

Equitable Development Zoning

Purpose, goals, and possibilities



In this presentation

- The purpose of Equitable Development Zoning
- Strategies we exploring
- Themes from work with stakeholders



What is equitable development?

“Public and private investments, programs, and policies that meet the needs of marginalized populations, reduce disparities, and expand access to quality-of-life outcomes.”

Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) drivers:

Advance economic mobility and opportunity

Prevent residential, commercial, and cultural displacement

Build on local cultural assets

Promote transportation mobility and connectivity

Development healthy and safe neighborhoods

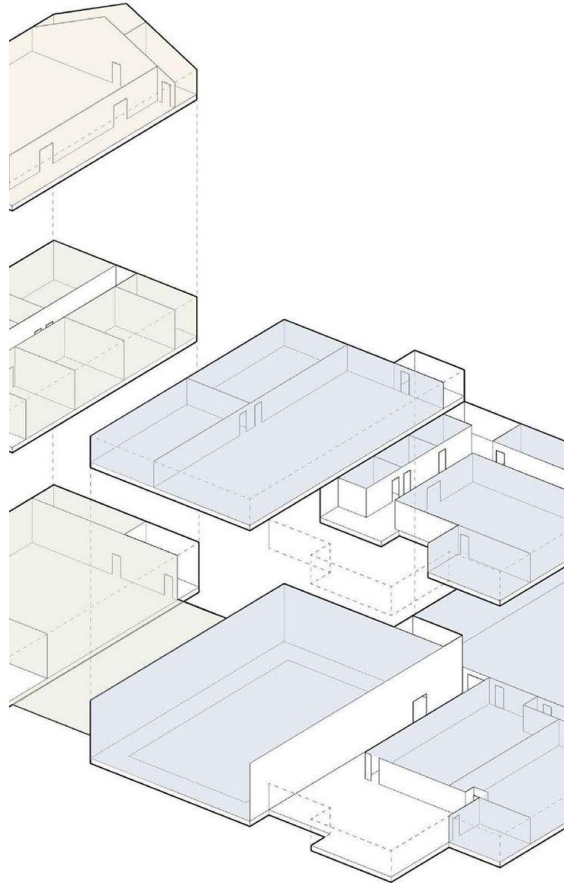
Enable equitable access to all neighborhoods





Wa Na Wari

Faced a costly and uncertain conditional use process



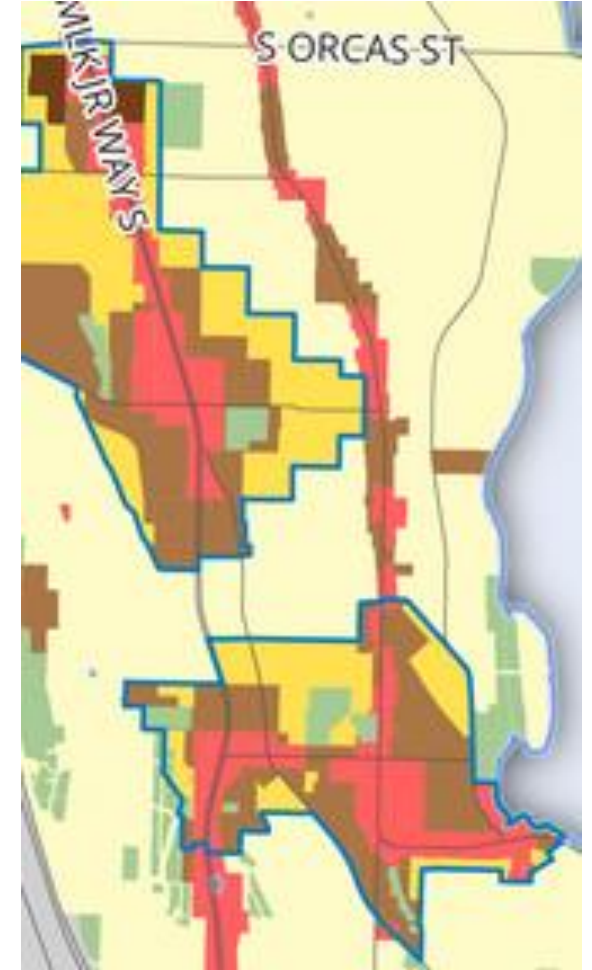
Nehemiah Initiative

Identified zoning changes that boost project feasibility



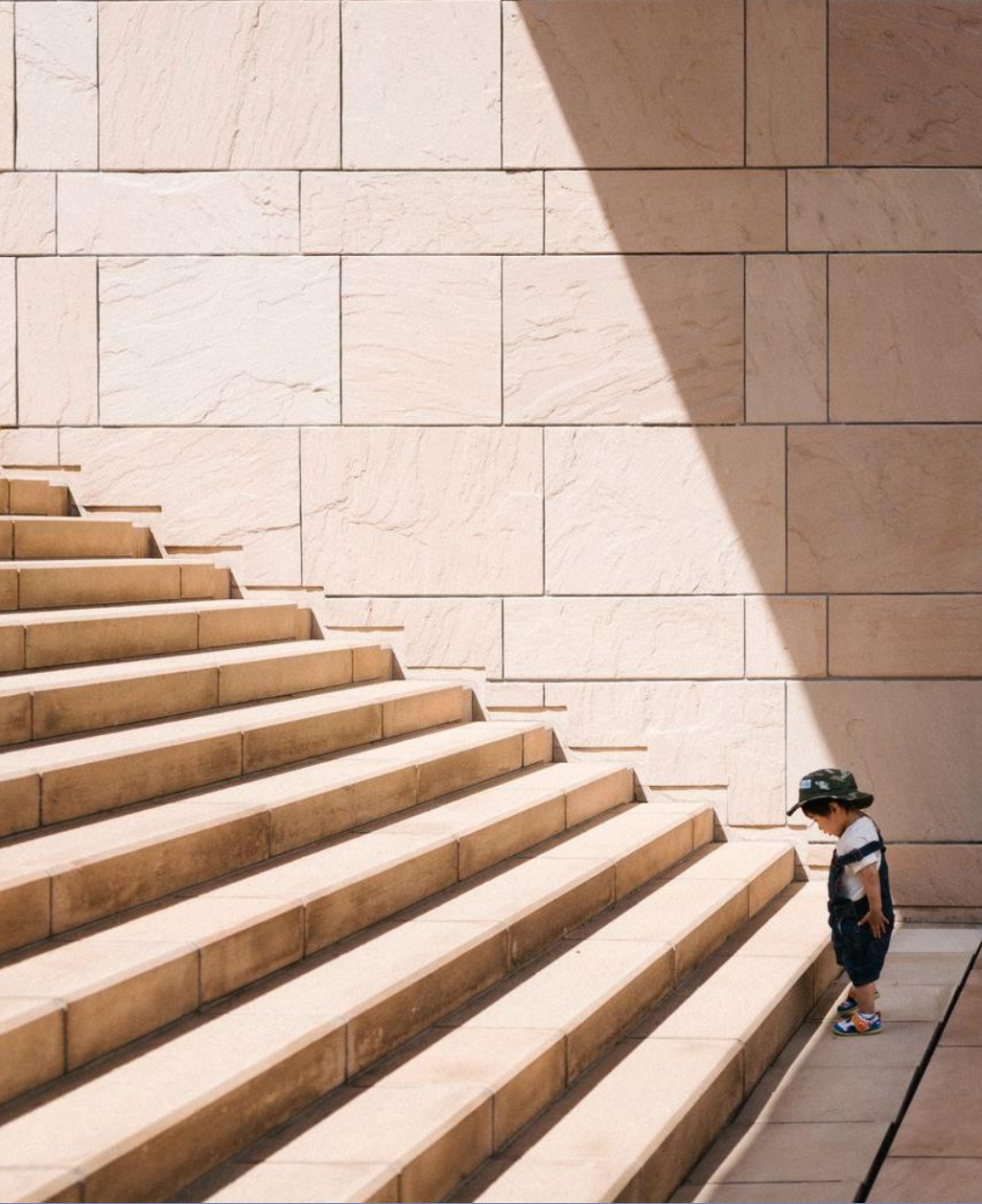
Hip Hop is Green

\$28,000 fee barrier to explore a contract rezone



Real Time Human Services

"Don't want to have to become a zoning expert"



The challenge

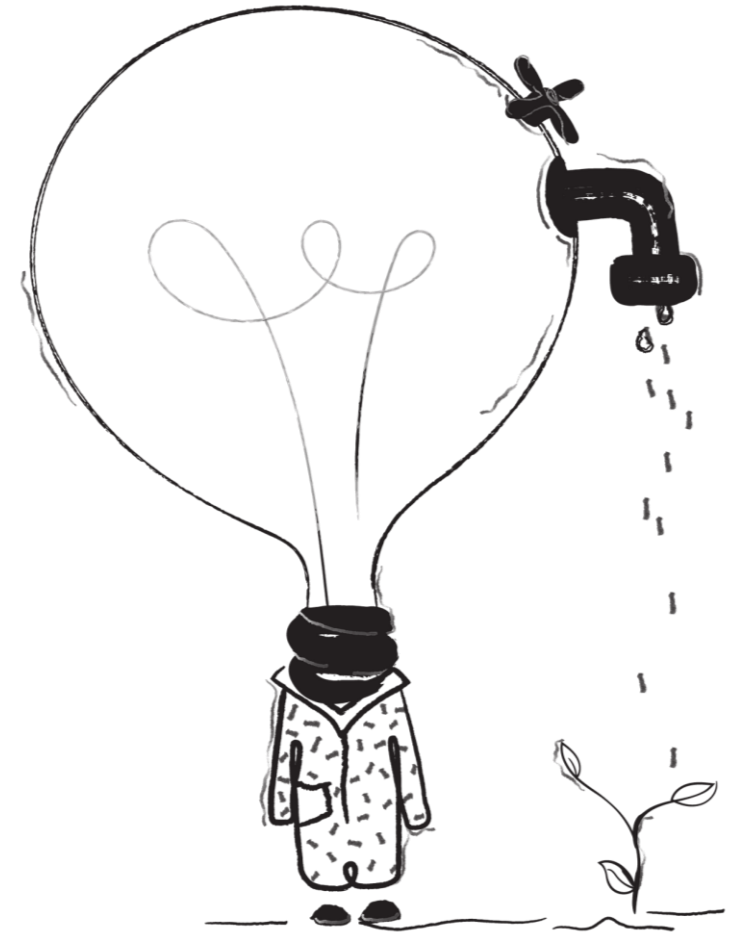
We prioritize equitable development, fund it through EDI, but regulate development in ways that can hinder, delay, complicate, and add cost to these projects by:

- Limiting allowed uses and development
- Adding costs due fees and requirements
- Creating delay and uncertainty
- Requiring specialized expertise that distracts from organization mission

The purpose and promise of EDZ

Align land use policy with our equitable development goals

- Help equitable development projects succeed by removing the barriers they face in City regulations and processes
- Provide resources and supports that increase access to the development process for BIPOC communities and organizations
- Shift development policy & process to prioritize community-supportive equitable development



Themes from early engagement

Conversations with EDI stakeholders in late 2020 / early 2021

Interviews with applicants to the 2021 and 2022 EDI RFPs

Key themes:

- Multiple City regulations are creating challenges for EDI projects
- Sites available and affordable to EDI organizations may not accommodate their proposed uses
- Existing zoning generally doesn't facilitate or encourage equitable development outcomes
- The permitting process is complex, costly, and uncertain, especially if a conditional use permit or a contract rezone is involved
- The real estate market and complex permitting together favor larger, experienced developers over small BIPOC-led organizations

Stakeholder group

In 2022, we have convened a stakeholder group with broad expertise to guide development of EDZ strategies

Areas of expertise

- Firsthand experience with EDI
- Arts & cultural space
- Community centers & institutions
- Affordable housing
- Childcare
- Land trusts & ownership models
- Indigenous methodologies & stewardship
- Practitioners with experience on ED projects

Scope of work

- Review near-term legislation to remove code barriers to equitable development
- Advise on how to define equitable development (criteria)
- Identify and recommend how to avoid potential unintended consequences
- Inform early implementation and continued engagement in 2023



Stakeholder group

Meeting 1: Problem statement and purpose; overview of potential strategies

Meeting 2: Barriers to EDI projects & near-term solutions

Meeting 3: Possibilities for providing flexibility for equitable development

Stakeholder interviews: Individual meetings

Meeting 4: Criteria for defining eligible equitable development projects

Upcoming meetings: Pilot projects, revisit unresolved issues

Strategies

- Permitting support
- Code changes to remove barriers to EDI projects
- Flexibility for equitable development projects/uses



Near-term strategies

Permitting support

Problem: Navigating the permitting process is complex, confusing, and costly, especially for smaller, BIPOC-led organizations developing their first project

Opportunity:

- Identify dedicated staff to help EDI projects before and during permitting
- Expedite permits for equitable development projects
- Explore ways to ease cost burden of review for ED projects

Timeline:

- SDCI has staff member assisting EDI applicants
- OPCD and SDCI currently sharing an intern who will explore where EDI projects are getting stuck to identify and share lessons



Near-term strategies

Legislation to remove code barriers

Problem: Many equitable development projects are permitted as institutions and thus face a lengthy, discretionary permit processes and restrictions on site selection and design.

Opportunity: Develop legislation removing Land Use Code barriers identified by EDI stakeholders, including possible solutions like:

- Allowing some institutional uses outright in residential zones (rather than conditional uses)
- Relaxing burdensome requirements for institutions (like dispersion and parking)
- Update and clarify definitions
- Consider allowing certain uses that are prohibited or limited in residential zones, such as urban agriculture and accessory commercial uses

Timeline: aiming to transmit legislation early 2023

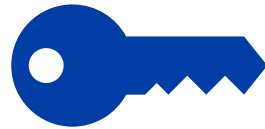
Longer-term strategies

Flexibility for equitable development

Problem: Structural barriers in the real estate system make it hard for equitable development to succeed

Opportunity: Use land use tools (development standards, overlays, incentives) to provide additional development capacity and flexibility for equitable development projects

Projects & uses determined to meet a definition & criteria for equitable development



Alternative development standards & flexibility

Flexibility for equitable development

As we explore this idea, we are considering questions like:

- How do we define the projects or uses that are eligible?
- Who determines that a proposal meets the criteria for equitable development?
- What types of flexibility or alternative development standards would be most helpful for equitable development projects?
- Should flexibility be available citywide or focused in certain geographic areas?

Looking ahead

- Near-term implementation through a pilot
- Scaling through One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Station Area Planning
- Adding Comprehensive Plan policy to support equitable development



Thank you!

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