tax Assessor		
Dekalb County Tax Assessor		
National Housing Preservation Database	Subsidized Housing Identification	Building is Subsidized
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development Multi-Family Contracts Database		

Table 2. Eviction Rate Means and Independent-Sample T-Tests for Four Types of

Multifamily Rental Buildings

Building Type	Mean Eviction Rate (nonserial filing rate)	Difference in Means (significance, p-value)
Nonsenior, market-rate buildings (1,708)	16.28 per 100 units	+14.74 per 100 units (0.057)**
Senior, market-rate buildings (4)	1.54 per 100 units	

Building Type	Mean Eviction Rate (nonserial filing rate)	Difference in Means (significance, p-value)
Nonsenior, market-rate buildings (1,708)	16.28 per 100 units	+2.43 per 100 units (0.090)**
Nonsenior-subsidized buildings (123)	18.72 per 100 units	

Building Type	Mean Eviction Rate (nonserial filing rate)	Difference in Means (significance, p-value)
Nonsenior, market-rate buildings (1,708)	16.28 per 100 units	- 8.73 per 100 units* (0.000)***
Senior-subsidized buildings (26)	7.55 per 100 units	

* significant at p < 0.05
** equal variances assumed
***equal variances not assumed

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Eviction Rate (Nonserial filing rate, share of units)	0.1630	0.1536
Units in Building	198.3	165.3
Value/Unit ($)	67,050	66,899
Sale in Same Year (0,1)	0.0862	0.2808
Sale in Previous Year (0,1)	0.1529	0.3600
Sale 2-3 Years Prior (0,1)	0.2430	0.4290
Age of Building (years)	35.94	19.00
BG Share, Renters Who are Cost-Burdened	0.5064	0.1539
BG Median Gross Rent ($)	983.1	213.2
BG Share in Poverty	0.2124	0.1692
BG Share, Female-Headed Families as Share HHs	0.1795	0.1223
BG Share, Over 25 w/College Education	0.3511	0.2331
BG Share, Households w/Children <17	0.2956	0.1495
BG Share, Renters >16 Who are 65+	0.0883	0.1002
BG Share, Renters Who are Black	0.5461	0.3098
BG Share, Renters Who are Latino	0.1280	0.1744
BG Share, Renters Who are Asian	0.0510	0.0920
Building is Affordable (0,1)	0.0770	0.2667
Building is Senior-market-rate (0,1)	0.0022	0.0465
Building is Nonsenior-subsidized (0,1)	0.0634	0.2438
Building is Senior-subsidized (0,1)	0.0136	0.1157

N = 1,844

# Table 4. Estimation of Eviction Filing Rate, 2016

	MODEL 1			MODEL 2			MODEL 3			
	Coefficient	SE*	Sig.	Coefficient	SE*	Sig.	Coefficient	SE*	Sig.	Beta
Constant	0.0111	0.0523	0.832	0.0153	0.0519	0.769	0.0245	0.0519	0.637	.
Units in Building	**-7.57E-05**	**2.20E-05**	**0.001**	**-7.50E-05**	**0.0000**	**0.001**	**-7.65E-05**	**2.17E-05**	**0.000**	**-0.082**
Value/Unit ($)	2.10E-07	1.45E-07	0.148	2.04E-07	0.0000	0.171	1.90E-07	1.52E-07	0.212	0.083
Sale in Same Year (0,1)	**0.0465**	**0.0109**	**0.000**	**0.0448**	**0.0109**	**0.000**	**0.0452**	**0.0109**	**0.000**	**0.083**
Sale in Previous Year (0,1)	**0.0441**	**0.0099**	**0.000**	**0.0430**	**0.0098**	**0.000**	**0.0425**	**0.0098**	**0.000**	**0.100**
Sale 2-3 Years Prior (0,1)	**0.0428**	**0.0086**	**0.000**	**0.0412**	**0.0084**	**0.000**	**0.0413**	**0.0083**	**0.000**	**0.115**
Age of Building (years)	**9.14E-04**	**2.80E-04**	**0.001**	**8.38E-04**	**2.77E-04**	**0.003**	**7.47E-04**	**2.80E-04**	**0.008**	**0.092**
BG Share, Renters Who are Cost-Burdened	**0.0563**	**0.0265**	**0.034**	**0.0598**	**0.0266**	**0.025**	**0.0629**	**0.0263**	**0.017**	**0.063**
BG Median Gross Rent ($)	6.70E-06	2.91E-05	0.818	4.66E-06	2.90E-05	0.872	8.57E-07	2.90E-05	0.976	0.001
BG Share in Poverty	0.0385	0.0422	0.361	0.0400	0.0423	0.344	0.0373	0.0427	0.382	0.041
BG Share, Female-Headed Families as Share HHs	-0.0251	0.0466	0.590	-0.0200	0.0466	0.668	-0.0257	0.0466	0.581	-0.020
BG Share, Over 25 w/College Education	_-0.0595_	_0.0359_	_0.097_	-0.0569	0.0356	0.111	-0.0558	0.0364	0.126	-0.085
BG Share, Households w/Children <17	-0.0074	0.0364	0.838	-0.0024	0.0367	0.948	-0.0080	0.0365	0.827	-0.008
BG Share, Renters >16 Who are 65+	-0.0491	0.0458	0.284	-0.0450	0.0461	0.329	-0.0297	0.0438	0.498	-0.019
BG Share, Renters Who are Black	**0.0884**	**0.0296**	**0.003**	**0.0879**	**0.0297**	**0.003**	**0.0890**	**0.0296**	**0.003**	**0.179**
BG Share, Renters Who are Latino	-0.0385	0.0315	0.222	-0.0402	0.0316	0.204	-0.0401	0.0316	0.205	-0.046
BG Share, Renters Who are Asian	**-0.0874**	**0.0339**	**0.010**	**-0.0901**	**0.0341**	**0.008**	**-0.0912**	**0.0339**	**0.007**	**-0.055**
Building is Affordable (0,1)				**-0.0282**	**0.0087**	**0.001**				
Building is Senior-market-rate (0,1)							**-0.1373**	**0.0438**	**0.002**	**-0.042**
Building is Nonsenior-subsidized (0,1)							-0.0135	0.0089	0.131	-0.021
Building is Senior-subsidized (0,1)							**-0.1065**	**0.0168**	**0.000**	**-0.080**
N= 1,844										
R-square	0.2976			0.2997			0.3051			

*clustered (at block group), robust standard errors

Not shown: 35 spatial fixed-effect dummies indicating super district area within metropolitan area

Bold and underlined = significant < 0.01; bold = significant < 0.05; underlined = significant

Figure 1. Map of Multifamily Rental Properties in the Five-County Atlanta Metropolitan Area
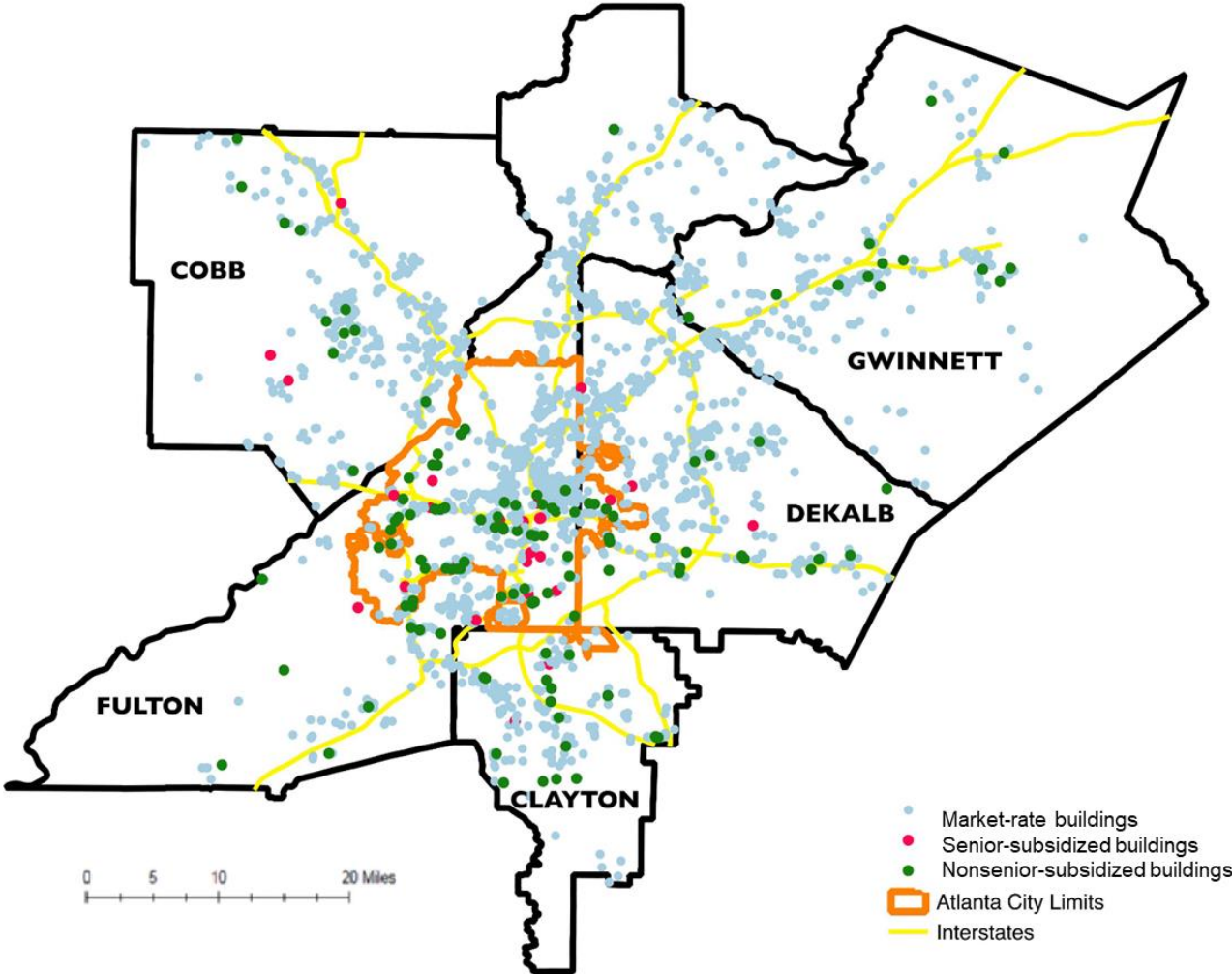
[i] Nonserial eviction filings are those filings that exclude repeat filings on the same tenant within a one-year period. Serial filings are those that are filed on the same tenant within the same period. Immergluck et al. (2019) show that the two different types of eviction filings exhibit somewhat distinct patterns across buildings and neighborhoods. Nonserial filings are more likely to result in the actual forced expulsion of a tenant from a rental unit.

[ii] For Fulton County, instead of using 2016 appraised values, 2017 values were used. Fulton County did not reassess properties from 2011 through 2016, so 2017 appraised values were deemed more accurate estimates of 2016 market values than 2016 appraised values.