

One Seattle Plan Comprehensive Plan Update

Racial Equity Toolkit Summary

May 2025

Background

The City of Seattle is updating its Comprehensive Plan, a roadmap for where and how Seattle will grow and invest in communities over the next 20 years and beyond. Seattle last engaged in a citywide process to update its Comprehensive Plan a decade ago. This major update, the One Seattle Plan (Plan), sets a refreshed vision and charts a new roadmap for the future. Central to that vision is working toward a city where current and future residents can benefit from and experience racially equitable outcomes — a city where someone's race or ethnicity does not impact health, wellbeing, or access to opportunity, including housing.

A Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) is a process to guide the development of the goals and policies in this Plan in order to further racial equity. Conducting a RET is an iterative process of community engagement, analysis, policy development, and evaluation, with each step informing the next. With [guidance](#) from the Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR), the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) employed a RET process in developing the Mayor's Recommended One Seattle Plan.

This work included an analysis of the existing Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan, extensive racial equity data and analysis published in the One Seattle Plan Housing appendix, analysis of racial equity impacts in an Environmental Impact Statement, and enhanced public engagement with communities that have historically been marginalized from policy processes like a major update of the Comprehensive Plan. More complete documentation of each of these components of the RET can be found via the links provided.

Finally, the RET has resulted in key changes and additions to the City's policies that will guide actions by multiple departments over the next 20 years, including a new growth strategy and policies that promote racial equity added throughout the Plan.

Racial Equity Analysis of Seattle 2035 and Urban Village Strategy (2021)

A Statement of Legislative Intent (29-4-B-1-2019) adopted by City Council in 2019 requested that the OPCD, in consultation with the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and SOCR, "prepare a racial equity analysis of Seattle's strategy for accommodating growth" as part of "pre-planning work in anticipation of the next major update to the Comprehensive Plan." To accomplish this work, OPCD contracted with PolicyLink, a national research and action institute dedicated to advancing racial and economic equity.

The project involved targeted outreach to historically marginalized communities and included a series of focus groups and a larger citywide stakeholder workshop in fall

2020. Participants included community members, organizations active in community development and advocacy around racial equity issues, and City boards and commissions. A community engagement summary report from this process can be found [here](#).

PolicyLink’s evaluation of the current Comprehensive Plan was informed by input from this public outreach and was also informed by a review of data analysis and documents related to the Comprehensive Plan and its implementation.

A final report from this process includes findings and recommendations from PolicyLink on what changes should be made in the Comprehensive Plan and how implementation can achieve more equitable outcomes. Topic areas included: housing supply and affordability, housing and neighborhood choice, jobs and economy, displacement, and community engagement. The final report can be found [here](#).

Equitable Community Engagement

Beginning with the official launch of the One Seattle Plan process in spring 2022, OPCD engaged the public through several phases of community and stakeholder input oriented around key milestones in the Comprehensive Plan update process. These included early engagement and scoping for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2022, engagement around key policy topics in the Plan in 2022 and 2023, feedback on the draft Plan and Draft EIS in spring 2024, and feedback on draft zoning changes in fall 2024.

Foundational community engagement goals for the One Seattle Plan were:

- Provide additional opportunities for communities that have been historically underrepresented in the City's planning and engagement processes, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.
- Create opportunities for interaction and co-creation with community and stakeholders.

Equitable community engagement included a range of new and expanded strategies:

- DON Community Liaisons assisted with outreach to cultural communities, conducted focus groups, and provided translation services as needed.
- OPCD ensured language access to communities speaking all 7 of Seattle’s Tier 1 languages through translated materials for community events, translation tools on project websites, and interpretation at key community engagement events.
- OPCD contracted with 8 community-based organizations (CBOs) to conduct tailored engagement with the members of communities they serve and produce reports of findings and recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan. The CBOs included Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Capitol Hill Eco District, Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association/ Duwamish Valley Youth Vision Project, Estelita’s Library, Khmer Community of Seattle/King County/ Noio Pathways/ KIMYUNITY, Wa Na Wari/ CACE 21, and sləpələbəxw (Rising Tides). Reports from each of the CBOs are available [here](#).

- OPCD worked with key City boards and commissions for input on the Plan, including the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board, sləp̓iləbəx^w (Rising Tides) Indigenous Planning Group, Green New Deal Oversight Board, Mayor's Council on African American Elders, and Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission, among others.
- Between June and July of 2023, OPCD facilitated stakeholder interviews with representatives from over 40 organizations working to address displacement in their communities.

A complete description of community engagement for the One Seattle Plan can be found [here](#).

Data Analysis

The Comprehensive Plan update was informed by several rounds of data analysis that identified, quantified, and mapped equity related factors including historical and ongoing racial disparities, displacement risk, and racial outcomes associated with alternative growth scenarios.

One outcome of the last major Comprehensive Plan update, Seattle 2035, was the creation of the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI). In coordination with EDI, OPCD has analyzed and reported on data that show how the city is progressing toward equitable outcomes across neighborhoods and racial and cultural communities. The resulting Equitable Development Monitoring Program ([link](#)) was established to fulfill this role, publishing several reports and data dashboards in the years leading up to the One Seattle Plan process. As stated in the Plan's Introduction, it is OPCD's intent after adoption of the One Seattle Plan to continue similar monitoring work focusing on implementation and outcomes that impact racial equity.

The Community Indicators Report was released in 2020. This report contains data on housing, community and neighborhood access to opportunity, transportation, and access to education and economic opportunities, which collectively show ongoing disparities among demographic groups and areas of the city.

The Comprehensive Plan update process that led to the adoption of Seattle 2035 in 2015 and 2016 used a newly developed Displacement Risk Index map to inform growth strategy and anti-displacement policies. Alongside the Community Indicators Report, OPCD also produced a new data dashboard of Heightened Displacement Risk Indicators that complement the map. The One Seattle Plan update process built upon this prior work with an updated map (included in the Housing Appendix) and early work to update the dashboard and initiate a multi-departmental and data-informed effort to track and improve upon the City's existing anti-displacement toolbox.

The Plan update was informed by new and more complete documentation of a long history of racial discrimination in Seattle. The Housing Appendix includes a new section, Historical Context of Racist Housing and Land Use Practices, that details this history from initial colonization through highly discriminatory housing policies in the 20th

century to conditions today that continue to result in racially disparate outcomes in housing and access to opportunity.

The Housing Appendix includes additional data and analysis explicitly directed at identifying racial disparities. Data on households shows ongoing differences across racial and cultural communities in income, homeownership, and housing cost burden. A Geographic Analysis of Racial and Social Equity in Housing explores patterns of segregation within the city and neighborhood disparities in housing affordability and access to opportunities that intersect with race.

Racial equity was also incorporated into environmental review for the One Seattle Plan. As part of the scoping process in Fall 2022, OPCD identified equity metrics that were to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement analysis. The One Seattle Comprehensive Plan EIS evaluated six growth strategy alternatives for potential impacts to the built and natural environment. Elements of the environment that were studied included earth and water quality, air quality/GHG, plants and animals, energy and natural resources, noise, land use patterns, historic resources, population, employment and housing, transportation, and public services and utilities. For each element historical inequities related to each topic area are documented. Where environmental impacts for any of the alternatives are identified, consideration is given to whether there are racial disparities in how these impacts are experienced and mitigation measures are identified.

Goals and Policies in the One Seattle Plan

The RET process informed and shaped the final Mayor’s Recommended One Seattle Plan, with goals, policies, and implementation approaches that are explicitly designed to promote equity and opportunity broadly and specifically address the impacts of historical racism and persistent racial disparities.

The Introduction to the Plan describes four “key moves” which include housing and affordability, equity and opportunity, community and neighborhoods, and climate and sustainability, all of which describe the broad objectives of the Plan to foster a more equitable city as we grow and invest in the future.

A centerpiece of the Plan is the newly revised growth strategy, which provides direction on the types and locations of development, particularly housing, to meet our needs for housing supply, diversity, and affordability over the next 20 years. The proposed growth strategy addresses the legacy of racially exclusive zoning through implementation of HB 1110 (the new state “middle housing” requirement) and with proposed locations for denser housing, including more affordable rental housing, in more places across the city, including new Neighborhood Centers and transit corridors located in areas with high access to opportunity and few housing options now. These changes were designed to reduce market pressures that are contributing to high housing costs and displacement of low income and communities of color and to promote opportunities and incentives for affordable housing development.

In addition to the Growth Strategy element, the proposed One Seattle Plan includes significant changes to 10 topical policy elements, changes that include adding and strengthening goals and policies that promote racial equity and anti-displacement strategies. Highlights include:

- In the Transportation element, a new Creating an Equitable Transportation System section with policies on transportation equity, including promotion of affordability, equitable access, and investments in underserved areas of the city.
- In the Housing element, a new Housing Security and Stable Communities section with expanded goals and policies on anti-displacement.
- In the Housing element, new and expanded policies underscoring the role of community ownership of land, proactive involvement of groups historically excluded from and burdened by housing policies, and support for lower- and moderate-income homeowners to achieve stability and wealth creation through development on their properties.
- In the Capital Facilities element, a new Equitable Capital Facilities and Service section
- In the Utilities element, expanded policies on equitable service provision to address all utilities as well as specific issues, such as affordability and community impacts.
- In the Economic Development element, policies promoting small business ownership, particularly among historically marginalized communities.
- In the Climate and Environment element, a Carbon Pollution Reduction subelement that emphasizes strategies consistent with a just transition away from fossil fuels.
- In the Climate and Environment element, a Healthy, Resilient Communities and Environment subelement that promotes strategies to achieve an equitable distribution of investments to mitigate climate impacts.
- In the Parks and Open Space element, new policies emphasizing equitable access and community partnerships, enhancing and indigenous culture and practice
- In the Arts and Culture element, new narrative and policies recognizing and promoting Indigenous arts and culture.
- In the Community Involvement element, a strong orientation around equitable engagement with goals and policies related to partnerships, community capacity building, and engagement with Indigenous communities.