

June 11, 2020

The members of the Seattle Planning Commission are outraged and saddened by the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Charleena Lyles here in Seattle, and too many others who have been injured and killed by police. This moment of pain is only one amidst centuries of racial violence and oppression in the history of our country. The injustice and violence that people of color experience betray our values as a city, and a nation. We support protesters in their expressions of frustration and anger, and we share their disgust with the racist systems and structures that target Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Racial bias and violence towards People of Color, Black people in particular, is especially atrocious when perpetrated by public servants employed to protect them. We stand in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives and affirm that Black Lives Matter.

Those of us who hold positions of public trust and can influence public policy need to correct the systems of our society that were designed to privilege white people. That privilege harms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color not just in our approaches to public safety and policing, but extends also to housing, transportation, public health, education and beyond. It is perpetuated in the political processes and forums for public input that shape our systems. As inheritors of the legacy of urban planning practices in Seattle and the U.S., we on the Seattle Planning Commission acknowledge that those practices have directly exacerbated racial segregation and inequities. We ask all leaders in positions of power to step up and make Seattle a community that advances and amplifies racial justice.

We acknowledge that institutionalized racial injustice threatens the safety and health of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in many ways, which demands the re-constitution not just of policing and public safety but many other arenas of public policy. Racism, like COVID-19, is a public health crisis. Racism emerges in myriad ways and levels of severity, from microaggressions and stereotyping, to the use of racist policies such as exclusionary zoning and red lining as tools for segregation. We need to be actively anti-racist in our efforts to serve our communities.

In response to recent events, the City Council of Minneapolis is discussing disbanding their police department, while Los Angeles has committed to cutting their police department budget. The intention of both efforts is to shift resources from paramilitary policing to educational and social services that will reduce racial and economic disparities. We urge the Seattle City Council and Office of the Mayor to undertake efforts to prevent further violence toward the black community and to build a more just and equitable city.

The Seattle Planning Commission, an independent and advisory body to the Seattle City Council and Mayor, supports protesters and advocates seeking racial equity. We commit to ongoing learning and conversation, and to a continuous search for ways that we can contribute to these efforts. We believe the urgency of this matter is such that we are willing to add this statement to the collective demand for meaningful anti-racist and structural change in our city, and our country.