

DESIGNING A NATIVE NEIGHBORHOOD

Key Themes +
Community-Driven Solutions

A REPORT BY TAHOMA PEAK SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Seattle commissioned Tahoma Peak Solutions to conduct a comprehensive review of various reports to identify key findings relevant to the development of a Native Neighborhood. The “Designing a Native Neighborhood: Key Themes and Community-Driven Solutions” report synthesizes insights and recommendations from these studies and community inputs, including the Native Neighborhood Case Study, Native and Indigenous Community Input Report for the Seattle Transportation Plan, Native Housing Zoning Report 2023, King County American Indian and Alaska Native Housing Needs Assessment, and Native Neighborhood Community Study. These documents highlight the critical Indigenous values and community assets that should guide the development of a Native Neighborhood in Seattle.

At the heart of this report is the recognition that Indigenous communities possess a wealth of traditional knowledge and holistic approaches to community planning. These approaches integrate housing with broader community needs such as transportation, healthcare, education, childcare, eldercare, cultural revitalization, and access to food and economic opportunities. This interconnected perspective ensures that housing developments not only provide shelter but also support the overall well-being of residents.

Key themes and design suggestions emerged from these documents, reflecting the values of interconnectedness, sustainability, cultural relevance, and inclusivity. This report distills these themes into actionable insights and recommendations, offering a comprehensive framework for creating a Native Neighborhood that honors Indigenous traditions and meets contemporary needs.

Through a collaborative effort, this report aims to inform and inspire stakeholders, planners, and policymakers in developing a Native Neighborhood that is vibrant, inclusive, and deeply rooted in

Indigenous values. By prioritizing community input and respecting traditional knowledge, we can create spaces that nurture and sustain Indigenous communities for generations to come.

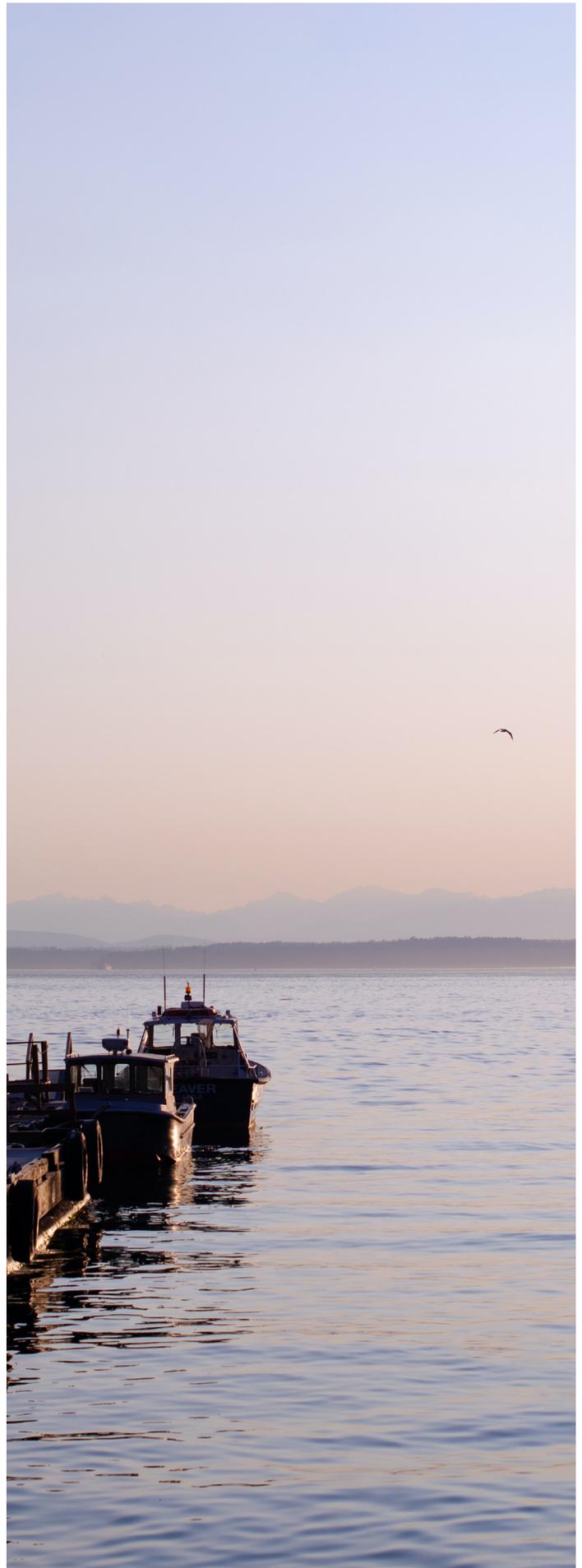
The Native Neighborhood Case Study, Native and Indigenous Community Input Report Seattle Transportation Plan, Native Housing Zoning Report 2023, King County American Indian and Alaska Native Housing Needs Assessment, and Native Neighborhood Community Study outline similar important Indigenous values and community assets that can inform the development of a Native Neighborhood. The following quote from the Native Housing Zoning Report best summarizes the Indigenous values that emerged from the documents and their implications for planning a Native neighborhood.

“Urban Native community members are traditional Indigenous knowledge holders, and listening session discussions include a holistic approach to community planning. Traditional knowledge avoids separating information into categories, and discussions about housing include wider community needs such as transportation, healthcare, education, childcare, eldercare, cultural revitalization, and access to food and economic opportunities. The value of living sustainably is also woven throughout listening session discussions and includes the needs of nature and the land are also integral to Indigenous planning. A guiding ethic for the urban Native community is to ensure that the needs of all communities are met, and a focus on our most vulnerable community members will ensure that everyone is cared for.”

In Indigenous ways of knowing, all things are interconnected. This concept is seen across all facets of life. The way Indigenous people understand the self as an emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental being are all interconnected. Meaning each aspect of the self informs and affects the others. The ways an individual is connected to the larger community are also deeply connected. Indigenous communities are interdependent, as opposed to independent, like in Western countries like the United States. The individual is essential to the community's well-being or health, meaning each individual is important and essential to the community. The community celebrates and cares for each community member because they are important to the health and well-being of the whole. There isn't a strong emphasis on the importance of independence, but rather a deep respect and understanding of how we need each other in order to thrive.

This concept of interdependence is seen throughout the different documents in this review. When considering how to develop a Native Neighborhood, it's important not to reduce housing to simply the construction and design of a physical structure. The values of interconnectedness do inform the design, but the concept of interconnectedness runs through the whole conceptualization of a Native Neighborhood.

When reviewing the five documents listed above, similar themes and suggestions emerged that articulated the concept of interconnectedness in different ways. The information is organized by theme, with an explanation of how Indigenous values inform that theme, followed by specific design suggestions.



LOCATION

Respondents highlighted the widespread presence of Indigenous land throughout Seattle, advocating for multiple Native neighborhoods with a central hub for large gatherings. Preferred locations should have access to water and nature, underscoring the significance of land and water relatives. Proximity to grocery stores, transportation, healthcare services, schools, and parks is crucial, ensuring housing supports the overall well-being of residents, not just providing shelter. This approach reflects the holistic view of housing as integral to the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of Indigenous communities.

RESIDENTS AND UNIT FEATURES

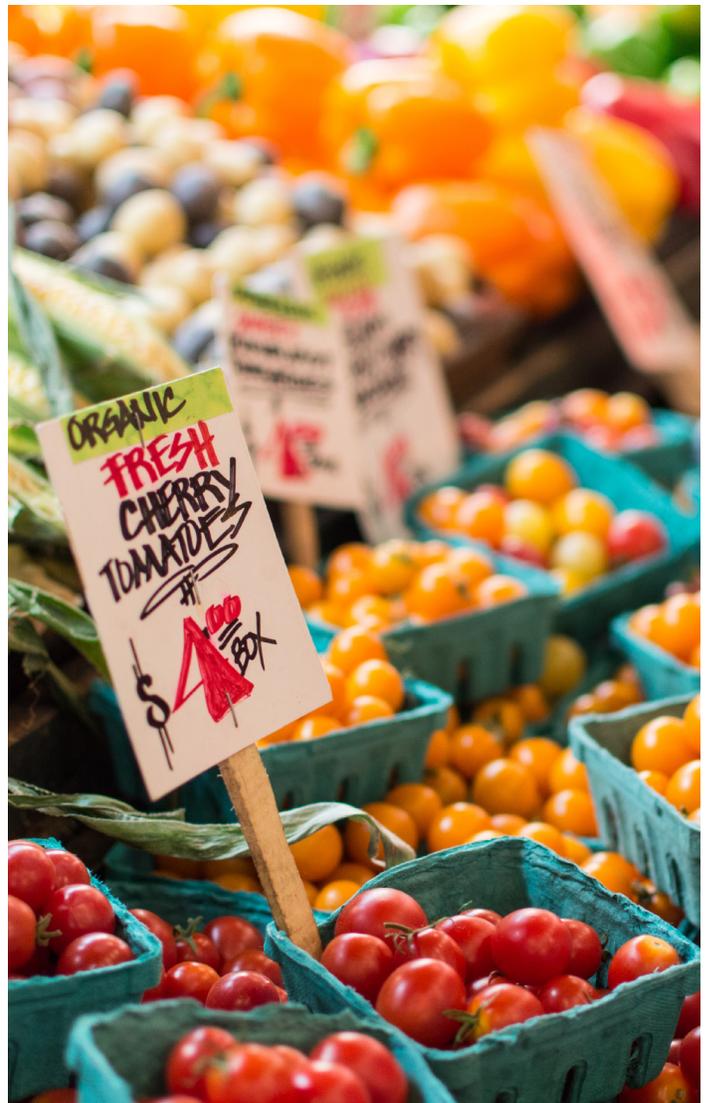
Many wanted to ensure the housing needs of the whole community were met by including various housing models, including rentals, lease to own, ownership, community land trust, private lots, and graduated or transitional housing programs. They wanted to see programs that supported homeownership financial education and offered down payment assistance. The persistent theme throughout all documents was an emphasis on affordability.

Many suggested various housing models to ensure the community's diverse needs were met. These included rentals, lease-to-own options, ownership, community land trusts, private lots, and graduated or transitional housing programs. Additionally, there was a call for programs that support homeownership through financial education and down payment assistance. Ensuring affordability was seen as essential for taking care of the entire community.

These suggestions reflect the importance of taking care of the entire community. Indigenous communities value that all generations have important gifts and knowledge to support the broader communities' health. A strong theme throughout the documents was the desire for multigenerational housing within one site. They also wanted to ensure the site offered mixed-income options for residents and

accommodate an economically diverse community. They wanted to ensure that units offered a variety of bedroom options to accommodate families of different sizes.

Some suggested standalone homes or a communal or village model. This would include individual rooms with shared spaces like a kitchen, workshop, tools, library, technology library, or rideshare. Offering storage and parking were also strong themes throughout. Indigenous communities deeply respect and value their Elders. Many spoke to the need for specific units that offered accommodations for Elders. This included units with one bath and bedroom on the ground floor, ADA accessibility, and designated parking. They also wanted to see equitable accessibility to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers.



SERVICES

All the documents discussed the desire for wraparound services that cared for the whole person across their lifespan. This emphasizes that housing should not just be a structure but a place where they can take care of their holistic self. There were many suggestions regarding the types of services a Native neighborhood could offer. This reflects being cognizant of the diverse needs within the community and the ways the community values all people across the generations. They suggested services for children and youth, including childcare, preschool, afterschool programs, college support programs, tribal college extensions, libraries, GED classes, and/or youth activities/programming. Another suggestion was services to support mental and behavioral health. Some suggestions included counseling services, which could include talking circle programs and/or healing centers. Another suggestion was access to nutrition, including grocery stores, food banks, commodities, SNAP, TANF, and/or day and meal programs.

They also suggested services to support their physical health, including a fitness center, health clinic, and/or dental services. They suggested employment services like job skill training and/or workforce development. They suggested elder, veteran, urban life skills, substance abuse and addiction services, and/or Native small business development. One option to meet all of these diverse needs would be to offer case managers who could connect residents with services and programs as well as provide some themselves. In large gathering spaces, you could partner with other Native-serving organizations to offer classes throughout the month while also offering some through internal staff. This model is common through the US Housing and Urban Development in their Services Coordinators Program.



COMMUNITY

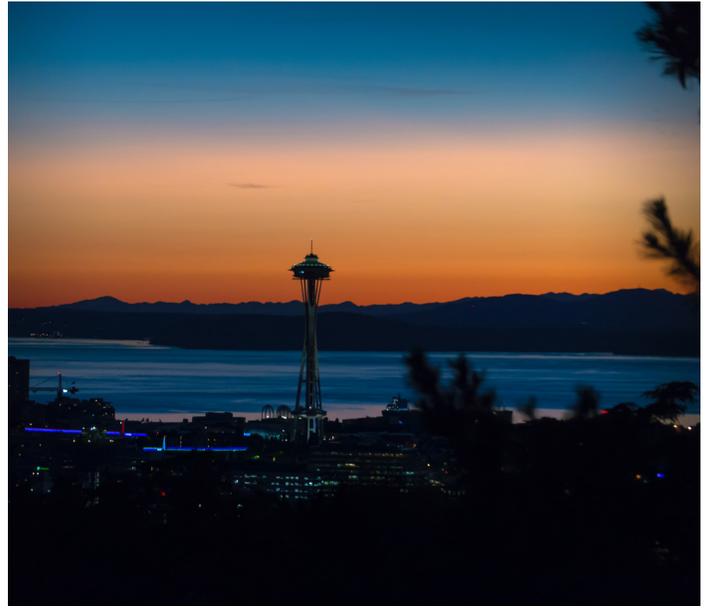
All documents reviewed expressed a clear desire in their findings to have a space for larger community gatherings to build relationships and foster community connection. Being an interdependent community, relationships, and gathering together are important values and essential practices. They also wanted to see spaces for visiting and enjoyment, like retail spaces, dining, and/or just spaces to visit and talk. When considering commercial spaces, some suggested a space for a Native business incubator, market, or space to support tribal enterprises.

ACCESS TO LANDS AND WATERS

As previously stated, residents wanted access to land and water. Some requested this to exercise their treaty rights and ensure that tribal communities can continue to manage their homelands using their traditional knowledge and protocols, and engage in ceremony. They also wanted to see green spaces stewarded by the community. They requested access to parks, water, gardens, yards, courtyards, balconies, rooftops, community green spaces, trails, playgrounds, open spaces, edible plants, native plants, and/or pavilions. One also emphasized the desire to respond to the needs of the land and regenerate it through sustainable design. Again, there are many diverse asks within this section, but the general theme is they want access to green spaces as much as possible within the design.

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Cultural connection is vital for Indigenous communities, intertwining traditional knowledge, practices, and overall community well-being. The report highlights the need for cultural programming that includes food sovereignty initiatives, traditional food gathering and processing, and cultural events such as art classes, carving, and cooking traditional foods. These activities aim to preserve and pass down cultural knowledge, reinforcing community bonds and cultural pride. Furthermore, the inclusion of community spaces, such as cultural centers for social gatherings and education, and the incorporation of Indigenous art, language, and symbols in public areas, like murals and wayfinding signs, are essential for maintaining and celebrating cultural heritage. Educational programs are also critical, engaging younger generations in traditional practices and involving elders as knowledge-keepers to ensure the continuity of cultural wisdom.





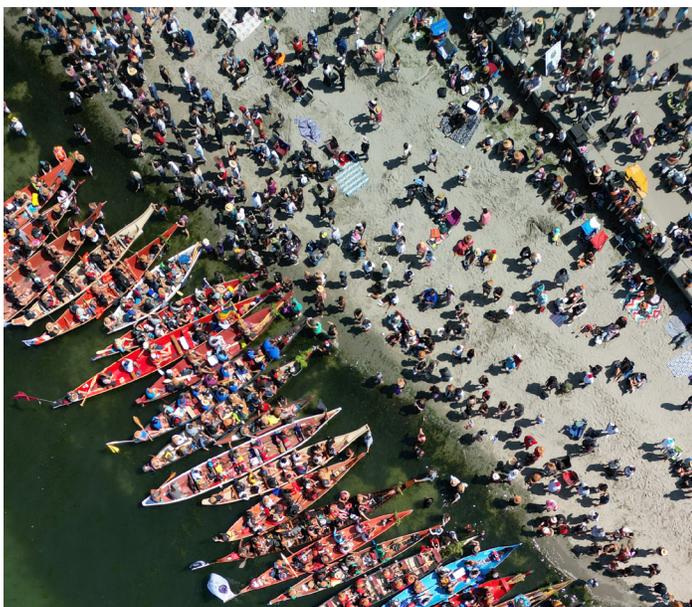
TRANSPORTATION

In all documents, people expressed the need for access to public transportation, and some suggested reducing or removing the cost. Some suggested providing more direct and frequent routes and adding missing connections to community events, cultural community centers, culturally significant places, Canoe Journey, and local reservations. Again, connection and gathering are essential to the community, so providing ways for residents within the Native neighborhood to stay connected and engaged with the broader Indigenous community and their home reservations was important.



SAFETY

Safety is a fundamental concern addressed by these reports, emphasizing specific measures to ensure the well-being of residents. Creating a secure environment involves a range of elements in the built environment, from ensuring adequate lighting in public areas to deter crime to creating naturally quiet and secure locations away from high-traffic or high-crime areas, and is crucial for providing a secure living environment. Community-based patrols can enhance security through active resident involvement. Additionally, proximity to emergency services such as fire stations, police stations, and hospitals is necessary, alongside emergency preparedness programs that educate residents on procedures and create community response plans to handle emergencies effectively. Finally, given the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous people in the city and country writ large, public safety institutions like the police force should prioritize their responses and investigations of crimes committed against Native people in the city.



INCLUSION IN PLANNING

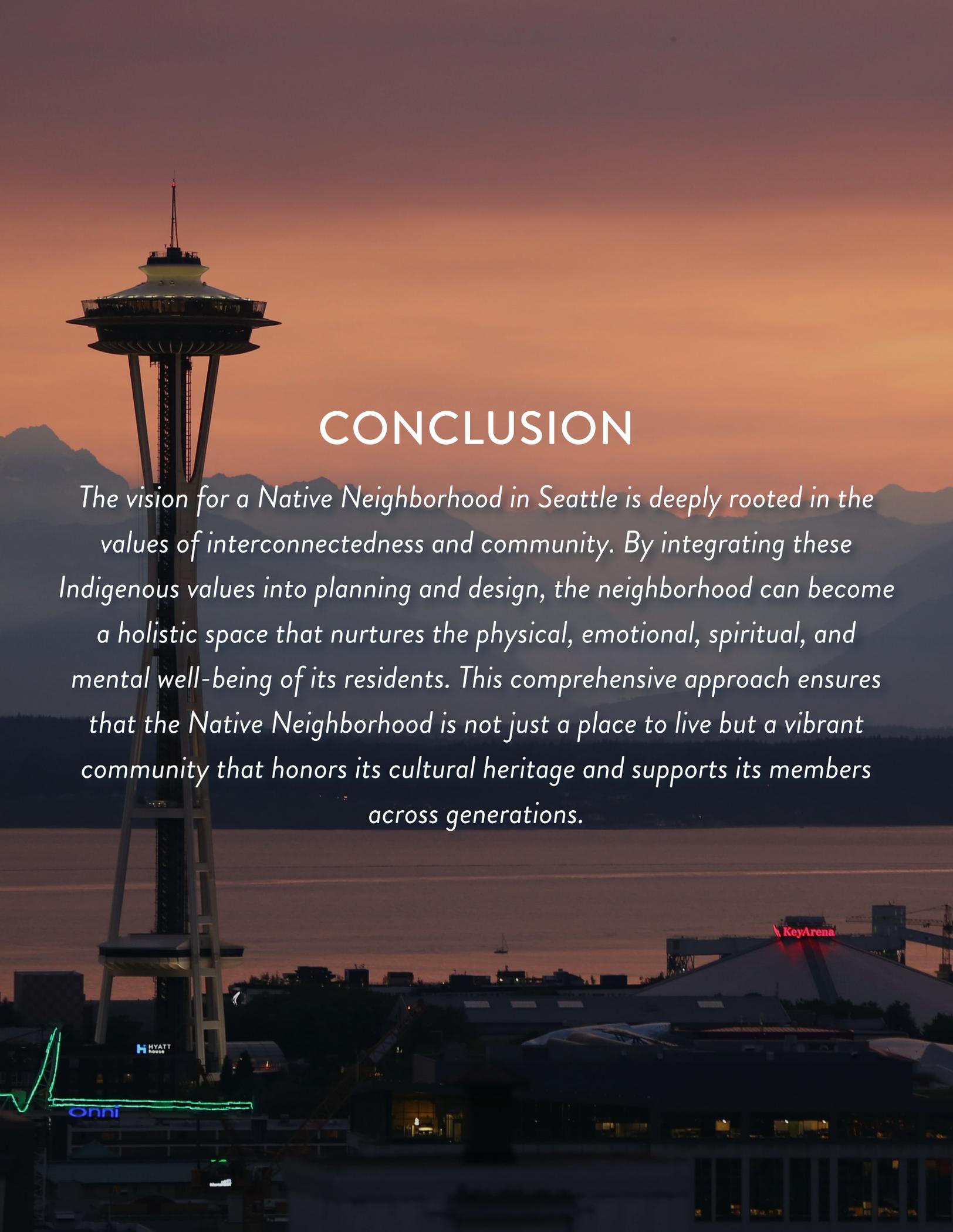
Many wanted to be included in planning discussions and activities before a plan was selected. They wanted to co-create solutions, procedures, and policies through community-centered design. They wanted the city to improve communication, outreach, and engagement and give resources for involvement. These suggestions reflect a long history of exclusion and erasure that Indigenous people have endured. It also reflects a lack of Indigenous representation in matters that impact Indigenous people. But, it also reflects that decision-making and workflows often tend to be deeply collaborative within Indigenous communities. Indigenous people respect and honor diverse perspectives and find value in bringing many people together to identify and execute the most effective solutions.



ART

Respondents wanted to see more art, language, and culture representation at bus and Link Light Rail stations, wayfinding signage in Lushootseed, bus wraps, murals, statues, welcome poles, route names, and/or maps. They also wanted new policies and protocols for art and culture projects. This would include artist selection procedures, budgets, and a vetting process to include feedback from the greater Native and Indigenous community. Other suggestions included art galleries, art installations, and museums. These suggestions reflect the desire for more Indigenous presences and representation after a long history of erasure. It also reflects the importance of art as a cultural and spiritual practice.





CONCLUSION

The vision for a Native Neighborhood in Seattle is deeply rooted in the values of interconnectedness and community. By integrating these Indigenous values into planning and design, the neighborhood can become a holistic space that nurtures the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of its residents. This comprehensive approach ensures that the Native Neighborhood is not just a place to live but a vibrant community that honors its cultural heritage and supports its members across generations.

ACTIONABLE STEPS FOR THE CITY OF SEATTLE PLANNING DEPARTMENT

1. Establish Native Neighborhoods as a Central Hub

Identify and allocate land with access to water and nature.

Ensure proximity to essential services: grocery stores, healthcare, schools, and parks.

2. Develop Diverse Housing Models

Include rentals, lease-to-own, ownership, community land trusts, and transitional housing. Implement homeownership support programs, such as financial education and down payment assistance.

Ensure affordability and multigenerational housing options with ADA accessibility and mixed-income units.

3. Provide Comprehensive Services

Integrate wraparound services: childcare, eldercare, mental health support, fitness centers, health clinics, and employment services.

Establish a system of case managers to connect residents with these services.

4. Create Community Spaces

Design large gathering spaces for community events and cultural activities.

Include retail, dining, and social spaces to foster community connections.

5. Ensure Access to Lands and Waters

Design green spaces managed by the community, including parks, gardens, and trails.

Facilitate access to areas for exercising treaty rights and cultural practices.

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6. Promote Cultural Connection

Offer cultural programs such as food sovereignty initiatives, traditional crafts, and art classes. Include Indigenous art, language, and cultural representations in public spaces.

7. Improve Transportation Access

Enhance public transportation routes and reduce costs.

Connect the neighborhood with community centers, cultural sites, and reservations.

8. Prioritize Safety

Implement secure entry systems and ensure a safe environment.

9. Facilitate Inclusive Planning

Involve Indigenous communities early in the planning process through community-centered design.

Enhance communication and provide resources for active involvement.

10. Support Indigenous Art and Culture

Promote Indigenous art in public transportation and other public spaces.

Develop policies for artist selection and cultural project funding, including community feedback.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1: Planning and Community Engagement

Conduct community workshops and listening sessions.

Map out potential locations and gather input on preferred sites.

PHASE 2: Design and Development

Collaborate with Indigenous architects and planners.

Integrate sustainable design practices and green infrastructure.

PHASE 3: Construction and Implementation

Begin construction with a focus on community-led projects.

Establish partnerships with Native-serving organizations for service provision.

PHASE 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

Implement a feedback system for continuous improvement.

Regularly assess the impact on the community and make necessary adjustments.

VISION STORY

Designing a Native Neighborhood

A Future of Interconnectedness and Resilience: The Native Neighborhood

Imagine a neighborhood in Seattle where every element, from the architecture to the green spaces, reflects the profound values of interconnectedness, sustainability, and cultural heritage. This is the vision for the Native Neighborhood, a vibrant community designed with and for Indigenous peoples, where traditional knowledge and modern needs harmoniously blend.

A Place Rooted in Tradition and Community

At the heart of the Native Neighborhood is a central hub, surrounded by cultural landscapes with access to water and nature. This hub serves as a gathering place for large community events, celebrations, and ceremonies, reinforcing the importance of land and water in Indigenous cultures. Proximity to essential services like grocery stores, healthcare facilities, schools, and parks ensures that residents' needs are met holistically, supporting physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.

Diverse and Inclusive Housing

The neighborhood boasts a variety of housing options to accommodate the entire community. From rentals and lease-to-own units to ownership opportunities and community land trusts, there is something for everyone. Programs that offer financial education and down payment assistance empower residents to achieve homeownership. The emphasis on affordability and multigenerational housing ensures that families of all sizes and economic backgrounds can thrive here.

Comprehensive Services for Holistic Well-being

The Native Neighborhood is more than just a place to live; it's a supportive environment where residents can access a wide range of services. Childcare centers, eldercare facilities, mental health support, fitness centers, health clinics, and employment services are all integrated into the community. Case managers are available to connect residents with these services, ensuring that everyone receives the support they need.

Community Spaces for Connection and Growth

Large community spaces are designed for gatherings, fostering strong intergenerational relationships and community connections. Retail spaces, dining options, and social areas provide places for residents to meet, share stories, and enjoy each other's company. These spaces also support local Native businesses, creating economic opportunities and celebrating Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Access to Lands and Waters

Green spaces, parks, gardens, and trails are thoughtfully integrated into the neighborhood, providing residents with places to connect with nature. These areas are managed by the community, ensuring that traditional knowledge and stewardship practices are honored. Residents have access to lands and waters for exercising treaty rights, engaging in ceremonies, and practicing sustainable living.

Celebrating Cultural Heritage

Cultural connection is a cornerstone of the Native Neighborhood. Programs and events that focus on food sovereignty, traditional crafts, and art classes help preserve and pass down cultural knowledge. Indigenous art, language, and cultural symbols are prominently displayed in public areas, creating a vibrant and inspiring environment.

Efficient and Accessible Transportation

Public transportation is easily accessible and affordable. It connects residents to cultural sites, community centers, and reservations. Frequent and direct routes ensure that everyone can stay connected and engaged with the broader Indigenous community.

Safety and Security

Safety is a priority in the Native Neighborhood. Adequate lighting, secure entry systems, and community-based patrols create a secure environment. Proximity to emergency services and robust emergency preparedness programs ensure that residents are well-protected.

Collaborative and Inclusive Planning

The planning and development of the Native Neighborhood are deeply collaborative, involving Indigenous communities from the very beginning. This community-centered approach ensures that the neighborhood reflects the values, needs, and aspirations of its residents.

A Legacy of Art and Culture

Indigenous art and culture are woven into the fabric of the neighborhood. Public transportation stations, murals, statues, and wayfinding signs in Lushootseed celebrate and honor Indigenous heritage. Policies for art and culture projects include community feedback, ensuring that the representations are authentic and meaningful.

Towards a Sustainable and Thriving Future

This vision for the Native Neighborhood in Seattle is not just a dream but a blueprint for a thriving, resilient community. By embracing Indigenous values of interconnectedness, sustainability, and cultural relevance, we can create a neighborhood that honors the past, enriches the present, and inspires the future.

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