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PAS MEMO

Advancing Racial Equity Through Land-Use Planning

By Paul Mogush, AICP

In the fall of 2016, planning staff at the City of Minneapolis were developing the game plan for updating the city's comprehensive plan, a decennial ritual required by Minnesota statute for municipalities in the seven-county Twin Cities region. Initial research, public engagement, and behind-the-scenes

conversations needed to frame this multiyear effort were complete, and the marching orders were clear: Develop a plan that addresses racial equity, housing affordability, and climate change—with racial equity at the top of the list.

Fast forward two years and the result was a comprehensive plan that gained national attention for eliminating single-family zoning, making Minneapolis the first major city in the United States to make such a move. Many have asked: How did that happen?

This *PAS Memo* answers that question. It begins with a summary of the housing crisis facing Minneapolis, the racial disparities that cause that crisis to disproportionately impact people of color, and the historical context of racist housing policies that contributed to the current situation. It outlines the approach the **Minneapolis 2040 plan** (Figure 1) takes to help overcome these disparities and atone for past injustice, including the process that created it. The *Memo* closes by sharing specific tools Minneapolis is using to implement this approach and offering other action steps that planners can take to adapt these ideas to their own communities.

minneapolis | 2040

Minneapolis 2040 — The City's Comprehensive Plan

**Done right, growth
can help our city become
a healthy, sustainable,
and thriving place for all.**



Adopted by the Minneapolis City Council on October 25, 2019
Effective January 1, 2020

Figure 1. The Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan (City of Minneapolis)

A Housing Crisis and the Nation's Worst Racial Disparities

Minneapolis and Minnesota have some of the deepest racial disparities in the nation covering just about every measurable social aspect, including economic, housing, safety, and health outcomes. Perhaps most striking is the income disparity: White non-Hispanic residents in Minneapolis make approximately three times the income of Black and American Indian residents. The median income in 2016 for white non-Hispanics was approximately \$65,000, while the median incomes for Blacks and American Indians were \$20,871 and \$22,476, respectively (Figure 2, p. 2).

Like many major metropolitan areas in the United States, employment and population growth in the Twin Cities region are outpacing the construction of new housing units. The re-

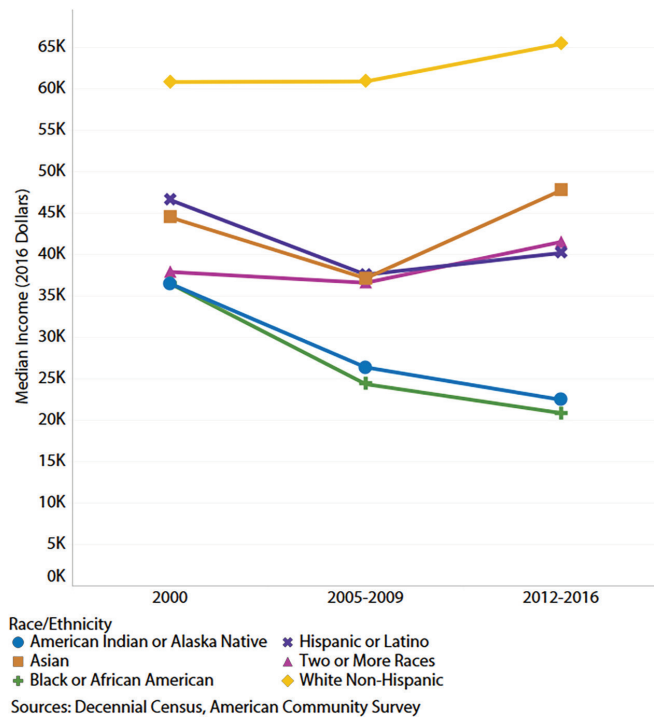


Figure 2. Median income by race/ethnicity in Minneapolis (City of Minneapolis)

sult is rising rents and home sale prices. For a growing number of Minneapolis residents, especially people of color, incomes are not keeping up with those rising costs. The loss of affordable housing units combined with reductions in household income have resulted in a greater number of cost-burdened households—households in which more than 30 percent of household income goes toward housing. Thirty-seven percent of all households in Minneapolis are cost burdened, but this is not equal across racial groups. Over 50 percent of Black households and over 45 percent of American Indian and Hispanic households in Minneapolis are cost burdened, whereas one in three white households are cost burdened (Figure 3).

A History of Racially Restrictive Housing Policies

While income and housing disparities are particularly acute in Minnesota, they exist throughout the country. They are rooted in deep layers of institutional racism spanning more than 400 years. Among those layers is a coordinated trio of racially restrictive housing policies adopted in the first half of the 20th century—redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and single-family zoning—that worked together to deny people of color the opportunity to live in high-amenity neighborhoods and to build wealth through homeownership.

As part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, Congress created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 to shore up the housing market and prevent mortgage foreclosures (Mapping Inequality n.d.). HOLC developed tools to standardize lending practices, including the infamous redlining maps produced in most major cities. It generally deemed older,

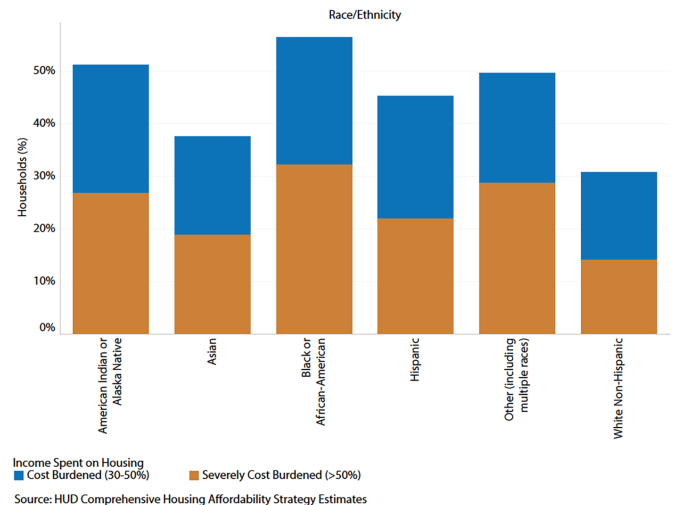


Figure 3. Cost burden by race in Minneapolis, 2010–2014 (City of Minneapolis)

denser parts of the city close to downtown as “definitely declining” and “hazardous” for the purposes of mortgage lending.

Using the guidance in these maps, lenders would only provide mortgages in the whitest parts of town—the green and blue areas shown in the map to the left in Figure 4 (p. 3). In Minneapolis, the “best” and “still desirable” areas of the city had the most sought-after amenities of the city’s park and parkway system and were located away from the noise and pollution of industry and the central business district.

The map to the right in Figure 4 shows the “best” (green) and “still desirable” (blue) areas of the HOLC redlining map (yellow and red categories are removed for clarity). A crosshatch overlay indicates where Minneapolis had single-family zoning through the end of 2019, which closely matches the single-family zoning of the original 1924 zoning map. The pattern is clear: these areas are almost a one-for-one match.

The message from the time of redlining was also clear: white people could get a mortgage for a home in the lower-density “desirable” areas, but nobody else could. To further reinforce this message, those same areas were restricted to single-family homes through zoning to keep renters and people of color from living nearby.

The third layer of racially restrictive housing tools was racially restrictive covenants: legal restrictions that developers recorded on the deeds of residential properties, prohibiting current and future owners from selling or renting their property to people of specific races, ethnicities, and religions (Figure 5, p. 3). The first of these restrictions in Minneapolis was recorded in 1910, and they were common throughout the country (Mapping Prejudice n.d.).

The legacy of these practices is apparent. Figure 6 (p. 3) shows the locations of racially restrictive covenants within the city. These areas are still predominantly white today.

Racially restrictive covenants were invalidated by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1948 case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* (334

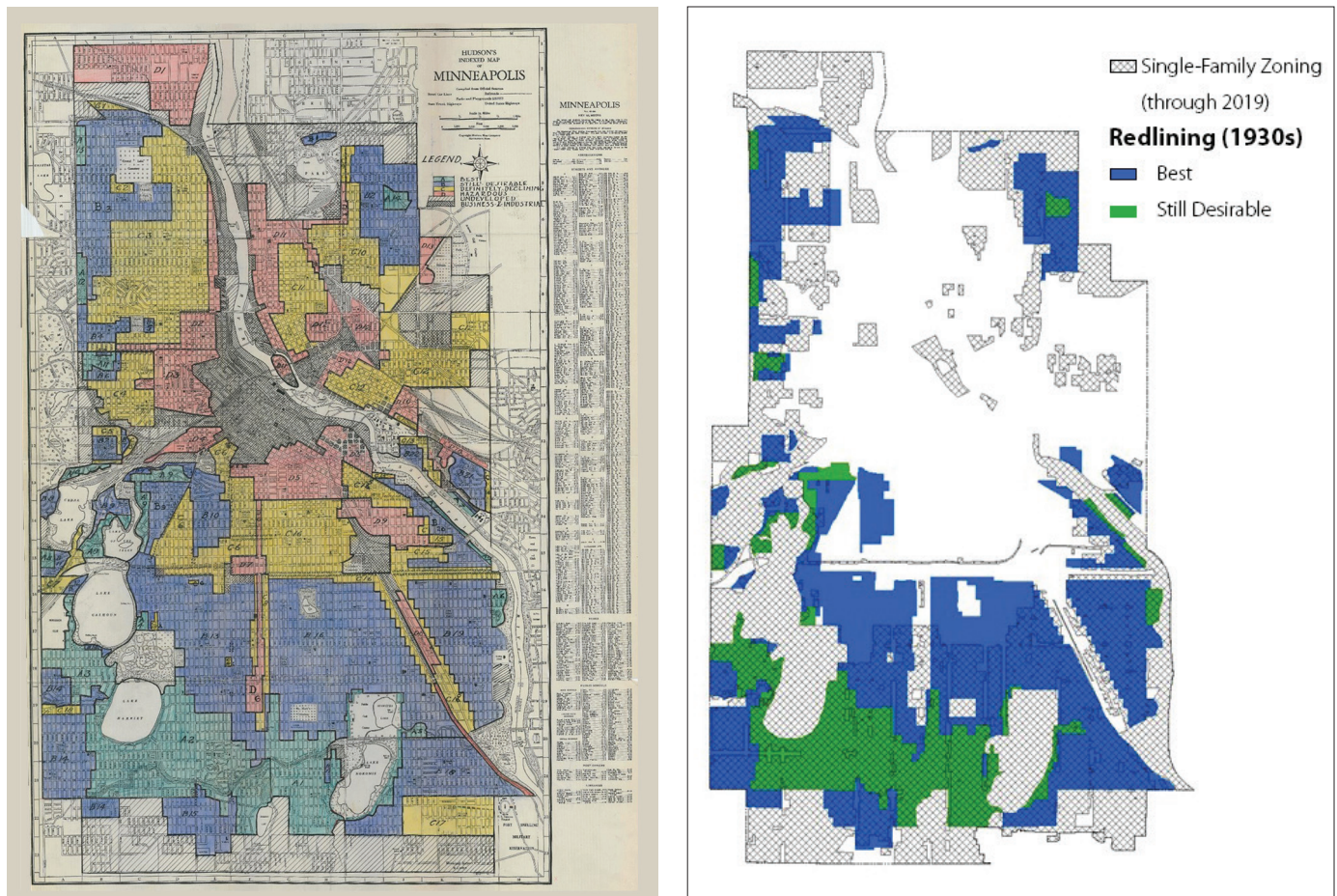


Figure 4. Left: Minneapolis HOLC redlining map (Mapping Inequality, University of Richmond). Right: “Best” and “still desirable” areas of HOLC map overlaid with single-family zoning (City of Minneapolis)

4. That no building shall be left with paper exposure or with the exterior incomplete.
 5. That the said land or buildings thereon shall never be rented, leased or sold, transferred or conveyed to, nor shall same be occupied exclusively by person or persons other than of the Caucasian Race.
 6. The foregoing covenant and restriction shall run with the land and shall bind the grantee herein and the heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns of said grantee until the first day of January A.D. Nineteen hundred and Forty.

Figure 5. An example of racially restrictive covenant language (Mapping Prejudice, University of Minnesota)

U.S. 1 (1948)). They remained technically legal but unenforceable until the Fair Housing Act of 1968 formally ended the practice of both redlining and racially restrictive covenants.

Decades later, the legacy of these practices remains in the form of economic disparities and geographic segregation, while other discriminatory real estate practices continue. For example, in Chicago, [modern lending practices](#) still result in far more loans taking place in majority-white neighborhoods than majority-Black neighborhoods (Lutton, Fan, and Louri 2020). And most cities still have large swaths zoned only for single-family housing.

Single-family zoning is only recently being identified as having worked in concert with redlining and covenants to further segregation and housing discrimination in the United

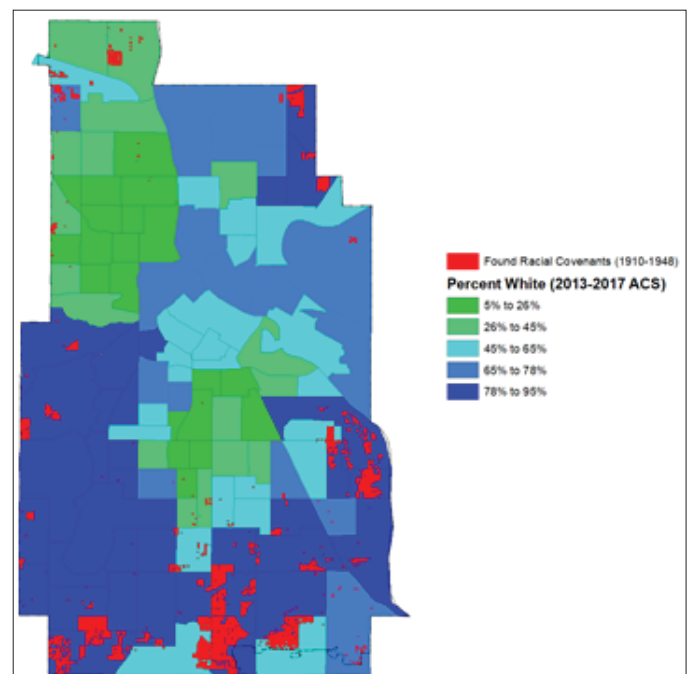


Figure 6. Properties with racial covenants in Minneapolis (City of Minneapolis)

States. The similar geographic patterns associated with all three of these practices in Minneapolis is likely replicated in cities throughout the country and will presumably be the topic of more analysis and conversation in coming years.

Connecting the Dots: Housing Affordability and Racial Equity

Metropolitan areas across the country are experiencing varying degrees of the same problem: Housing is getting more expensive as employment and population growth outpaces the construction of places to live. Racial disparities in income and wealth mean that the housing affordability problem disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Figure 7 illustrates this problem in Minneapolis. In 2000, the city already had a pronounced disparity between neighborhoods affordable to Black households and white households. By 2014, housing was less affordable for everyone, but Hispanic households could afford only a few neighborhoods near the center of the city and not a single Minneapolis neighborhood was affordable for median-income Black households.

Clearly, the housing problem in Minneapolis, and in other cities across the country, is a racial equity issue. Doing something about the problem of housing affordability and choice is part of the larger effort toward achieving racial

equity. That is the connection that planners were trying to make for stakeholders as they developed the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan.

The Plan: Minneapolis 2040

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires municipalities in the Twin Cities area to do comprehensive planning and to update their plans every ten years. The process is administered by the Metropolitan Council, the appointed body that oversees regional systems such as transportation, wastewater, and parks. The Metropolitan Council develops a regional plan with a 30-year horizon, and each city and county must write a plan that is expected to be consistent with that plan.

In 2016, Minneapolis staff and leadership saw the upcoming round of comprehensive planning as an opportunity to go above and beyond the base requirements of the regional planning process and take an even deeper and broader look at the future of the city. To accomplish this, planners set up a substantial infrastructure of working groups and committees, involving more than 150 city staff with representation from most departments as well as a steering committee of elected officials and department heads. The charge of these groups was to take a deep dive into a list of 11 topic areas (Land Use and Built Form, Transportation, Housing, Economic Competitiveness, Environmental Systems, Public Health, Heritage

Changes in Rental Affordability by Race/Ethnicity between 2000 and 2014

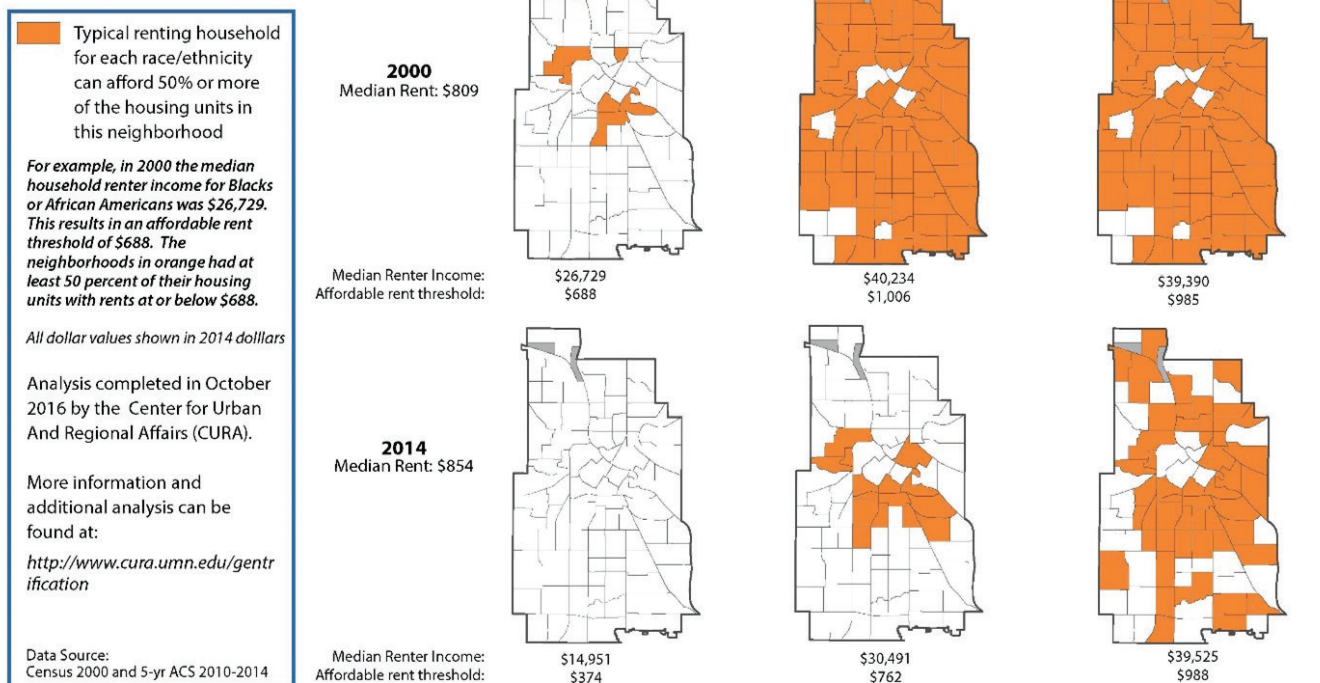


Figure 7. Areas in Minneapolis affordable to median-income households by race, 2000 and 2014 (Adapted by the City of Minneapolis with permission of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) from *The Diversity of Gentrification: Multiple Forms of Gentrification in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, <http://gentrification.umn.edu>, January 25, 2019.)

Mapping Prejudice

Inspired by the [Segregated Seattle](#) project, [Mapping Prejudice](#) is a research project housed in the Borchert Map Library at the University of Minnesota that is illuminating the role that racially restrictive covenants played in contributing to racial disparities and segregation. Led by Dr. Kirsten Delegard, the team of university-based researchers and community volunteers have reviewed every residential property deed in Minneapolis and surrounding Hennepin County to create the first-ever complete database and map of racial covenants in the country.

Users of the Mapping Prejudice website can access an interactive map that shows each property with an identified covenant. Clicking on a property reveals information specific to that covenant, including the exact language.

Preservation, Arts and Culture, Parks and Open Space, Public Services and Facilities, and Technology and Innovation), using data to provide a baseline for goal setting.

Each topical work group put together a list of goals based on its data collection efforts as well as feedback from the community during an initial round of engagement. Planning staff synthesized this long list into 13 draft goals for the future of the city. This exercise proved to be very important in moving a bold plan forward. Planners presented the goals to the city council for its approval before writing the plan itself, securing a unanimous vote calling on staff to develop a draft plan that would contribute to achieving [14 goals](#) (the council added one).

While all 14 goals were important, a shared sense of priority among the community, staff, and elected officials became clear: We must use this plan to advance racial equity and housing affordability, and to combat climate change.

Community Engagement and Education

Seeing the opportunity to use the comprehensive plan update as a vehicle for advancing these goals, Mayor Betsy Hodges included in her budget the resources for a substantial public engagement process.

A few years prior, Minneapolis planners had worked with Intermedia Arts, a local nonprofit, on a pilot program to bring social-practice artists into city processes. The [Creative CityMaking program](#) embedded local artists into five planning processes (including small area plans, transportation plans, and historic preservation efforts), designing and implementing innovative arts-based engagement strategies for each. The pilot became a successful ongoing partnership, moving into other city departments to enhance engagement and expand outreach to traditionally under-represented communities.

For Minneapolis 2040, planners scaled up this approach to a multiyear, citywide process. The city council approved a civic engagement plan that included a project schedule, engagement principles and methods, and a list of stakeholders that focused on making space at the table for cultural communities,

The Mapping Prejudice team also collaborated with Twin Cities Public Television to produce the hourlong documentary [Jim Crow of the North](#), which details the history of redlining and racial covenants in the Twin Cities and tells the story of the Mapping Prejudice project.

In addition to informing Minneapolis 2040, the Mapping Prejudice project resulted in a 2019 change to state law allowing property owners to discharge racially restrictive covenants from their deeds. The [Just Deeds coalition](#), started by the suburban city of Golden Valley, provides residents of member cities free legal and title services to voluntarily remove covenants. The City of Minneapolis has joined this coalition, and to date 101 covenants have been discharged.

renters, and other groups that are often left out of decision making. Staff issued a call for artists, modeled after the Creative CityMaking pilot, to design and implement new methods for engagement at community workshops and street festivals, making these experiences fun and accessible.

In one example, artists Molly Van Avery and Mike Hoyt designed [a mobile engagement toolkit called Imagining Equity](#) that they hauled on a large electric-assist tricycle to festivals around the city. Participants manually scrolled through hand-drawn depictions of the city's history, including examples of events and policies that led to current racial disparities, and then drew on a scroll their own visions of a future city that has healed from inequities. People were encouraged to record video of their scroll to post on social media. In another instance, artist Eric Avery anchored a series of open houses with [a mock TV show, TV 2040](#), interviewing participants about their hopes for the future of the city while others mingled, ate free food from local restaurants, and conversed with poets and visual artists who committed their ideas to paper.

While this approach was a fun and refreshing departure from traditional public meetings, in the early phases of the planning process planning staff also used engagement as an opportunity to provide a baseline understanding of the roots of racial disparities. In 2021, the history of redlining and racially restrictive covenants is top of mind for many Americans in general—and planners specifically—as we undergo a renewed reckoning on race in the wake of George Floyd's death at the hands of police in Minneapolis. But this wasn't the case in 2016, when the Minneapolis 2040 planning process was beginning. Planners studied that history in school, and the history was present in the lived experiences of many Americans of color who were directly or indirectly affected, but there still wasn't widespread recognition or understanding.

Fortuitously, a headline appeared in the Star Tribune that fall: "[Mapping Prejudice Project Traces History of Discriminatory Deeds in Minneapolis](#)" (Brandt 2016). Researchers at the University of Minnesota, along with a team of volunteers, were scouring residential property deeds in Minneapolis and



Figure 8. Community members interacting with planning staff at an open house (City of Minneapolis)

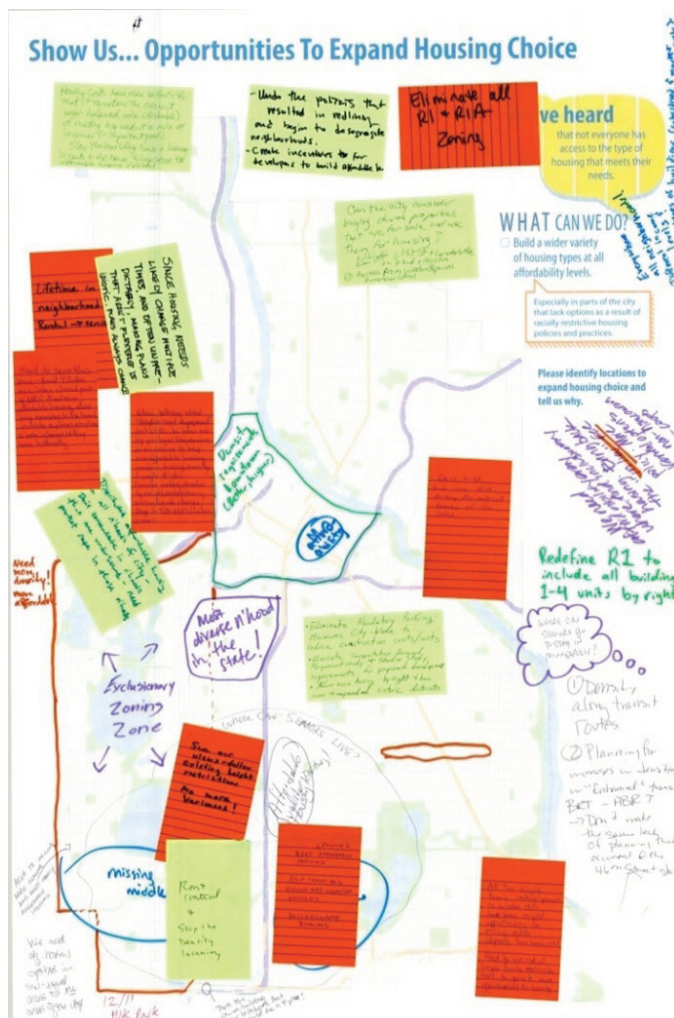


Figure 9. Public feedback from the Minneapolis 2040 planning process on expanding housing choice (City of Minneapolis)

surrounding Hennepin County to identify and map racially restrictive covenants. The planning department formed a partnership with the University of Minnesota's [Mapping Prejudice](#) project to bring their work into the Minneapolis 2040 process (see the sidebar on p. 5).

Also around that time, renewed attention was placed on the practice of redlining when the University of Richmond in Virginia launched [an online portal](#) that displayed high-resolution scans of redlining maps from cities around the country. Planning staff used these two projects as starting points for educating themselves, elected officials, and the public about the nation's and the city's history of racist housing policies, creating the [Planning for Equity](#) website. They didn't know where this would lead, but felt it was an important conversation to have.

Midway through the engagement process, planning staff reported back to the community. They presented a series of simple summary statements, organized by topic, of what they had heard from community members, each followed by data that validated those concerns and some high-level ideas for how the comprehensive plan could help. Community members were asked to rank the effectiveness of each high-level idea on a scale of "it's effective" to "let's rethink," add specific ideas on a map of the city, and provide additional comments on sticky notes or in conversations with staff (Figure 8). These opportunities were available both at in-person events and [online](#), using the same materials.

Surprising sentiments began to emerge from this conversation. Planners started seeing and hearing comments like "eliminate all R1 and R1A [single-family] zoning" and "redefine R1 to include all buildings 1-4 [units] by right" (Figure 9). Residents were asking for more density along transit routes and legalizing missing middle housing, and they were pointing out specific areas of the city that they viewed as having exclusionary zoning—all before staff had proposed any specific policies or drafted any land-use maps. For veteran planners accustomed to NIMBYism as the prevailing outcome of public engagement, this was a moment of awakening and a realization that an opportunity existed to do something bold.

Ending Single-Family-Only Districts

The engagement process had illuminated strong community support for the way planning staff framed the city's housing challenges:

We've heard concerns about the rising cost of housing. Minneapolis is become a less affordable place to live, especially for people of color. Working together, we can change this.

We've heard that not everyone has access to the type of housing that meets their needs. Working together, we can change this.

Planners proposed two simple, high-level statements for how the comprehensive plan could help alleviate these challenges, which also saw high levels of community support.

The Minneapolis 2040 plan translated these statements into land-use policy.

1. Build a wider variety of housing types at all affordability levels, especially in parts of the city that lack options as a result of racially restrictive housing policies and practices.

In recent years, housing development in Minneapolis' city center has followed a familiar pattern. Almost every new building is five or six stories of wood-frame construction, on or near a major street. This product is important to growing the housing supply, and it's important that it continue to happen. But it leaves a substantial gap in the housing types being built. Smaller multifamily buildings are largely missing from the new product mix (hence the name "missing middle"). In Minneapolis, much of this type of housing was constructed in the first half of the twentieth century, but it was no longer being built after a series of downzonings in the second half of the twentieth century.

To address this, Minneapolis 2040 uses the concept of the urban transect to regulate development. Areas closest to the central business district allow a relatively dense mix of buildings in the range of what's already there, so that additional missing middle housing can be constructed where opportunities arise. Farther from downtown, in areas that are primarily single-family homes and that were closed to people of color through racially restrictive housing policies, the plan allows up to three units to be built on a typical 5,000-square-foot lot.

This approach provides more housing choice, both in terms of location and the types of housing that are allowed, and it moves the city at least one step away from the racist origins of single-family zoning. Some level of affordability can be achieved with this approach, as it should cost marginally less per unit to build two or three units in the same space where previously only one was allowed. Planners recognized the limits of this, however, and were prepared to do much more to increase affordability.

2. Increase the supply of housing to help keep all housing more affordable.

While increasing the variety of housing types is important, most new housing units will continue to be in larger multifamily buildings. Planners knew that local government couldn't get in the way of this reality, because constraining the housing supply would worsen the affordability problem—a burden that would fall disproportionately on people of color.

Minneapolis has long supported development of multistory, multifamily housing along streets with frequent bus service and in areas near light rail transit stations. But this support has been in the form of very general guidance in previous comprehensive plans, often leaving it to developers to make the case for rezonings to achieve this ostensible goal. Minneapolis 2040 introduced a new parcel-specific **built form map** to accompany the traditional **future land-use map** included in many comprehensive plans.

While the land-use map guides where residential, commercial, and industrial uses are allowed, the built form map guides the bulk and height of new buildings. Every parcel of land in the

city is assigned one of 14 built form districts, each providing an allowed height range in stories and guidance about appropriate lot sizes. If a developer proposes a building within that range, it will be approved without any rezonings or other discretionary processes as long as it meets all code requirements.

Absent this level of predictability citywide, the unavoidable result is an inequitable approach to deciding where new residents are welcome and an uncertain environment for developers working to keep up with housing demand.

Implementing the Plan

The city council approved the plan on December 7, 2018. Following several months of review by the Metropolitan Council and some technical revisions to the plan text, the city council gave **Minneapolis 2040** a final approval on October 25, 2019.

Quick Interim Fix: Three-Unit Text Amendment

At the same meeting, the council approved an initial **set of changes to the zoning ordinance** to allow three units on properties zoned single family. Both the plan and three-unit zoning amendment became effective on January 1, 2020, making Minneapolis the first major city in the country to eliminate single-family zoning. Right out of the gate, the city had implemented a substantial part of the agreed-upon approach to increase housing choice and made a notable move away from the racist origins of single-family zoning.

Full Implementation: Built Form Overlay Districts

Following that milestone, planning staff immediately got to work on implementing the full **built form map** from Minneapolis 2040. This meant adding overlay zoning districts citywide to match the comprehensive plan map and writing height, bulk, setback, and other regulations to match the policy intent for each district.

Planning staff also developed a new system for considering requests to increase building height and bulk beyond the range of each district. Most districts in the built form map include language opening the door to height increases if development proposals go above and beyond to advance comprehensive plan goals. The regulatory approach was to introduce a menu of floor area ratio and height premiums for elements such as affordable housing, providing a childcare center or a grocery store, or including a through-block pedestrian connection. Importantly, these premiums are processed administratively.

The city council approved the new built form overlay districts and **associated code text** in December 2020, and they have been in effect since January 1, 2021. The next major step will be to implement the Minneapolis 2040 future land-use map, replacing the current zoning districts (which essentially date back to 1963) with new districts that match the comprehensive plan.

When that process is complete, Minneapolis will have rewritten most of its zoning code in a phased approach to implement Minneapolis 2040. Most importantly, all development that is consistent with the comprehensive plan will be allowed as of right, with no special permissions needed.

Zoning Reform Gaining Momentum

Minneapolis isn't alone in enacting policy and regulatory reform related to single-family zoning. Following are some other examples.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Over ten years ago, Grand Rapids began allowing small-scale multifamily housing as a special use in its lowest-density residential district. Recent ordinance amendments allow duplexes as of right on corner lots and rowhouse fourplexes within 500 feet of a mixed-use commercial district.

State of Oregon: The Oregon Legislature passed [House Bill 2001](#) in 2019, requiring all cities with more than 10,000 people to allow duplexes on all residential land, with a wider variety of missing middle housing for cities with a population of over 25,000 as well as in all of the Portland metro area.

Portland, Oregon: Before the state legislation in Oregon (and before Minneapolis enacted its changes), Portland was busy preparing its own policy and ordinance changes to allow more missing middle housing types on residentially zoned land. The [2020 action](#) by the Portland City Council goes beyond the new state law, allowing four units just about everywhere and up to six if affordability requirements are met.

Sacramento and Berkeley, California: The city councils in [Sacramento](#) and [Berkeley](#) have taken votes stating their intent to eliminate single-family zoning in their general plans, both of which are currently being updated. This comes as attempts at a statewide approach have so far not gained approval of the legislature.

One Strategy Isn't Enough: Inclusionary Zoning and Other Efforts

To help ensure that housing affordability—and by extension racial disparities—do not get worse, housing construction must be allowed to keep up with demand and a range of housing types must be allowed throughout the city. That's the approach of the Minneapolis 2040 built form map. But simply allowing housing to be built is not a complete or sufficient strategy for affordability. The regulatory approach must be supplemented with proactive strategies and investments for alleviating the cost burden that so many residents are experiencing.

On the same day that Minneapolis 2040 and the zoning change allowing three units went into effect, so did a [new inclusionary zoning ordinance](#). The ordinance applies to all new multifamily development projects of 20 units or more and requires a percentage of the units to be affordable. It offers developers a menu of options for the number of affordable units and the level of affordability, some of which include city subsidy. Options for alternative compliance include an in-lieu fee or providing affordable units offsite.

While some cities have experienced a slowdown in residential development after implementing inclusionary zoning, that does not seem to be the case in Minneapolis. In 2020, the first year of implementation, the city approved over 6,000 new units of housing.

This new strategy joins a long list of other new and long-standing housing strategies, including an [affordable housing trust fund](#), a [naturally occurring affordable housing \(NOAH\) preservation fund](#), [homebuyer down payment assistance](#), and a [pilot program](#) to build affordable missing middle housing on vacant city-owned lots, to name a few.

Measuring Progress

There are a lot of eyes on the degree to which policy and regulatory change associated with Minneapolis 2040 will move the

needle on housing affordability and racial disparities, as well as the magnitude of change that will take place in terms of real estate development.

During the planning process, many people were concerned about the degree of change that would be seen in areas dominated by single-family homes. At the time, planners expected the rate of change to be incremental. This has proven to be the case after the first year of implementation. In 2020, the city approved building permits for 34 duplexes and nine triplexes (both conversions and new construction). Some of these were likely in places where such development would have been allowed prior to eliminating single-family zoning. In contrast, 6,000 or so units were approved in larger multifamily buildings during the same period. Though some may find comfort in the low number of new two- and three-unit buildings, others are disappointed.

The city council [action](#) approving Minneapolis 2040 included a direction to staff that the zoning ordinance limit the bulk and height of duplexes and triplexes in the same manner as single-family homes. This means a maximum height of 2.5 stories and a maximum FAR of 0.5. Basements and half-stories don't count toward FAR in the Minneapolis zoning code, so 4,375 square feet of habitable space is allowed on a typical 5,000-square-foot lot. Planning staff are optimistic that triplexes with sufficient unit sizes will be feasible under these regulations. Housing advocates are skeptical, especially after seeing Portland adopt more generous rules (see the sidebar above). Planners will be watching closely, poised to propose changes if these regulations prove to be a barrier.

Planning staff is also working in partnership with the Minneapolis branch of the Federal Reserve to track the housing outcomes of Minneapolis 2040 more broadly. Over the next 10 years, the Fed will be tracking a series of indicators to measure the degree to which the city is successful in achieving the stated housing goal of the plan: "In 2040, all

Minneapolis residents will be able to afford and access quality housing throughout the city.” The analysis will include a modeled estimate of what would have happened without the policy changes and will compare that trend line to what actually happens.

Action Steps for Planners

Planners can learn from the experience of Minneapolis enacting land-use policy and regulatory change in response to racial disparities. While this work in Minneapolis was done in the context of a multiyear comprehensive planning process, the following action steps can be adapted to any planning effort aimed at advancing racial equity.

Do the Research

Telling the story of racist housing policies and making the connection between those policies and the current racial disparities in Minneapolis was key to arriving at new methods for tackling those disparities. Planners in other communities can find historic redlining maps from around the country on the [Mapping Inequality](#) website. Researching the history of local zoning regulations may reveal a similar story to Minneapolis. Planners can then make it relevant to the issues facing their communities today, using census and other data to illustrate the need for policy change.

Learn to Talk About Race

Bringing racial equity into plans and planning processes means talking a lot about race. That can be uncomfortable. In Minneapolis, planners were fortunate to have a lot of support from the planning department to become more comfortable talking about race and developing a toolkit and vocabulary. Providing outside training opportunities for staff can make a big difference. Sessions from the YWCA and the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#) were particularly helpful.

Set Goals

Setting clear goals was critical to success in moving a bold plan forward. Equally critical was city council adoption of those goals early in the process, which required showing elected officials through documentation of the engagement process that the goals matched what the public was asking for. Keeping the council engaged and active in the process throughout three years of planning was key in getting the plan approved.

Just as important as what the goals say about the future of the city is what the goals *don't* say. Absent from the goals are amorphous terms like “livability” or “neighborhood character” that are hard to pin down and are often used to preserve the status quo.

Showing the direct connection between the goals and the proposed plan policies was important when writing and releasing the draft plan. Toward that end, staff designed an interactive website that allowed users to navigate the plan content either by goal or by topic. This approach worked well for some but others preferred a linear document, so staff prepared a PDF to supplement the website.

Use Innovative Community Engagement Methods

Targeting engagement to traditionally underrepresented communities and employing fun and innovative methods provides a platform for people to make their voices heard. Artists were key to making this work in Minneapolis. As noted earlier in the article, memorable examples of artist-led engagement included a mobile engagement tricycle focused on imagining an equitable future and a mock TV show that involved participants in a discussion about the year 2040. More tools are documented in the [Planning Process](#) and [Project Archive](#) sections of the Minneapolis 2040 website. Artists in other communities will have other great ideas.

Reading through the thousands of comments the city received throughout the process (and staff did read everything!) illuminated the perspectives of people experiencing housing insecurity, having difficulty finding a job that pays a living wage, or worrying about the future of the planet. Also evident was the work of organized advocacy groups wanting to see the plan goals achieved and pushing the city to do more. Designing a process that lifted up their voices was critical to the plan's success.

Communicate Clearly and Carefully

It can be extremely helpful to make use of communications professionals at critical points in the process. Planning staff made the mistake of not doing so at first. Pride in the engagement work obscured the fact that most people in the city still knew little to nothing about the process. A few days prior to release of the draft plan, local media reported on the proposal to eliminate single family zoning without any of the important context behind it. The plan would have been controversial regardless, but that unplanned leak made it even more difficult to properly frame the proposed policy changes. Having a communications strategy in addition to an engagement plan would likely have made a big difference.

Make the Plan Specific and Accountable

Along with eliminating single-family zoning, what Minneapolis 2040 does differently from other comprehensive plans is provide specific development guidance for every parcel in the city, with clear lines drawn between the mapping approach and the plan goals. This level of specificity is often left to neighborhood- or corridor-level planning, which often leads to inequitable outcomes across geographies. Taking a citywide approach ensures accountability to shared goals and increases the likelihood of equitable development.

Conclusion

Environmental sustainability has been the main thrust of progressive land-use planning approaches in the last decade or two, but more and more planners are working to add racial equity as a lens to apply to their work. A key challenge for the profession, however, is to move beyond racial equity as merely a lens through which to view individual decisions and elevate it to a primary driver for systemic planning. That means using the full toolbox available to planners to proactively dismantle institutional racism.

The land-use approach that planners took in Minneapolis is just one small step in advancing this work as it relates to housing. This excerpt from Minneapolis 2040 summarizes what is required of us to achieve racial equity:

To achieve the goal of eliminating disparities, the City of Minneapolis will work to undo the legacy that remains from racially discriminatory housing policies by increasing access to opportunity through a greater diversity of housing types, especially in areas that lack housing options as a result of discriminatory housing policy. The City will invest in education, skills training, small business support and other support systems to help residents access opportunities to gain and retain well-paying employment that allows them to grow as individuals. Additionally, the City will lead by example, hiring and training a diverse workforce, as well as promoting these practices through its contracts, vendors and other procurement and partnership opportunities.

Achieving this goal will mean directing City and other resources—dollars for transit, for affordable housing and business development, for education, and for health and safety programs—to the geographic areas most in need, while providing economic and housing opportunities for all Minneapolis residents. Accomplishing this will require tracking progress and outcomes; and it will require engaging with the community, especially with communities of color, around City actions.

We have a lot more to do.

About the Author

Paul Mogush, AICP, is the manager of community planning at the City of Minneapolis, where he has worked as a planner for 15 years. The community planning team led the development of Minneapolis 2040, the city's progressive comprehensive plan that focuses on racial equity, housing affordability, and climate change. In addition to his work at the city, he has been active with the Minnesota chapter of the American Planning Association and the Minnesota Design Team. He holds a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Minnesota.

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