

Seattle 2035 Equity Analysis



Overview

The City of Seattle is updating its Comprehensive Plan to guide how the City will grow and what kind of city we want to be. The City has released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluating four growth alternatives.

How can we grow while making sure everyone has what they need to succeed and thrive?

Throughout Seattle's history, some populations and neighborhoods have prospered at the expense of others as a result of racially discriminatory public policies. While social equity has been a core value of the Comprehensive Plan since its adoption in 1994, the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) did not exist until 2005.

We have prepared an Equity Analysis to identify how growth may benefit or burden marginalized populations. This analysis will inform potential strategies to lessen impacts and maximize opportunity for marginalized populations.

How did we conduct the Equity Analysis?

The analysis evaluated existing conditions, analyzed potential impacts of each alternative, and identified solutions with an eye toward the following questions:

- Are different distributions of growth more or less likely to displace marginalized populations and/or affect their access to opportunity?
- What strategies and investments are necessary to address the impacts of growth and maximize opportunities for equitable development?

Key Terms

Marginalized populations:

Low-income people, people of color, and English language learners

Access to opportunity:

The services, amenities, and other key determinants of social, economic, and physical well-being

Displacement:

The involuntary relocation of marginalized populations from their current neighborhood

Equitable development:

Public and private neighborhood investments, programs, and policies to meet the needs of marginalized populations and reduce disparities

Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI):

Seattle's effort to overcome institutional racism and eliminate racial disparities



Existing Conditions: Is Seattle Equitable Today?

We examined demographic, economic, and physical factors to understand current displacement risk and access to opportunity. The findings are expressed as the **Displacement Risk Index** and the **Access to Opportunity Index**. They show that disparities exist, leaving many marginalized populations at risk of displacement and without the means to succeed and thrive in life.

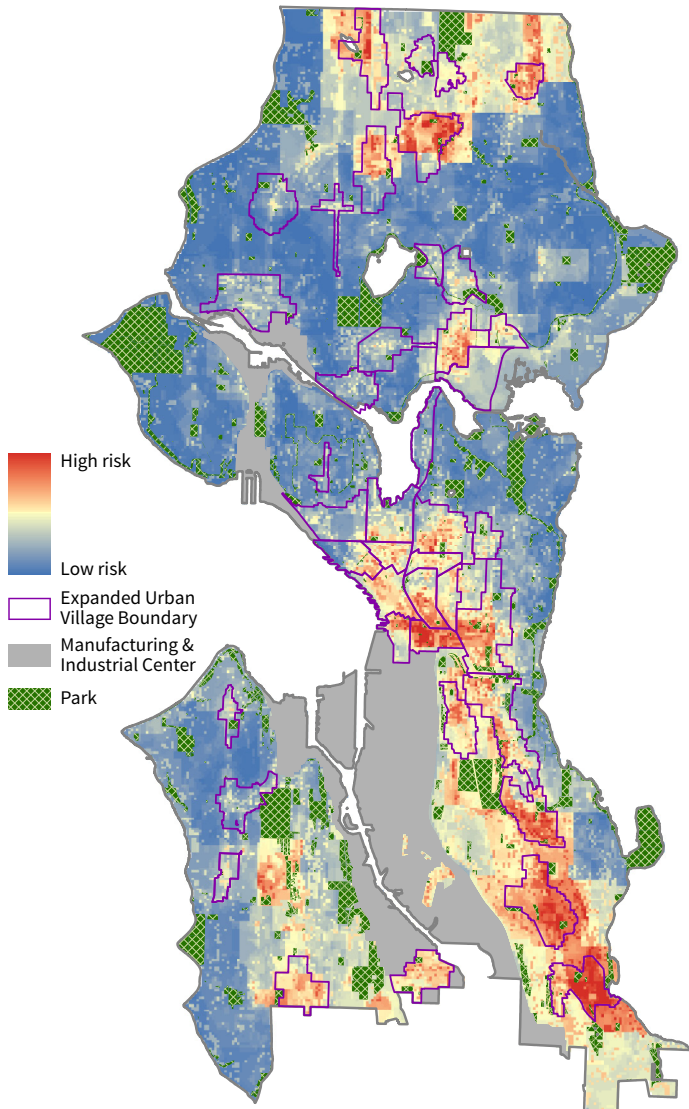
What is the Displacement Risk Index?

The Displacement Risk Index includes factors that increase the risk of marginalized populations being displaced.

What were the findings?

Displacement risk is greatest in neighborhoods that have historically been home to communities of color.

Displacement Risk Index



Criteria:

- Communities of color
- Low English-speaking ability
- Low educational attainment
- Renter households
- Housing cost-burdened households
- Low household income
- Access to frequent bus service
- Access to light rail / streetcar
- Proximity to core businesses
- Proximity to school, park, community center, or library
- Proximity to higher-income neighborhood
- Travel time to regional job center
- Development capacity
- Below-average median rent

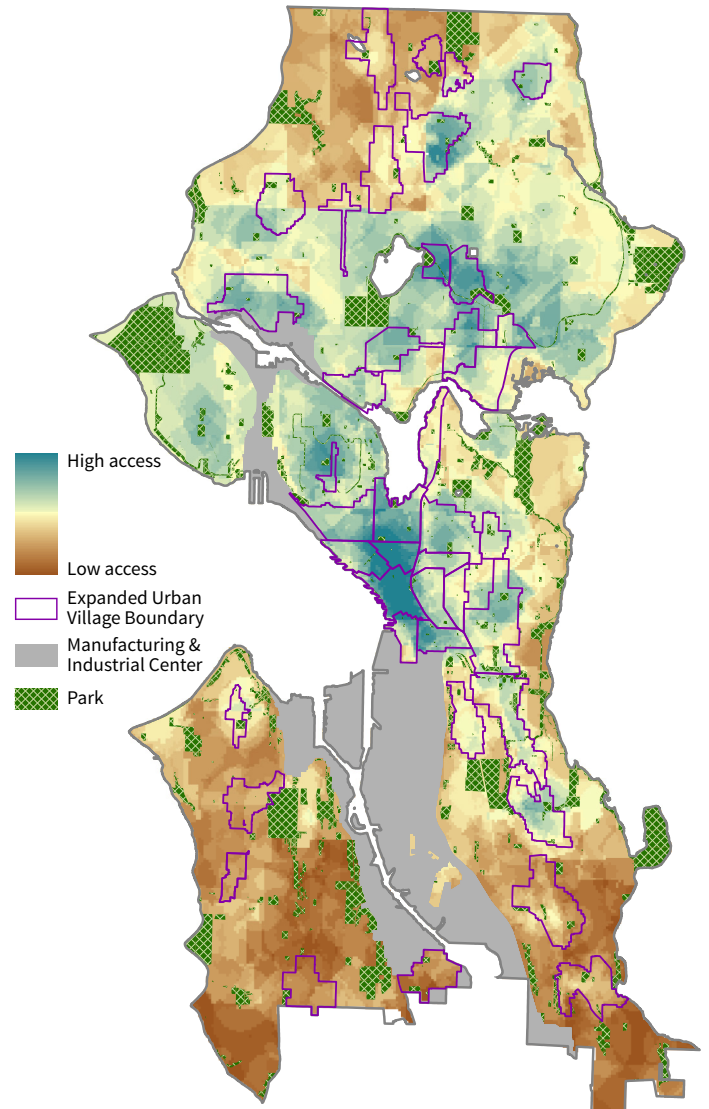
What is the Access to Opportunity Index?

The Access to Opportunity Index includes factors that contribute to social, economic, and physical well-being.

What were the findings?

Access to opportunity for marginalized populations is not equitably distributed.

Access to Opportunity Index



Criteria:

- High-performing elementary and middle schools
- Above-average high school graduation rate
- Number of jobs within two-mile radius
- Increase in median home value
- Access to frequent bus service
- Access to light rail / streetcar
- Proximity to a library
- Proximity to a community center
- Proximity to a park
- Proximity to a public health facility
- Access to fresh produce

How can displacement risk and access to opportunity inform our growth strategy?

Seattle's Urban Villages and Urban Centers fall into four categories based on their displacement risk and access to opportunity.

High displacement risk Low access to opportunity

- Displacement risk is high and requires mitigation to ensure new growth benefits marginalized populations as these areas change.
- Growth can bring new services and amenities and increase access to opportunity.

Representative areas:

Bitter Lake, Othello, Rainer Beach, South Park, Westwood-Highland Park

Potential equitable development strategies:



High displacement risk High access to opportunity

- New development could cause displacement if not coupled with public sector investment to stabilize existing communities.
- High demand areas with available amenities and opportunities.

Representative areas:

Columbia City, Downtown, First Hill-Capitol Hill, North Beacon Hill, Northgate, North Rainier, University District, 23rd & Union-Jackson

Potential equitable development strategies:



Low displacement risk Low access to opportunity

- These areas could absorb growth with minimal displacement, but access to opportunity is low.
- Each area varies in the gaps in services and amenities that will increase access to opportunity.

Representative areas:

Admiral, Aurora-Licton Springs, Morgan Junction, West Seattle Junction, 130th & I-5

Potential equitable development strategies:



Low displacement risk High access to opportunity

- These areas are in high demand and have fewer marginalized populations and expensive housing.
- Limited capacity for growth reduces the possibility for more choices for marginalized populations to live in these high-opportunity areas.

Representative areas:

Ballard, Crown Hill, Eastlake, Fremont, Green Lake, Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, Madison-Miller, Roosevelt, South Lake Union, Upper Queen Anne, Uptown, Wallingford

Potential equitable development strategies:



What is Equitable Development?

Equitable development is an approach to creating healthy, vibrant communities and includes the investments, programs, and policies that meet the needs of marginalized populations and reduce disparities.

To achieve racial and social equity, we need **strong communities and strong people**. This means investing in strategies that build community stability and resilience in the face of displacement pressure and great neighborhoods throughout the city with equitable access for all.

A vision for an equitable Seattle

Seattle will be a diverse city where all people are able to achieve their full potential regardless of race or means. Seattle's neighborhoods will be diverse and will include the community anchors, supports, goods, services, and amenities people need to lead healthy lives and flourish.

Here's what we need to do to ensure new growth builds strong communities and strong people:



Advance economic mobility and opportunity

Promote economic opportunities for marginalized populations and enhance community anchors. Provide access to quality education, training, and living-wage jobs.



Prevent residential, commercial and cultural displacement

Enact policies and programs that allow marginalized populations, businesses, and community organizations the ability to stay in their community.



Build on local cultural assets

Respect local community character, cultural diversity, and values. Preserve and strengthen cultural communities.



Promote transportation and connectivity

Prioritize investment in effective and affordable transportation that supports transit-dependent communities.



Develop healthy and safe neighborhoods for everyone

Create neighborhoods that enhance community health through access to public amenities, healthy food, and safe environments, for everyone.



Equitable access to all neighborhoods

Leverage private development to fill gaps in amenities and expand the supply and variety of housing and employment choices.

Analysis of Growth Alternatives

The four growth alternatives differ in the distribution of growth throughout the city. Based on existing conditions, we analyzed each alternative based on its potential to displace marginalized populations and expand their access to opportunity.

More growth where displacement risk is high requires more public investment so that marginalized populations are not displaced. In low-risk, high-opportunity areas, more growth can leverage private development to increase access to opportunity for marginalized populations.

The table below summarizes the potential impacts of each growth alternative on displacement risk and access to opportunity.

Residential growth relative to number of existing housing units:



Key findings across all alternatives

- Access to opportunity for marginalized populations is unevenly distributed now and will continue to be limited under any alternative.
- Displacement risk is high now and will remain an issue under any alternative.
- The alternatives differ in the level of growth projected in areas where displacement risk is high.
- Alternatives 3 and 4 would require the greatest level of public investment to mitigate displacement.

Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Continue Current Growth Trends 	Guide Growth to Urban Centers 	Guide Growth to Urban Villages Near Light Rail 	Guide Growth to Urban Villages Near Transit
What level of public investment is necessary for marginalized populations to benefit from growth without displacement?			
Required public investment is in the middle compared to other alternatives because growth is more evenly distributed in both high- and low-displacement risk urban villages.	Potentially lower levels of investment needed because less growth is allocated in high-displacement risk areas. However, more growth would be in expensive high-rise construction.	Highest level of growth in high-displacement risk areas like Rainier Beach, Othello, and North Beacon Hill, requiring the greatest degree of anti-displacement mitigation.	Substantial anti-displacement investments required in the southeast Seattle urban villages with light rail stations where displacement risk is high.
How much does the alternative expand access to opportunity for marginalized populations?			
Allocates significant growth to a few urban villages where displacement risk is low and access to opportunity is high.	Does the least to expand access for marginalized populations because less growth is allocated to areas with high opportunity and low displacement risk.	Potential to expand access to opportunity in some, but not most, areas with low displacement risk and high access to opportunity.	Greater potential to grow in areas with high access to opportunity than Alternative 3, but limited potential to expand access in other high-access urban villages.

For more information

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