

# Seattle Fire Department Dangerous Buildings Ordinance

Date  
4/23/2024

Seattle Fire  
Department



**City of Seattle**

# Seattle Fire Department Mission Statement

*"The mission of the Seattle Fire Department is to **save lives and protect property** through emergency medical service, **fire and rescue response and fire prevention**. We respond immediately when any member of our community needs help with professional, effective and compassionate service."*





# Dangerous Buildings Impact Communities and First Responders

## The Seattle Times 1 dead in vacant building fire in Mount Baker

April 20, 2023 at 10:28 am



A person was found dead inside this vacant commercial building on Rainier Avenue South where fire broke out Thursday morning. (Greg Gilbert / The Seattle Times) [Less](#) ^

## The Seattle Times Lake City Way reopens after fire in vacant building

May 10, 2023 at 6:47 am



Seattle Fire Department responds early Wednesday to a fire on Lake City Way between Northeast 135th Street and Northeast 137th Street. (Kevin Clark / The Seattle Times)

# Current Process

- **SFD actively working with property owners and current Seattle Fire Code.** Education, options to restore to safe condition or demolish. Goal: voluntary compliance.
- **Typical building removal process involves** insurance review, permit review and issuance, demolition activities, and may take up to 1+ years.
- **Challenges**
  - Repeated unauthorized entry and fires while property is moving toward demolition.
  - Non-responsive owners.





# Dangerous Buildings Impact Communities and First Responders

*The Seattle Times*

## Fire at First Hill vacant building spreads to neighboring apartments

Jan. 1, 2024 at 9:51 am | Updated Jan. 1, 2024 at 2:02 pm



A fire consumed a vacant building on First Hill on New Year's Day, forcing the displacement of residents in a neighboring apartment building. (Courtesy of the Seattle Fire Department) [Less](#) ^

- Since the pandemic, more vacant buildings and more transient activity
- Riskier rescue operations vs. safer defensive suppression
- Spread to nearby buildings: hazard for neighbors, disrupts local businesses
- 3 occupant deaths in 2023 in Seattle

*The New York Times*

## *3 Firefighters Die After Being Trapped in Blaze at Vacant Baltimore Rowhouse*

Part of the building collapsed as they battled the fire. Another firefighter was in fair condition on Thursday, officials said.

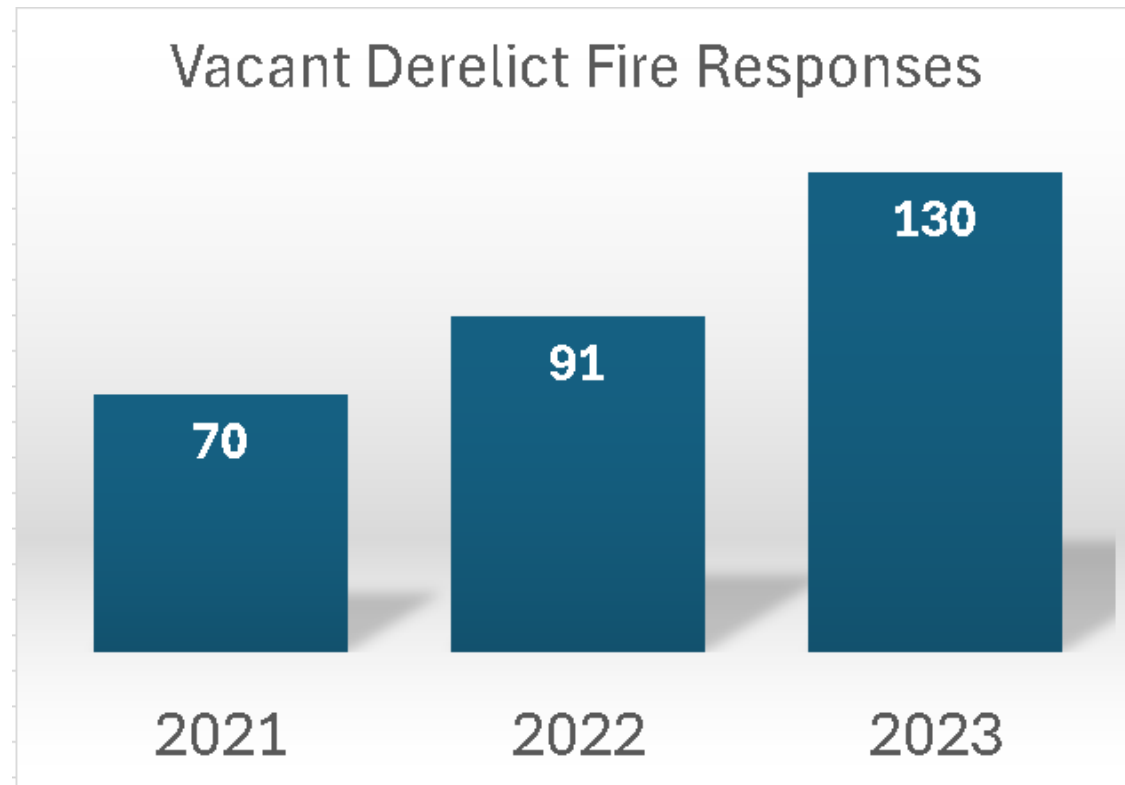
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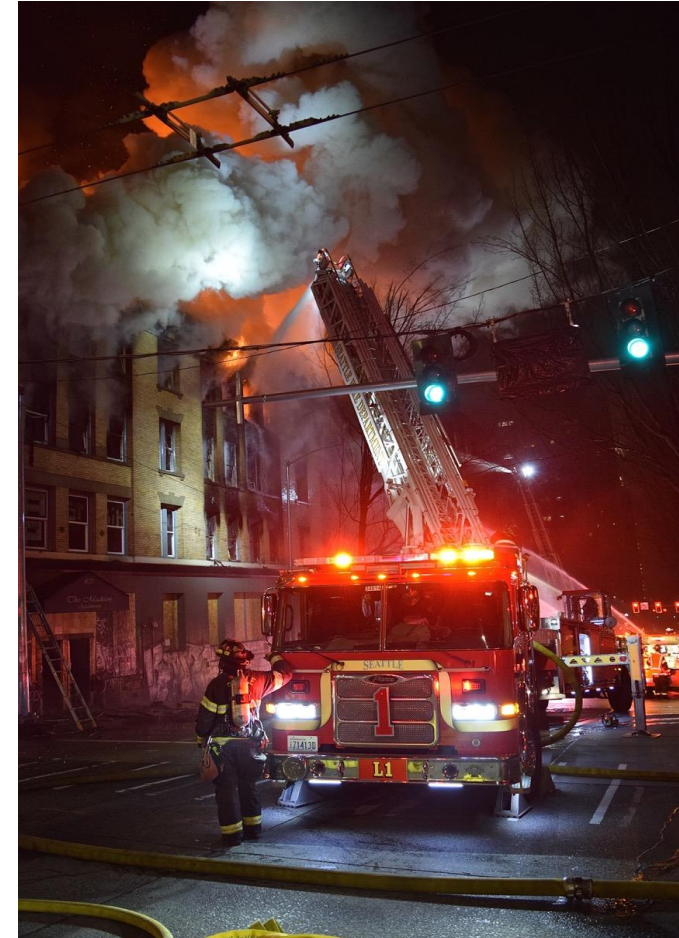
# Seattle Fire Department Vacant/Derelict Fire Responses



From SFD NFIRS Reports

# Monitoring of Vacant or Dangerous Buildings

- SDCI Vacant Building Monitoring: 300+
- SFD Vacant and Derelict Tracking: 100+
- SFD Vacant and Derelict w/1 or More Fires: 40+

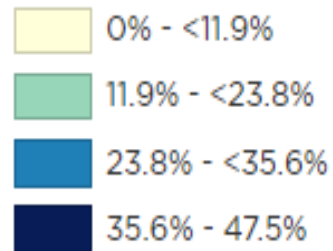




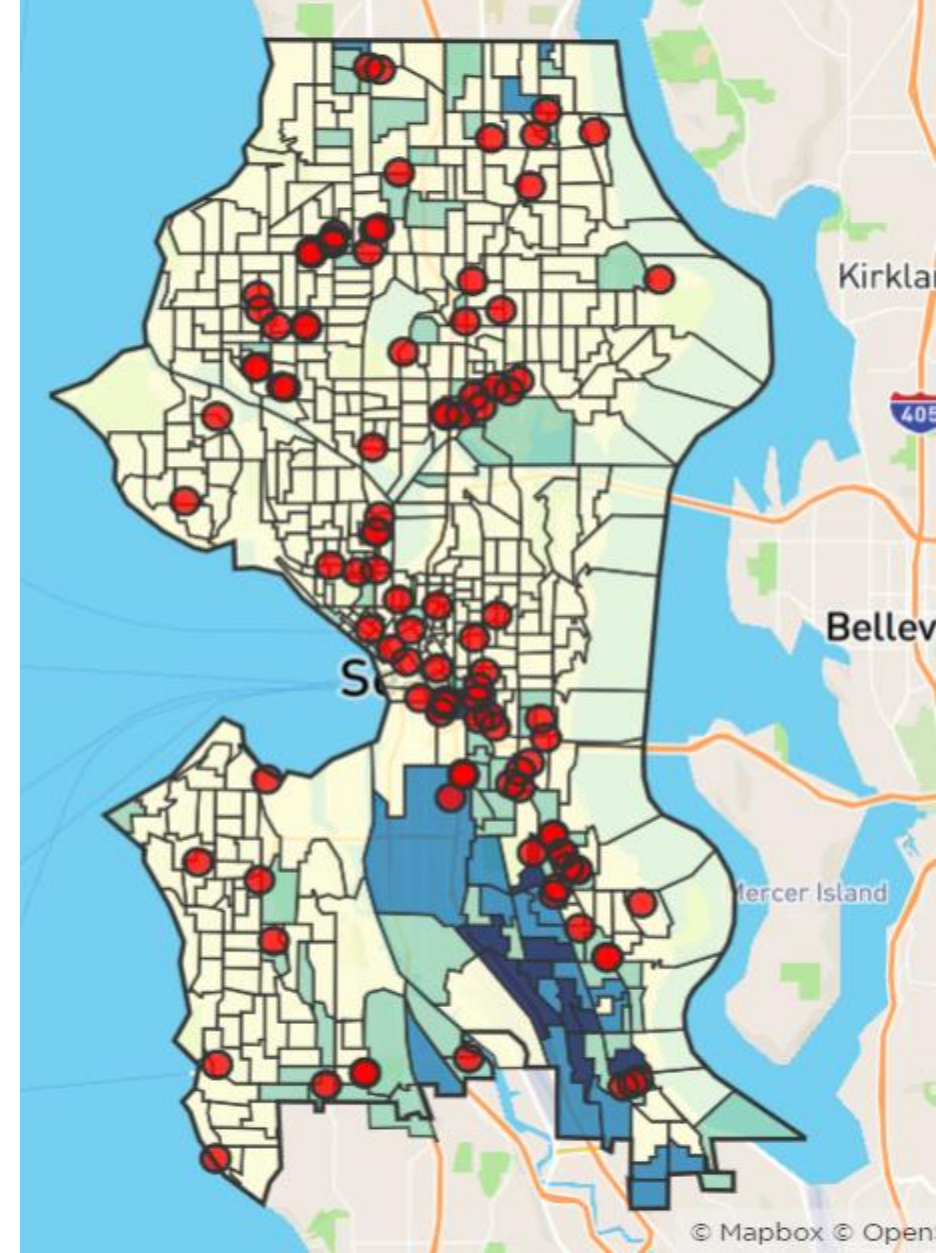
# Derelict Buildings: Language Diversity



## Limited Spoken English

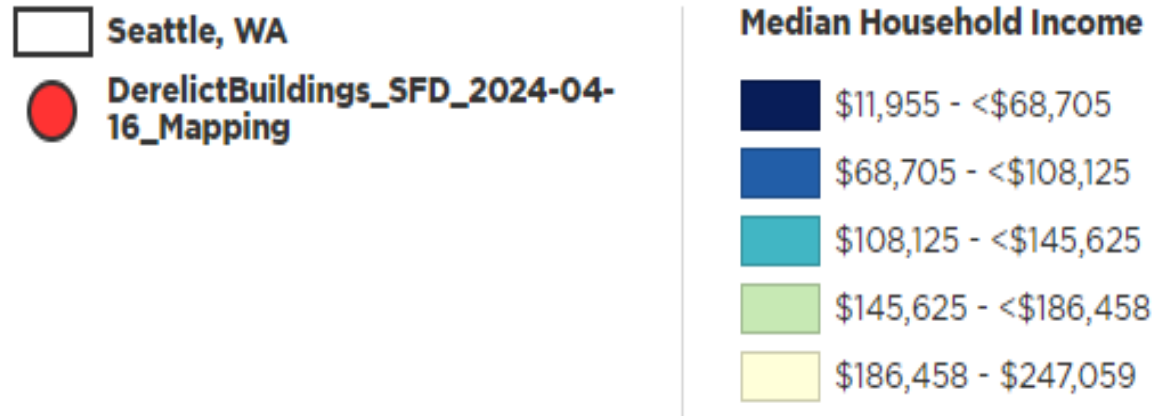


Sources: US Census Bureau 2020; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2018-2022

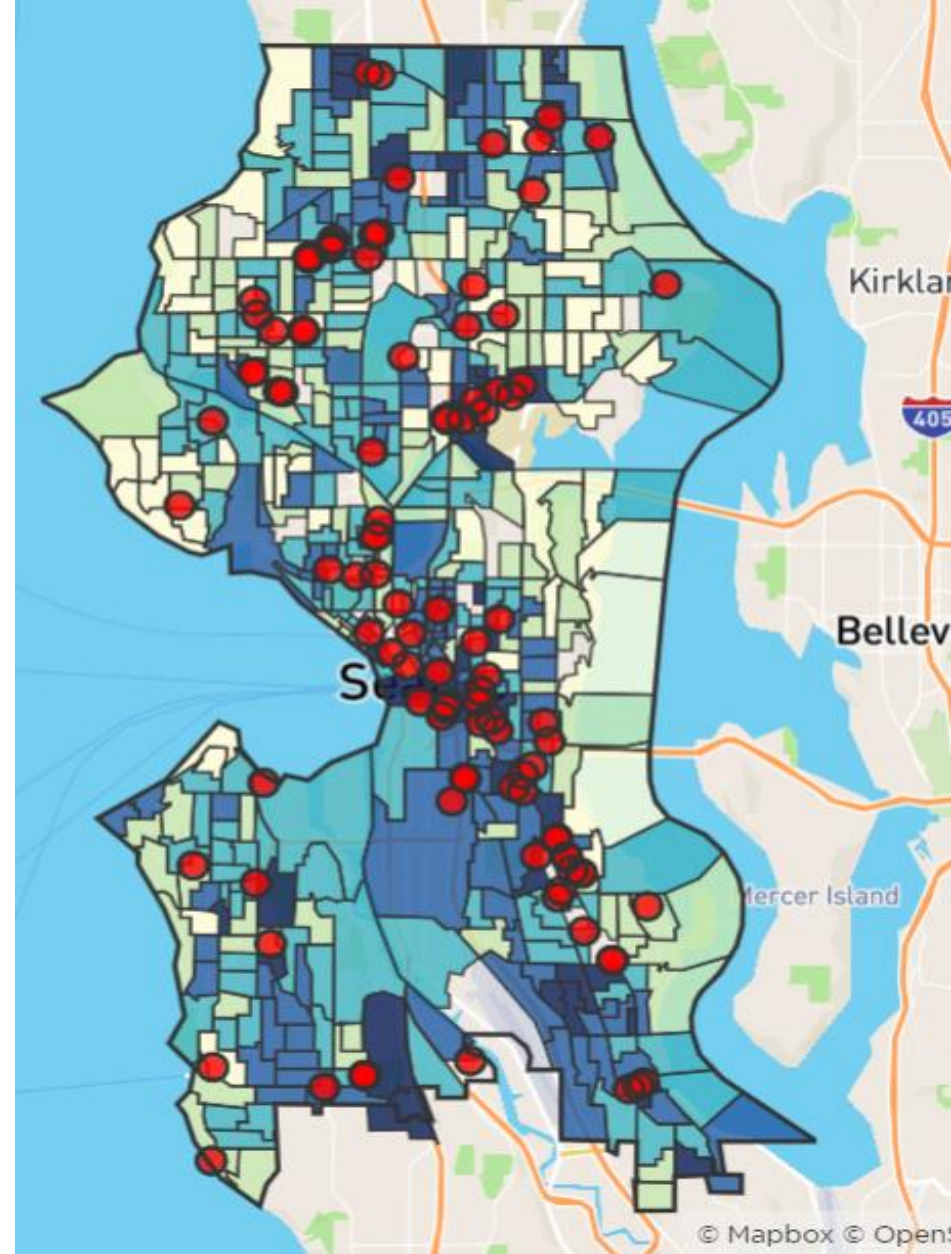




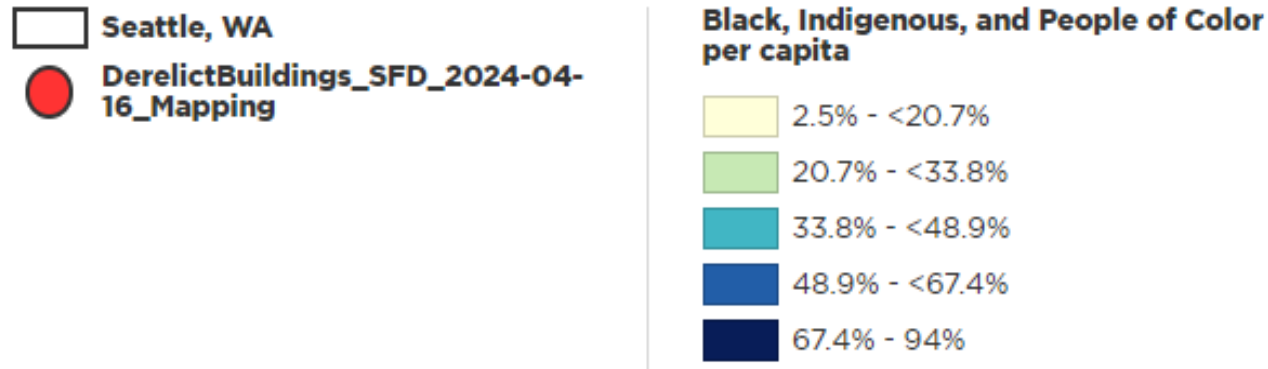
# Derelict Buildings: Income Diversity



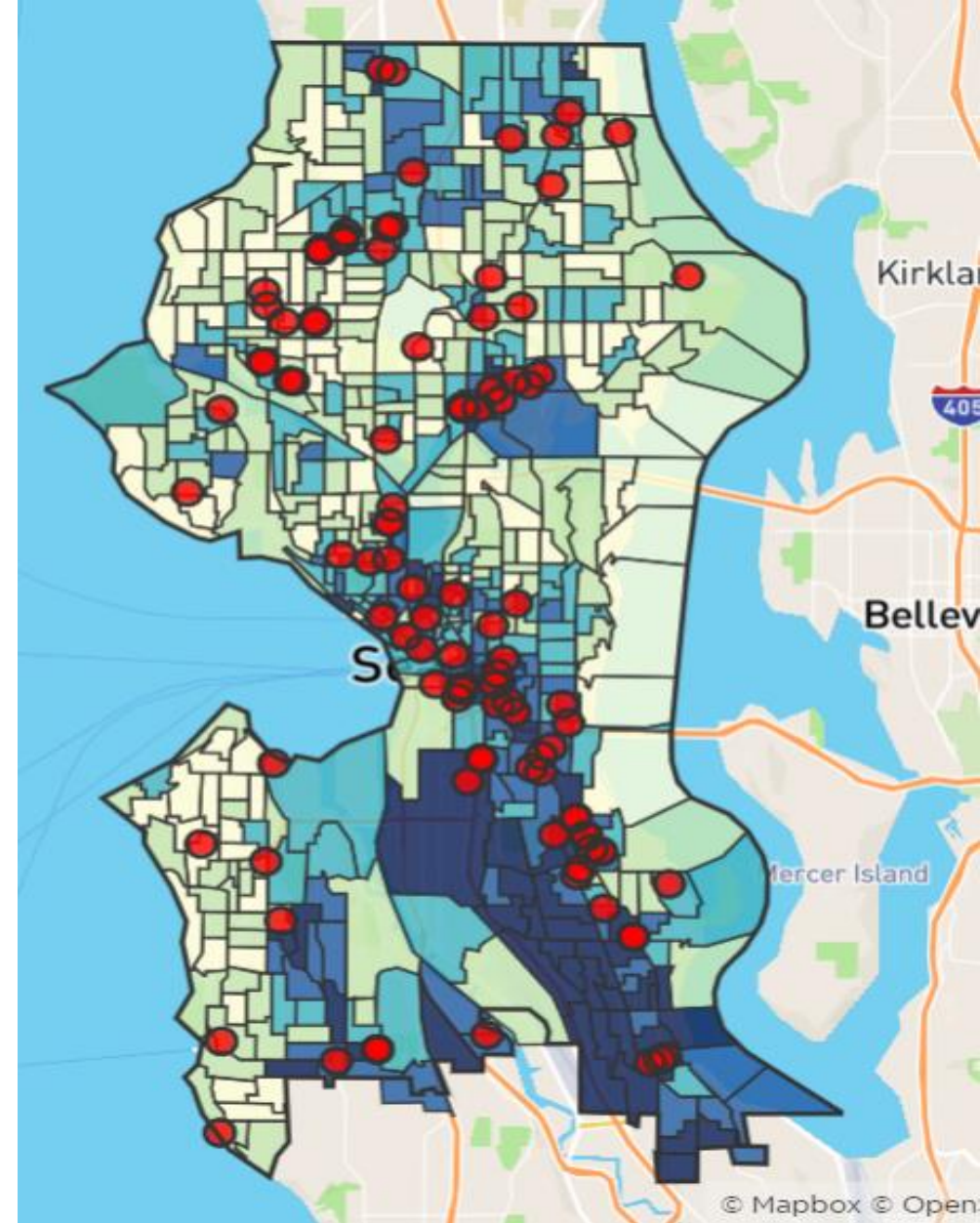
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2018-2022



# Derelict Buildings: Racial Diversity



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2018-2022





# What the Ordinance Does – Amends Seattle Fire Code

## Clarifies Fire Chief’s existing “summary abatement” authority

- Imminent danger to life and property, Fire Chief already has authority to take action directly to address the unsafe condition.
- Ordinance clarifies that this includes demolition and adds ability to pass the costs back to the property owner.

## Clarifies Fire Chief’s existing “abatement” authority

- Other unsafe buildings, not an imminent hazard, Fire Chief already has authority to require building owner to fix or demolish.
- Ordinance adds ability for Fire Chief to directly address the unsafe condition, including fencing/securing property and demolition, and to pass the costs back to the property owner.

**Adds authority for the City to use RCW 35.21.955 to place a lien against the public nuisance property.**

# THANK YOU

## Questions?



*Here to Serve*