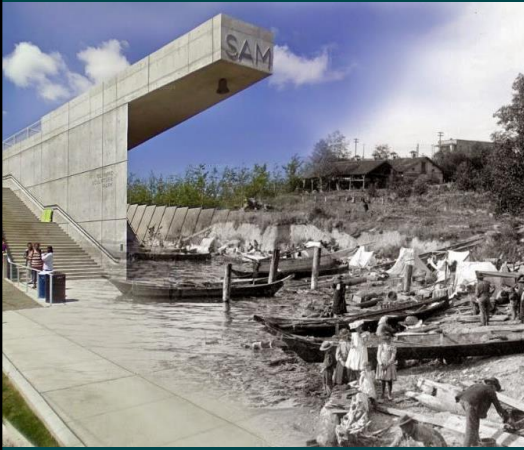


# Centering Racial Equity in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan



 Seattle  
Office of Planning &  
Community Development



Thank you for watching our presentation on centering racial equity in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

# One Seattle Plan

A major update to current Comprehensive Plan, *Seattle 2035*

The City updates its Comprehensive Plan about once a decade.

This is our opportunity as a community to:

- understand how our past produced current disparities
- update investment and policy priorities
- shape an equitable future



The One Seattle Plan is our opportunity to shape the future of our city and invest in our priorities as a community.

The One Seattle Plan is an update to our current Comprehensive Plan, *Seattle 2035*, and it will guide City decisions about where we locate housing and jobs, and where and how we invest in things that we need to grow as a city.

This Plan Update is our chance to define and take action on a unified vision for all of Seattle's residents and in neighborhoods across the city.

Its policies will steer how the City will spend money on transportation, utilities like electricity, drainage & wastewater, parks & open space, and many other public services and infrastructures that will be needed as we grow over the next 20 years.

Our goal is to shape a Seattle that is more equitable, livable, sustainable, and resilient for our communities, both now and in the future. To create this equitable future, we must understand how our past produced the disparities we see today.

This presentation will walk you through how the One Seattle Plan is an opportunity for community to:

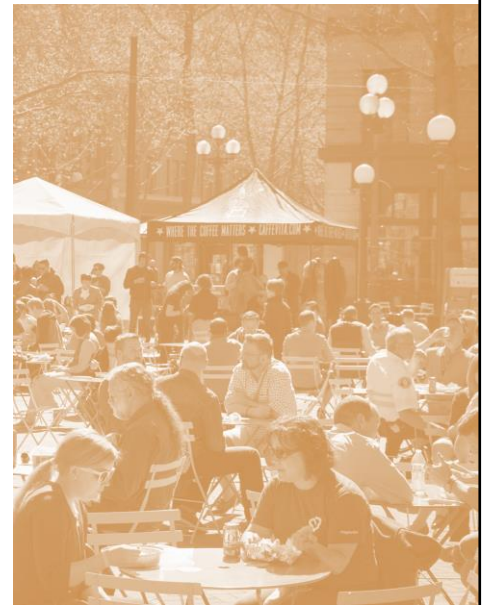
- Understand how our past produced current disparities
- Update investment and policy priorities

- Shape an equitable future

# Creating a more equitable, livable, sustainable, and resilient city as we grow

The Plan update will address several major challenges for our communities and Seattle as a whole, including:

- Racial inequities, past and current
- Displacement pressures
- Housing costs
- Climate change and resilience
- Investments to meet existing and future community needs
- Recovery from the global pandemic



While Seattle's Comprehensive Plan has guided growth in Seattle since 1994, we're now facing several major challenges, both new and longstanding, that make this update different. Updating the Plan is an opportunity to address these challenges in order to realize our vision of an inclusive, welcoming city.

## How will we do this?

First, we must look honestly at how growth in Seattle has unfolded in the past to produce unequal outcomes along lines of race that continue today. We need new and stronger tools to respond to Seattle's housing crisis, grow without displacement, and address our massive housing shortage. We must address our climate emergency, which is already having severe impacts on our region, and make investments rooted in community resilience, social cohesion, and environmental justice.

And we must do all these things as we recover from a pandemic whose impacts have worsened these disparities.

The One Seattle Plan will address challenges new and old: racial equity, housing costs, access to economic opportunity and education, climate change, and more. Our existing plan provides a starting point as we explore different

approaches to growth and investment, along with new strategies to reduce displacement pressures.

# An equitable future

## Why we lead with race

- Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)
- Comprehensive Plan core value: race and social equity
- We'll work together to develop targeted policies that improve outcomes for all



Sources: Elmina B. Sewall Foundation and Saskatoon Health Region Advancing Health Equity

## Further learning:

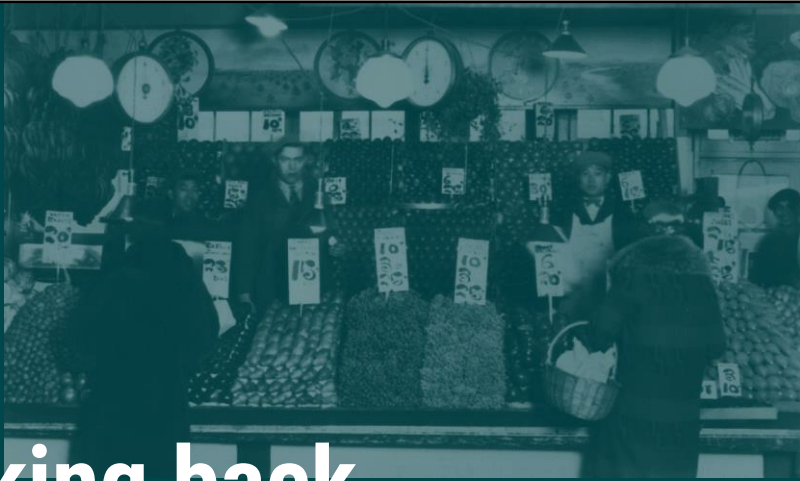
- [About Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative](#)
- [Seattle's Racial Equity Actions](#)
- [Targeted universalism](#)



Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative formally began in 2004 with the recognition that we are responsible, both personally and collectively, for eliminating racism and its legacy today. The initiative has a rich history of accomplishments over the past two decades, with much more underway.

This comprehensive plan update will center racial equity as a core value. This presentation provides a high-level overview of why and how we plan to do that, although we acknowledge that we can't and don't cover everything on this subject here.

Overall, our goal is to create an equitable future, where the color of your skin, your ethnic background, your faith, your gender, and whom you love do not negatively impact quality of life.



# Looking back at our past



As we plan for the future, we must also understand the forces that shaped the racial inequities that persist in our city today.



## Seattle is in unceded Coast Salish territory

We recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have reserved treaty rights to this land, including the Duwamish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and Snoqualmie. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial.

This land acknowledgment only becomes meaningful when coupled with accountable relationships and informed action. We are committed to building public awareness of and support for tribal sovereignty, and to advancing equity among tribal and urban Native communities through our actions.



# Colonization of Our Region

White colonists brought fundamental shifts to this region

## Indigenous land stewardship principles

Take only what you need, never more than half  
Relationships with land and other beings, not ownership

## Colonial land principles

Private land ownership  
Public land management  
Transformation of geography to support commerce

Washington and Seattle were established on a foundation of white supremacy

- 1849 Black Exclusion Law
- 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott
- 1864 state constitution prohibited “Ownership of Lands by Aliens”
- 1865 Ordinance 5

### Further learning:

- [Native Seattle](#) by Coll Thrush
- [Seattle's Duwamish Tribe celebrates new Long House and Cultural Center](#)
- [Dkikila'letch to Pioneer Square: From Native village to Seattle metropolis](#)



Colonization has historically harmed, displaced, and attempted to erase Native communities, and these impacts continue today. Washington and Seattle were founded through a series of racist and exclusionary laws and treaties. Past planning practices contributed and deepened this pattern of exclusion.

Colonization brought fundamental shifts to land management and development in our region, with a shift from Indigenous land stewardship principles to colonial practices of private land ownership, public land management, and literal reshaping of the land for economic growth.

# Industrialization & urbanization

The early 1900s immigrant experience was divided along racial lines

- White immigrants could easily own land; BIPOC immigrants faced significant barriers
- BIPOC immigrants typically were paid less for more dangerous work

Industrialization furthered the erasure of Indigenous communities

- Land transformation erased native geographies and economies
- Indigenous culture was stolen and appropriated to support commerce and encourage white immigration

This pattern repeated for subsequent immigrant groups

- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)

## Further learning:

- [The Golden Potlatch – Study in Mimesis and Capitalist Desire](#) by Candice Hopkins
- [Reflections on history of anti-Chinese hate in Seattle and Washington state](#)



White farmers were purchasing on Ballast Island in the 1930s for their Longhouses. By 1917, they were also forced to leave Ballast Island.



In the early 1900s, the people moving here had very different experiences based on their origin and skin color. White immigrants could own land, while BIPOC immigrants typically had more dangerous jobs, were paid less, and had more difficulty purchasing land if they were allowed to own land at all.

Industrialization further erased Indigenous communities while co-opting their culture to draw commercial interests to the region.

At the same time, monumental geographic shifts that began during the colonial era continued. Waterways were reconfigured, huge swaths of land were regraded, and traditional land-based economies were restructured to support expanded commercial interests.

These changes all relied on the exploitation of cheap labor from BIPOC immigrants. Once major land transformation projects were complete, the BIPOC laborers responsible for the work were further cut off from their associated economic benefits, often through legal channels such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

## Racist origins of housing & land use policy

# Zoning

### Introduction of racial zoning in U.S. cities (early 1900s)

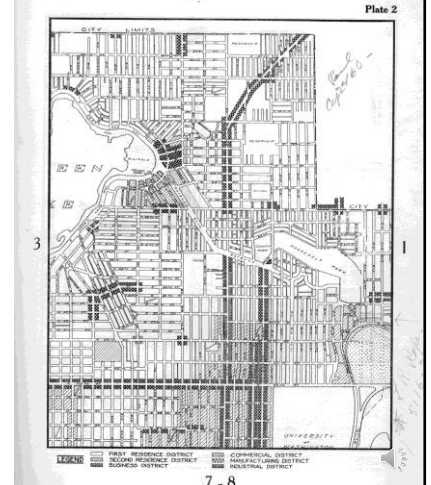
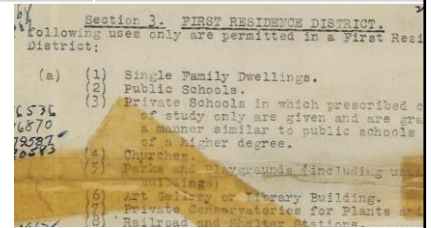
- Explicit exclusion of people of color from white neighborhoods to protect property values and sequester wealth
- After racial zoning was ruled unconstitutional in 1917, regulations on lot size and housing type perpetuated economic and racial segregation

### Seattle's first zoning ordinance (1923)

- Developed with support from Harland Bartholomew, who saw zoning as a tool to **"preserve the more desirable residential neighborhoods"** and to prevent movement into **"finer residential districts ... by colored people"**
- The City Zoning Commission argued its zoning proposal would prevent **"lowering of the standard of racial strength and virility"**

#### Further learning:

- [Exclusionary Zoning: Its Effect on Racial Discrimination in the Housing Market](#)



In the early 1900s, cities began to control land use in new ways. Shortly after Los Angeles and New York City became the first cities to set limits on the scale and form of buildings, zoning became as a tool to regulate where people of color could live. Cities enforced explicit racial segregation by identifying separate areas of the city for Black and white families. Zoning was a tool to protect property values in and exclude people of color from white neighborhoods.

After the Supreme Court found racial zoning unconstitutional in 1917, other regulations substituted for racial zoning. Minimum lot size requirements and bans on higher-density housing like apartment buildings prohibited lower-cost types of housing that would be affordable to low-income families. This reinforced racial segregation since people of color have disproportionately lower incomes.

Seattle never had explicit racial zoning, but zoning here arose with similar intentions. Harland Bartholomew was an urban planner who helped established Seattle's first zoning ordinance in 1923 and saw zoning as a tool to "preserve the more desirable residential neighborhoods" and prevent movement into "finer residential districts by colored people." The Seattle Zoning Commission said its proposal to prohibit multi-unit dwellings — which had previously been allowed citywide — would help prevent a lower standard of racial strength by preventing overcrowding in those areas.

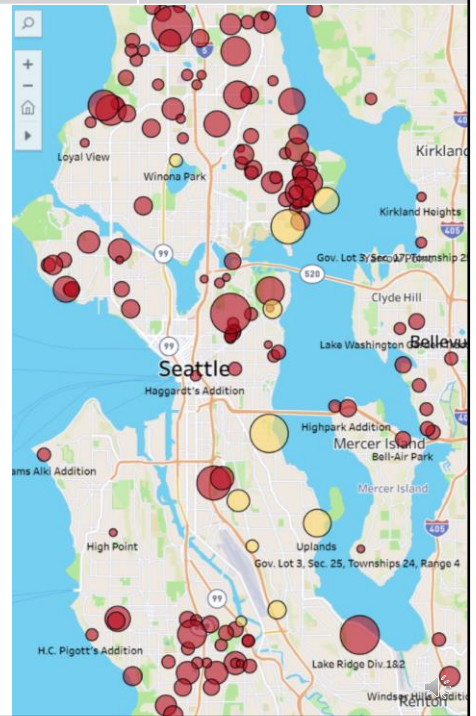
## Racist origins of housing & land use policy

# Racial covenants

- From 1926 to 1948, many Seattle neighborhoods adopted and enforced racial covenants
- These legal contracts barred people of color from owning property throughout the Seattle area
- Racial discrimination in real estate remained legal until the Housing Rights Act in 1968
- Whites-only clauses remain in thousands of property deeds in Seattle
- The effects of this period of explicit racial segregation persist today

### Further learning:

- [Segregated Seattle](#) — The Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project



Along with exclusionary zoning, racial covenants also took hold after racial zoning was outlawed and proliferated when the Court upheld their use in 1926. As a result, these legal contracts contained in the deed for a property became instruments to promote and fortify racial segregation.

Many Seattle neighborhoods and suburbs used racial covenants to ensure overt and total racial exclusion. The map to the right is a still from an interactive database from the Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project that has begun to catalogue these covenants in Seattle's neighborhoods. Language in property deeds and developer plats, like this one from the Blue Ridge neighborhood, restricted homeownership in most of the city to white, Christian residents and excluded others from owning, renting, or occupying property unless employed by a white family. This practice continued until 1948, but other racial discrimination in real estate remained legal until the Housing Rights Act of 1968. Though unenforceable, whites-only clauses remain in thousands of property deeds in Seattle.

## Racist origins of housing & lending policy

# Redlining

- In the areas where Black property, they faced
- Government-insured mortgages expanded homeownership along known as redlining.
- This limited Black home build wealth through communities of color

### A-2 Area

The property in this area is protected with building and racial restrictions. This is a very sparsely settled district, but very desirable on account of the unobstructible view of mountains and lakes which can be obtained. Also, the class of original purchasers indicate a permanent district of professional men as home owners. The homes are of the larger type, well maintained. This district is known as "Windemere".

### E-5 Area

This is a new sparsely settled district which is known as "Hawthorne Hills". The sub-division was placed on the market just prior to the depression. The property lies well, with a good view over the valley, Lake Washington and the Cascade mountains. The property has building and racial restrictions. Numerous professional men have purchased building sites in this area. Indications point toward a very desirable residential neighborhood in the near future.

### E-6 Area

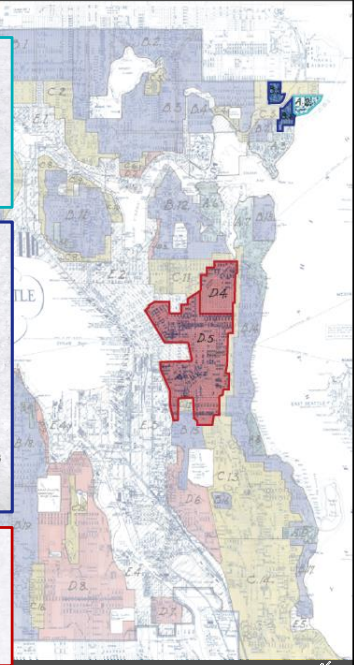
This property lies adjacent to the "Windemere" and "Laurelhurst" additions. The property is predominately occupied by home owners of moderate means. No racial problems in this area. Homes are of the modern bungalow and dwelling type and well maintained.

### D-4 Area:

This is the Negro area of Seattle.

### D-5 Area:

This district is composed of various mixed nationalities. Homes are occupied by tenants in a vast majority. Homes generally old and obsolete in need of extensive repairs.



### Further learning:

- [Mapping Inequality](#)
- [How a New Deal Housing Program](#)
- [50 Years Since the Fair Housing Act](#)
- [The Rippling Effects of Redlining and Segregation \(podcast\)](#)

Not only were people of color excluded from most Seattle neighborhoods on the basis of race, but in those areas where they could own property, people of color faced racial discrimination in government lending. In 1934, the Federal Housing Administration or FHA was created to revive the mortgage industry after the Great Depression. Redlining was the practice of mapping areas based on their perceived creditworthiness for government-backed loans. In color-coded maps, areas rated most risky were shown in red and had more people of color.

In Seattle, areas were explicitly described by their racial composition. Redlined areas were rated hazardous because people of color lived there. Areas rated "best" and "desirable" enjoyed greater access to loans because they were "protected...with racial restrictions."

This had devastating and long-lasting effects on racial disparities in homeownership and wealth, as Black households in particular could not get loans to build and pass on wealth.

## WWII–present A Tale of Two Cities

From WWII to the present, a series of events deepened and solidified the racial disparities we see in Seattle today:

- Japanese incarceration
- BIPOC veteran exclusion from postwar federal loans
- [National Interstate and Defense Highways Act \(1956\)](#)
- 1964 Civil Rights & 1965 Immigration acts
- War on crime
- 1990s population and economic growth increased white migration back to cities, driving gentrification

### Further learning:

- [After Internment: Seattle's Debate over Japanese Americans' Right to Return Home](#)
- [How the Federal Government Built White Suburbia](#)
- [How Interstate Highways Gutted Communities—and Reinforced Segregation](#)



Seattle voters reject Open Housing Ordinance (1964)



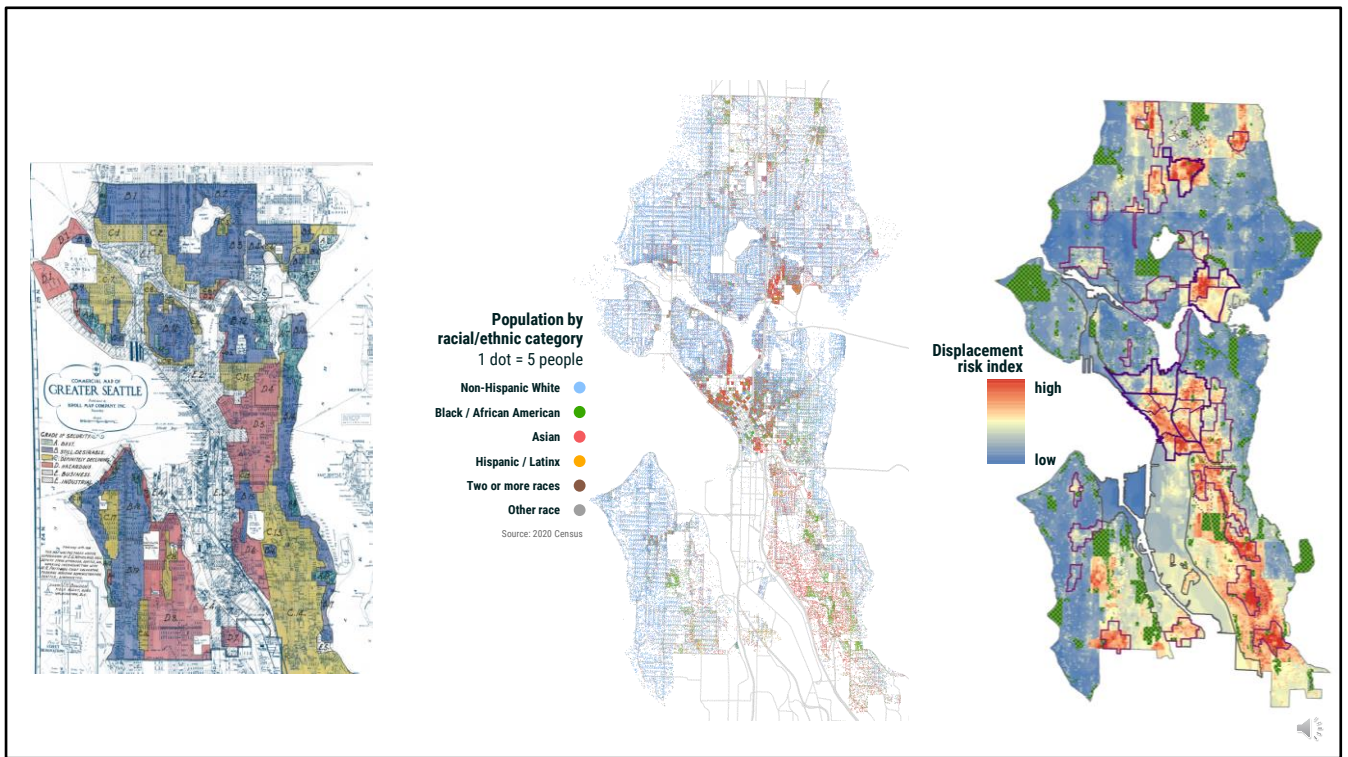
From WWII to the present, a series of events crystalized and exacerbated the racial disparities we see in Seattle today:

- Incarceration of Japanese families destroyed communities and transferred businesses and property to white families
- BIPOC veterans were excluded from federal loans that built intergenerational wealth for the families of white veterans
- [National Interstate and Defense Highways Act \(1956\)](#) was another massive financial federal investment that exacerbated white flight, destroyed BIPOC communities, and created dependence on cars
- Our population and economy grew dramatically in the 1990s, leading to white migration back to cities. Negative consequences include gentrification, rising housing costs, and the displacement of BIPOC communities



# Our present: Persistent inequities

That brings us to the present, where we are planning in the context of persistent inequities and several major challenges and crises that threaten our vision of an inclusive and welcoming city.



It may feel like exclusionary practices happened a long time ago, but the reality is the effects of this history are still with us today. Racial segregation and exclusion established through redlining and racial covenants is still visible in where people live now, in persistent homeownership and wealth gaps, and in displacement pressures communities of color face today.



# The legacy of redlining

Today's inequities along lines of race show how our city's history of segregation and exclusion is still with us today:

- Homeownership
- Income and wealth
- Environmental quality
- Life expectancy and health outcomes

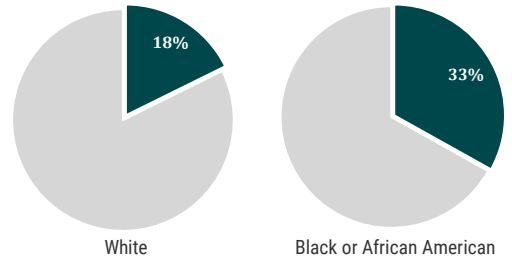
**Seattle's economic growth has not been shared equitably among everyone in our community.**

**Further learning:**

- [Equitable Development Monitoring Program](#)
- [The Racial Wealth Divide in Seattle](#) — Prosperity Now

|  | HOLC MAP RATING |           |           |                 |
|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
|  | BEST            | DESIRABLE | DECLINING | HAZARDOUS       |
| People of Color                              | 15%             | 22%       | 42%       | <b>52%</b>      |
| Poverty                                      | 15%             | 22%       | 23%       | <b>25%</b>      |
| Contaminated Sites (Average Per Square Mile) | 17              | 24        | 32        | <b>38</b>       |
| Average Life Expectancy                      | 85 years        | 84 years  | 83 years  | <b>81 years</b> |

**Seattle households with zero net worth**



Source: [Prosperity Now](#), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 2016

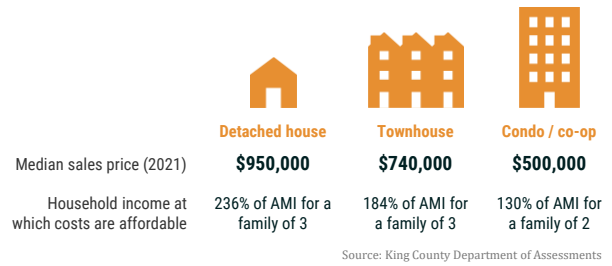
Persistent disparities along lines of race show how our city's history of segregation and exclusion is still with us today.

Many redlined areas remain majority people of color today, and have greater rates of poverty, more exposure to environmental hazards, and even lower life expectancy compared to greenlined areas where white households were able to get mortgages and build wealth.

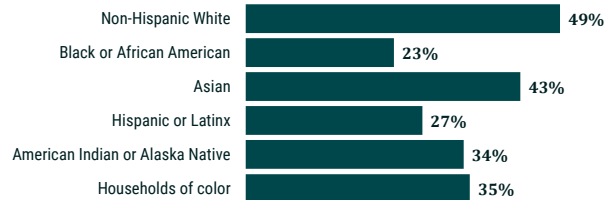
After decades of a racist housing and planning practices, white households today have substantially more wealth than Black households, largely because white households were able to buy homes, generate, and pass on wealth. As Seattle has grown, a legacy of exclusion has meant the benefits of that growth have not been shared equitably among everyone in our community.

# Housing out of reach

- Despite recent housing production, we still have an enormous shortage in both market-rate and rent-restricted affordable housing for low-income people
- Homeownership is out of reach for the vast majority of Seattle-area households
- Rental homes affordable and available to low-income households are extremely scarce



## Homeownership in Seattle by race of householder



Source: American Community Survey, 2016-2020

### Further learning:

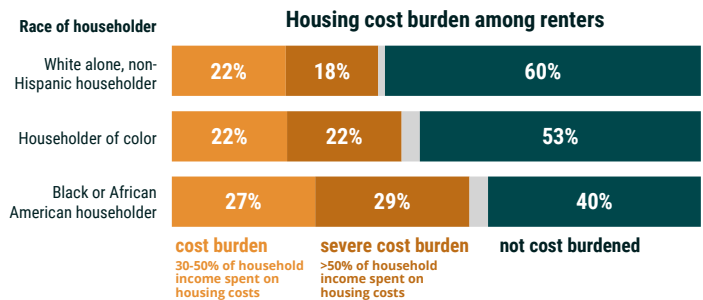
- [Market-Rate Housing Needs and Supply Analysis](#)
- [Housing Choices Background Report](#)

Unfortunately, these disparities are getting worse, not better, as we face an acute housing crisis. Despite creating lots of new housing, rapid population and job growth has pushed housing costs upward for renters and prospective homeowners, putting housing out of reach for many in our community. Homeownership — previously withheld from people of color through redlining and racial covenants — is now financially unattainable for most households that don't already own a home. Homeownership remains a primary way families create and pass on wealth and achieve stability. While nearly half of white households own their home, less than a quarter of Black households do.

Soaring home prices mean more households are renting for longer. But rising rents make that harder too, especially for low-income households, for whom affordable homes are extremely scarce. This drives displacement as people move out of the city to find rents they can afford. And it pushes some people in our community out of housing entirely, a major contributor to homelessness.

# Displacement

- Rising housing costs are causing housing insecurity and accelerating displacement
- When housing choices are limited, competition for housing in areas at risk of displacement increases
- As more of a household's income goes to housing, less money is available for other needs, and risk of displacement increases
- When low-income people are pushed to the suburbs, negative impacts to health, community, and environment also occur



## Further learning:

- Equitable Development Monitoring Program [Displacement Risk Indicators](#)
- Growth & Equity Analysis [Displacement Risk Index](#)

As Seattle has grown, rising housing costs have led to displacement for many community members. Renters are particularly vulnerable to displacement due to the potential for sudden rent increases or eviction. When a household is paying a substantial share of its income on housing cost, vulnerability to displacement is even higher. Nearly 60 percent of Black households experience housing cost burden, putting them at elevated risk of displacement.

Displacement has many negative effects — loss of community ties, housing instability, health impacts, and environmental damage as our population spreads out and suffers longer commutes. Displacement of communities of color, especially Black communities, has continued during the last two decades of growth in Seattle.



# Looking ahead: An approach to centering equity in the One Seattle Plan



As we look to the city's future, we are prioritizing racial equity in our development of the One Seattle Plan, including in our community engagement work and in the outcomes of the plan.

# Equitable community engagement

## Our engagement centers voices from:

- BIPOC communities
- Limited-English populations
- Immigrants & refugees
- Youth & Elders
- LGBTQ community
- People with disabilities
- Low-income populations
- Renters
- People experiencing homelessness
- Other historically under-represented communities

## We are co-creating engagement through:

- partnerships with community-based organizations serving BIPOC communities
- partnerships with 10 Community Liaisons

## We are also engaging with:

- City boards and commissions
- Public agencies
- Cultural organizations
- Policy advocates
- Community-based organizations
- Small business owners
- General public



First, we are concentrating our limited budget and staff resources on an equitable engagement strategy specifically focused on amplifying voices that have been historically and systematically under-represented in the City's planning and engagement processes.

This means that we will focus on centering the voices from populations, including those listed here, that have been marginalized in past Comprehensive Plans.

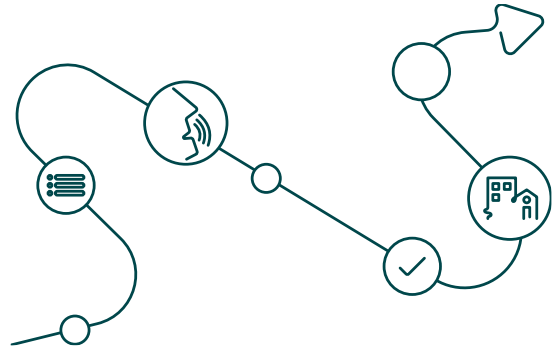
Our two central strategies for reaching these communities are partnerships with community-based organizations and Community Liaisons from the Department of Neighborhoods. Our community-based engagement partners have created and are implementing their own engagement workplans that reflect and respond to their specific BIPOC communities. Community Liaisons also have deep connections with these targeted populations.

# Racial equity outcomes will guide the Plan

**A Racial Equity Toolkit will help us set outcomes, guide the Plan, and evaluate progress.**

We will develop the Plan so that:

- it reflects Indigenous history, voices, and values that address erasure and invisibility
- communities of color see their priorities reflected in the updated Plan and themselves in the city's future
- people of color have access to more housing choices they can afford in all areas of the city
- growth is shared more broadly across the city to reduce displacement pressures



To guide the update of the Plan, we are setting racial equity outcomes that we'll use to ensure we're on track and so community can hold us accountable.

Our aim is to develop a Plan that:

- reflects Seattle's Indigenous history, voices, and values
- responds to the needs and priorities of communities of color today and in the years to come
- expands access to more affordable housing choices across the city, especially for communities of color
- explores new strategies to reduce displacement pressures

# Urban Village Strategy

Seattle's approach to planning for growth and development since 1994

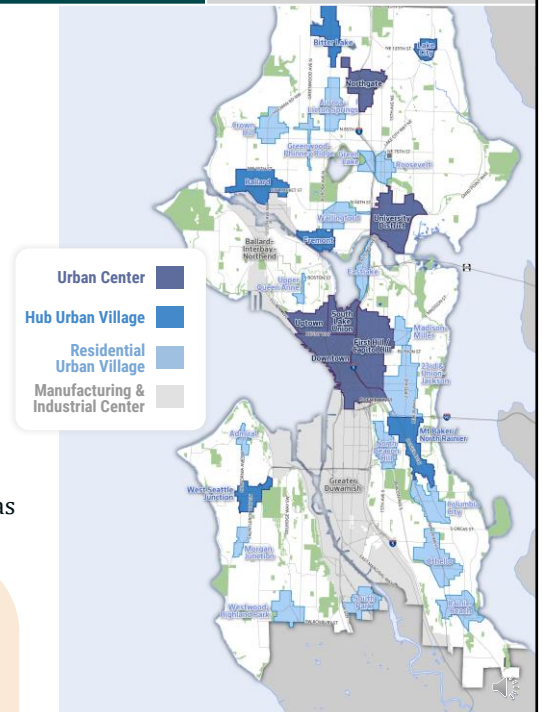
This strategy concentrates housing and jobs in mixed-use neighborhoods near transit

However, there are growing concerns that this strategy:

1. Reflects a pattern of segregation originally established through restrictive zoning, racial covenants, and redlining
2. Worsens our affordability crisis by restricting housing supply and diversity
3. Fuels displacement by concentrating new housing in limited areas

## Further learning:

- [Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy](#) — Seattle Planning Commission
- [Racial Equity Analysis Community Engagement Summary](#)
- [Racial Equity Analysis PolicyLink Recommendations](#)



To achieve these outcomes, we need to rethink our approach to where and how growth unfolds in our city.

Since 1994, the Comprehensive Plan has used Urban Villages as our strategy for distributing housing and jobs.

This strategy concentrates development in about 30 designated growth centers. Since 2012, more than 80 percent of new housing has gone to these compact, mixed-use areas near transit and services. That also means that, despite rapid population growth in recent years, many areas outside urban villages actually have fewer residents today than they did decades ago.

This approach to a growing city at the heart of our region has raised several concerns:

1. First, the urban village strategy reflects a compromise struck in the 1990s designed to shield many areas of Seattle from the prospect of new housing. As a result, it reinforced and perpetuated the patterns of segregation and exclusion established through redlining and racial covenants by prohibiting lower-cost housing types in much of the city.
2. Second, it has worsened our affordability crisis by restricting housing supply and diversity of housing types. Population growth has boosted demand for housing, but our supply has not kept pace, in part because much of the city has restrictive zoning that allows only detached homes.
3. Together, this fuels displacement pressure, as development is concentrated in limited areas, and our housing shortage pushes prices upward. Many areas where people of color were concentrated due to racist housing practices in the early 20th

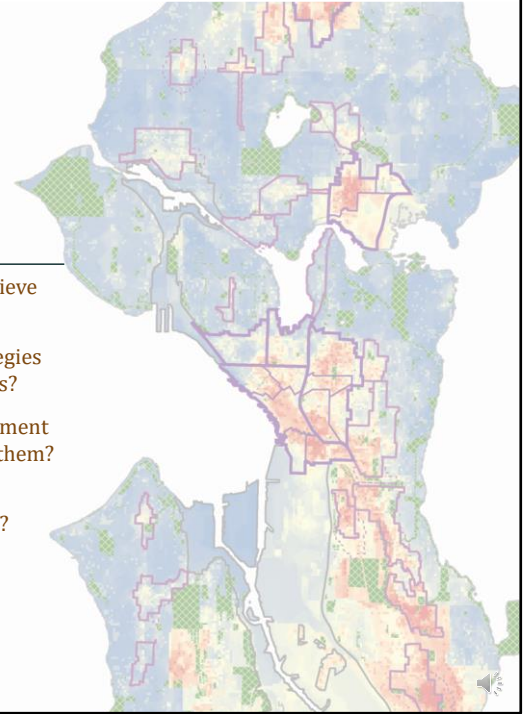
century have since been targeted for growth through our planning in the last 25 years.

We are now looking at how this strategy has benefitted some people and burdened others in inequitable ways and exploring new ways to grow that achieve more equitable and affordable housing and neighborhood choice for all. You can learn more and comment on this through the scoping process for our environmental impact statement by visiting our website.



# Data & evaluation

As we create the Plan, we will assess our progress in several ways:



## Types of analysis

## Questions they help us answer

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Racial Equity Toolkit                           | ➔ | Do potential new policies help achieve our racial equity outcomes?              |
| Analysis of alternative growth strategies       | ➔ | How would different growth strategies affect our enormous housing needs?        |
| Updated displacement risk index                 | ➔ | Which areas are at risk of displacement and how will future growth affect them? |
| Equitable Development Monitoring Program (EDMP) | ➔ | How do we ensure ongoing accountability / plan effectiveness?                   |

### Further learning:

- [Growth & Equity Analysis \(2016\)](#)
- [Equitable Development Monitoring Program](#)

Our goal is a future that advances opportunity and minimizes harm for people and communities who have experienced harm and are not benefitting from how our city is evolving.

To ensure we're on track, we'll use an environmental analysis called an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS, as well as a displacement risk analysis. This work will complement what we're hearing through public engagement to help us assess our progress. We will continually evaluate if we're succeeding in charting a new vision, or just repeating current practices. We intend to stay accountable to community through continuous feedback.

Ongoing monitoring is critical for ensuring accountability. The City's [Equitable Development Monitoring Program](#) will continue as a tool for measuring and informing progress in advancing equity and combating displacement. We will be updating the monitoring program so we can measure progress toward outcomes in the Racial Equity Toolkit and strengthened goals in the new Comprehensive Plan.

# Conclusion

**The One Seattle Plan is our opportunity to shape a more equitable future for our city and invest in our priorities as a community.**

**To develop this vision for a more equitable city, we want to hear from you:**

What are the most pressing concerns in your community?

How should the City prioritize investments to better steward our land and communities?

Where and how should the City guide new housing and jobs?

What outcomes would you like to see to create a more equitable future?

[seattle.gov/OPCD/one-seattle-plan](https://seattle.gov/OPCD/one-seattle-plan)

[engage.oneseattleplan.com](https://engage.oneseattleplan.com)

We are asking everyone with a stake in Seattle's future to share their perspective on what will make Seattle a better place to live. You are experts with critical knowledge. To make this community-driven Plan successful, we need your feedback.

In short, we want to hear from you!

- The best and most immediate way to get involved is to visit the One Seattle Engagement Hub website, our central hub for all virtual engagement for this Update.
- On this platform, you can share your feedback in multiple ways, view what others are saying, and stay updated about how the engagement process is shaping the Plan Update.
- Please visit [engage.oneseattleplan.com](https://engage.oneseattleplan.com); share your thoughts, And sign up to stay involved and updated as this plan evolves under the direction of voices like yours.
- Thank you for your input!