



Water Forward 2024

Equity Grounding December 12, 2022

Reflection

What are the values of the Water Forward Task Force?

What are the realities you see?



The History of the Equity Office

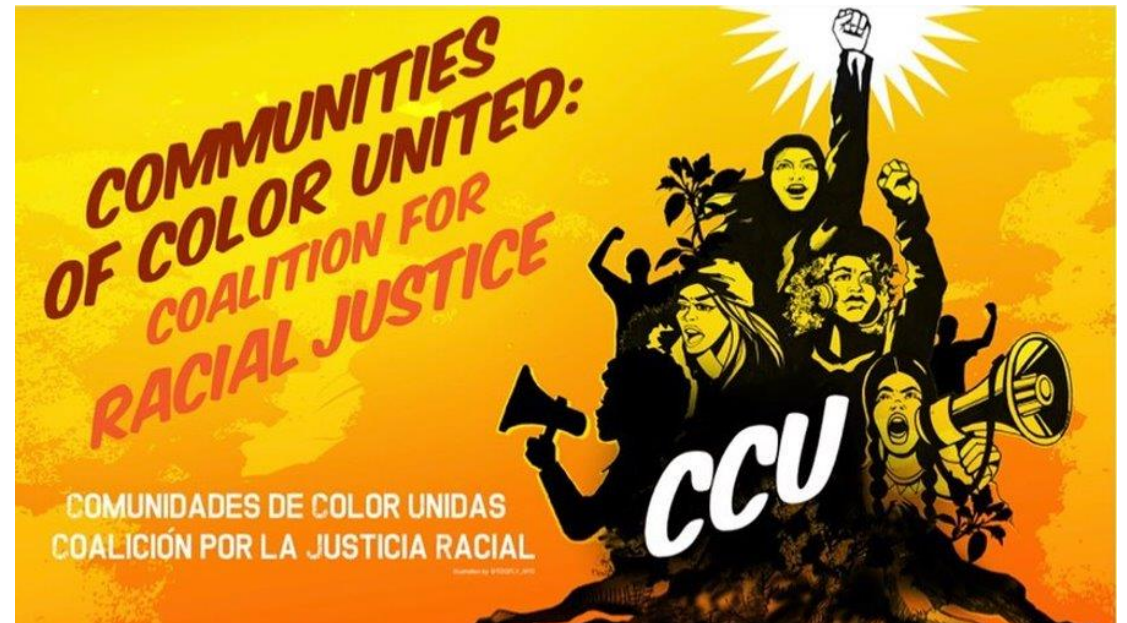


2015 Headlines Capture Drive for Community Organizing

Austin is the best place to live in the nation according to *U.S. News and World Report*

&

One of the most economically segregated cities in the U.S. according to the *Martin Prosperity Institute*



And Led To...

- 2015: City Council resolution creating Equity Office to administer Equity Assessment
- 2016: Chief Equity Officer Brion Oaks hired in October after national search
- Equity Assessment tool co-created with community members, 900+ hours of volunteer time

RESOLUTION NO. 20150507-027

WHEREAS, a recent study from the Martin Prosperity Institute determined that Austin is the most economically segregated city in the country, and also that Austin ranked 4th nationally for occupational segregation and 5th nationally for educational segregation; and

WHEREAS, the first Regional Affordability Committee included a presentation from the City Demographer (Presentation) stated that the reduction in the local poverty rate from 20.3 percent in 2012 to 17.8 percent in 2013 was at least partially attributable to the displacement of low-income residents, shown by increases in poverty rates in surrounding counties such as Bastrop, which saw an increase from 10 percent to 22 percent over the same period of time; and

WHEREAS, the Presentation included 2013 data from the American Community Survey produced by the United States Census Bureau that shows that 5.4 % of non-Hispanic white children under the age of 5 in the City of Austin were living at or below the federal poverty threshold, where 51.8% of African-American children and 33.0% of Hispanic children in the same age group are living at or below the federal poverty threshold; and



City Equity Definition

Racial equity is the condition when race no longer predicts a person's quality of life outcomes in our community.

The City recognizes race is the primary determinant of social equity, therefore we begin the journey toward social equity with this definition.

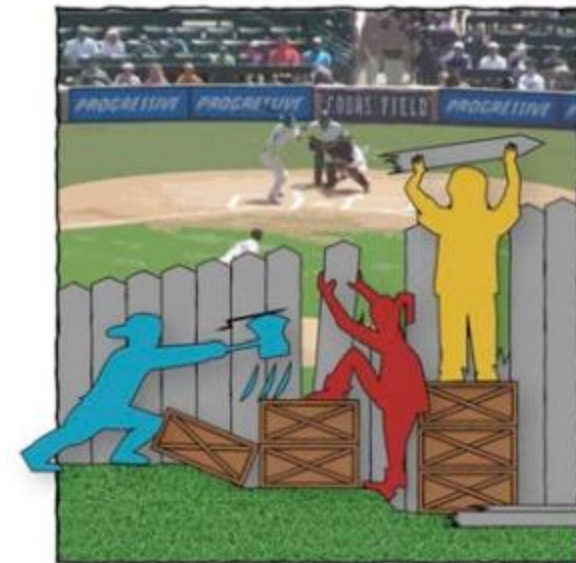
The City of Austin recognizes that alleviation of historical and structural disparities are won by critically transforming institutions and creating a culture of equity.



EQUALITY



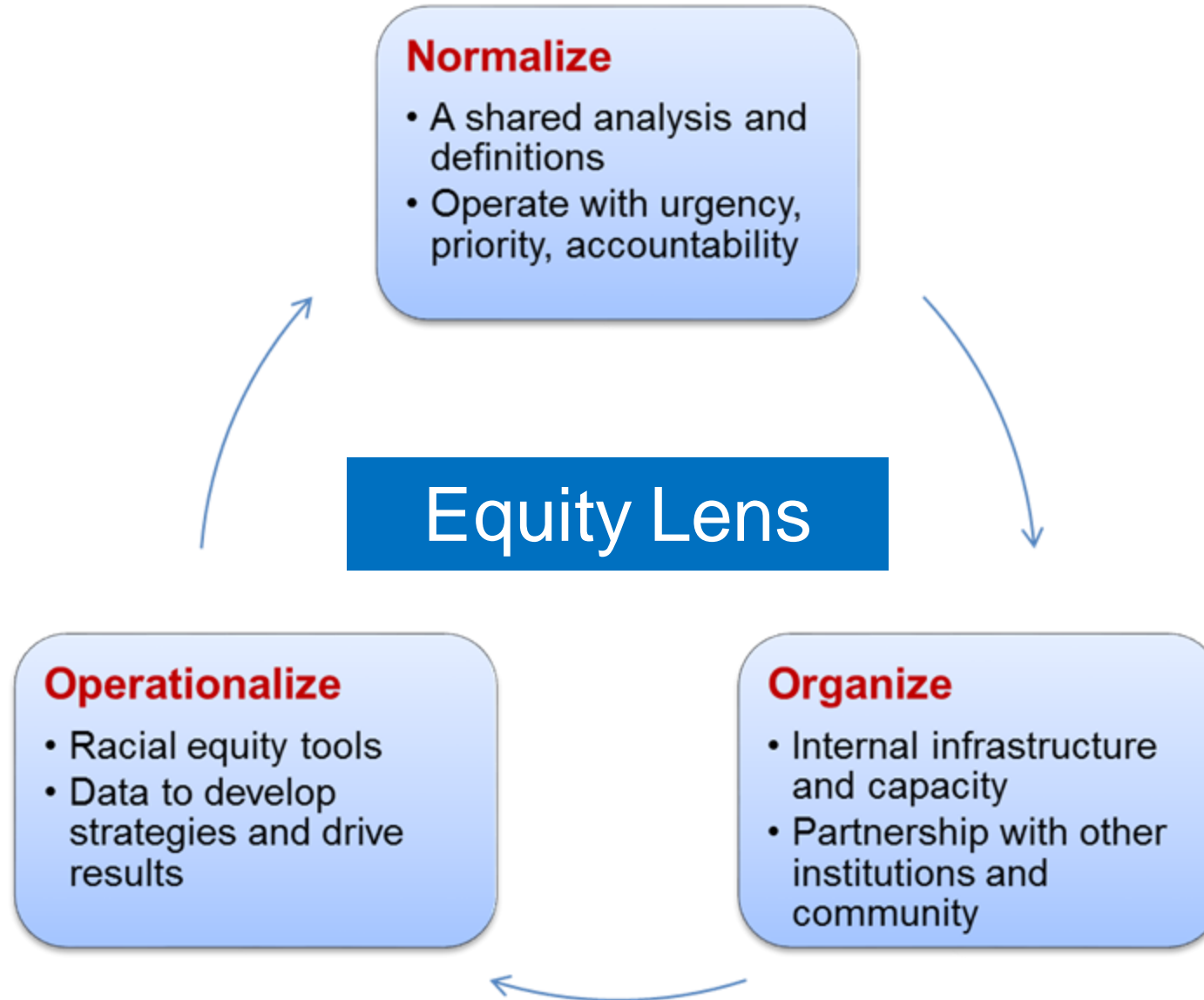
EQUITY



Justice



A Framework for Equity

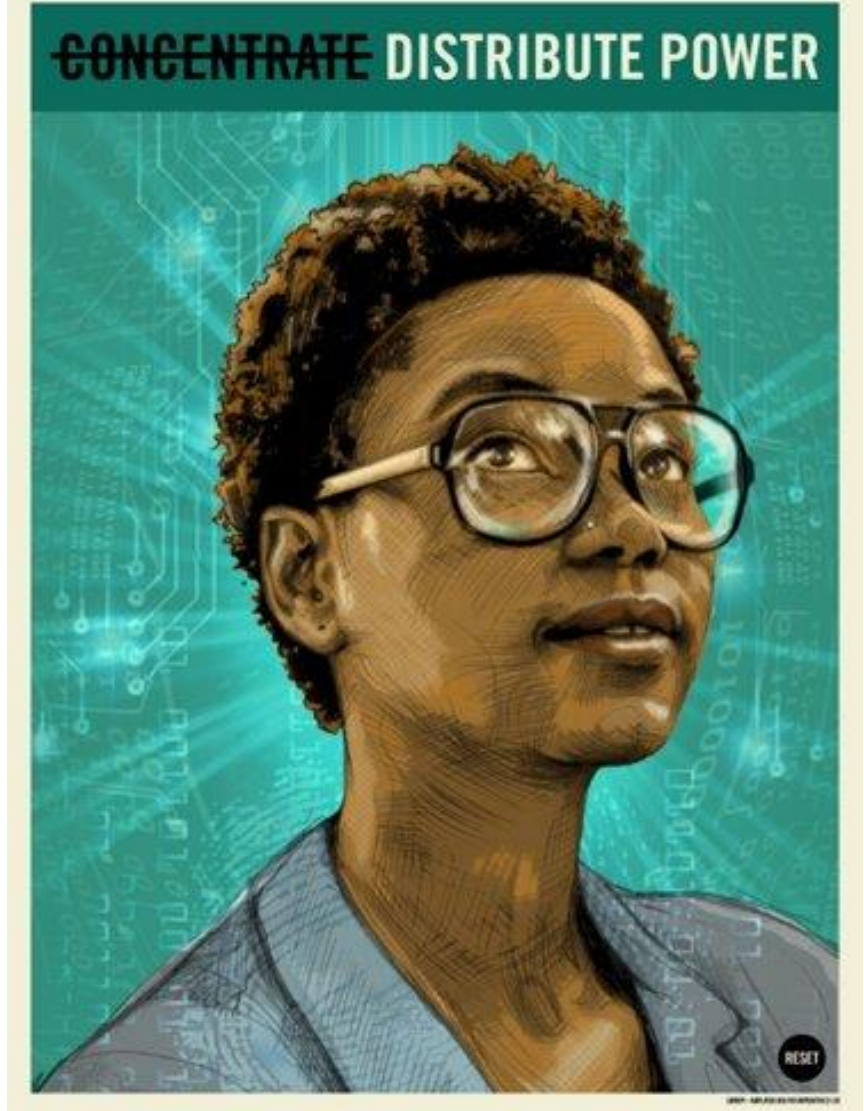


Thinking & Talking about Power

Power is

1. possession of control, authority, or influence over others.
2. the ability to act or produce an effect - "It's in your power to change things".
3. the right to do something.
4. physical might

SYSTEMIC POWER is the legitimate/legal ability to access and control those institutions sanctioned by the state.



Our Disparities, Our Gaps



Map of Poverty

Figure 17. Median Income in Austin by Census Tract

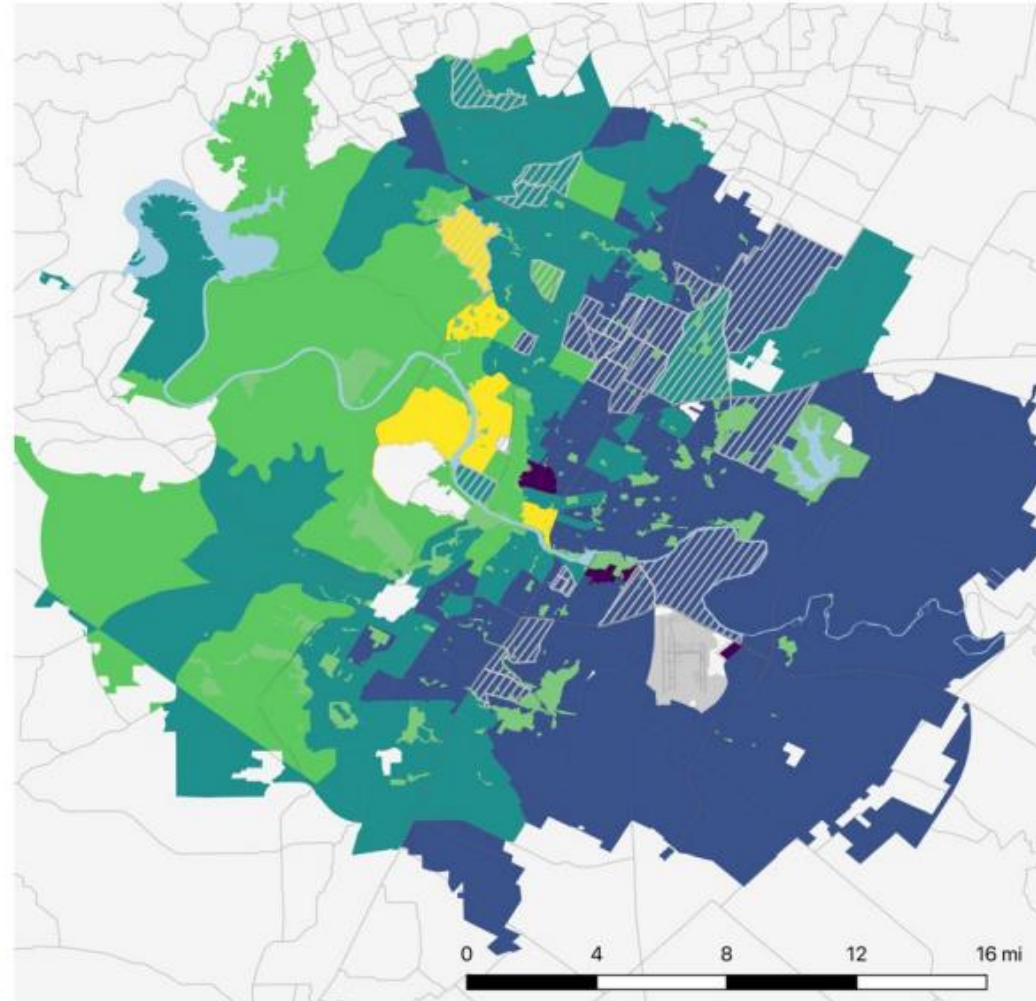
Median Income,
by Census Tract

Austin, Texas

Percent foreign born
30% - 49%

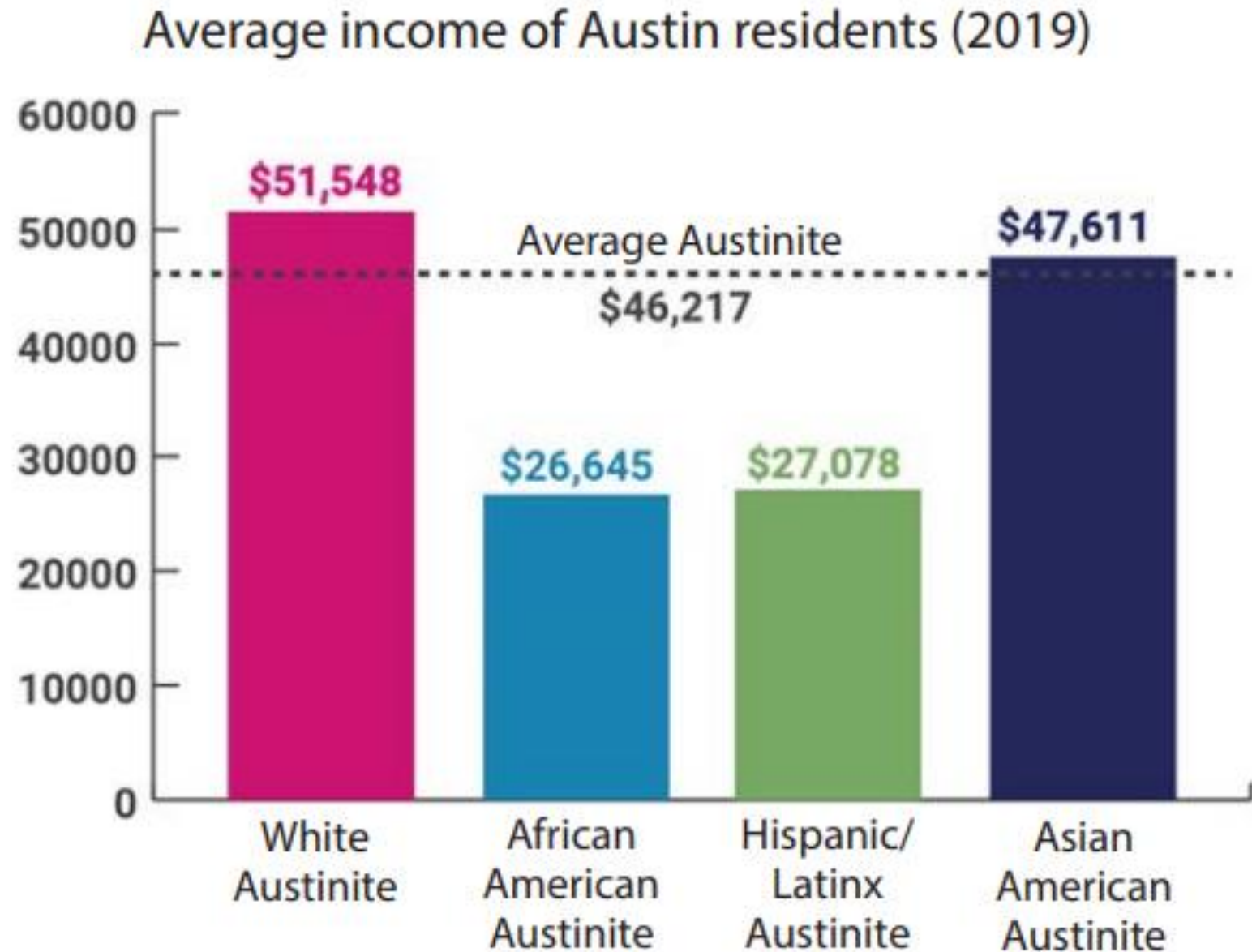
Median income,
in dollars

- <\$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$40,000
- \$40,000 - \$60,000
- \$60,000 - \$80,000
- \$80,000 - \$90,194



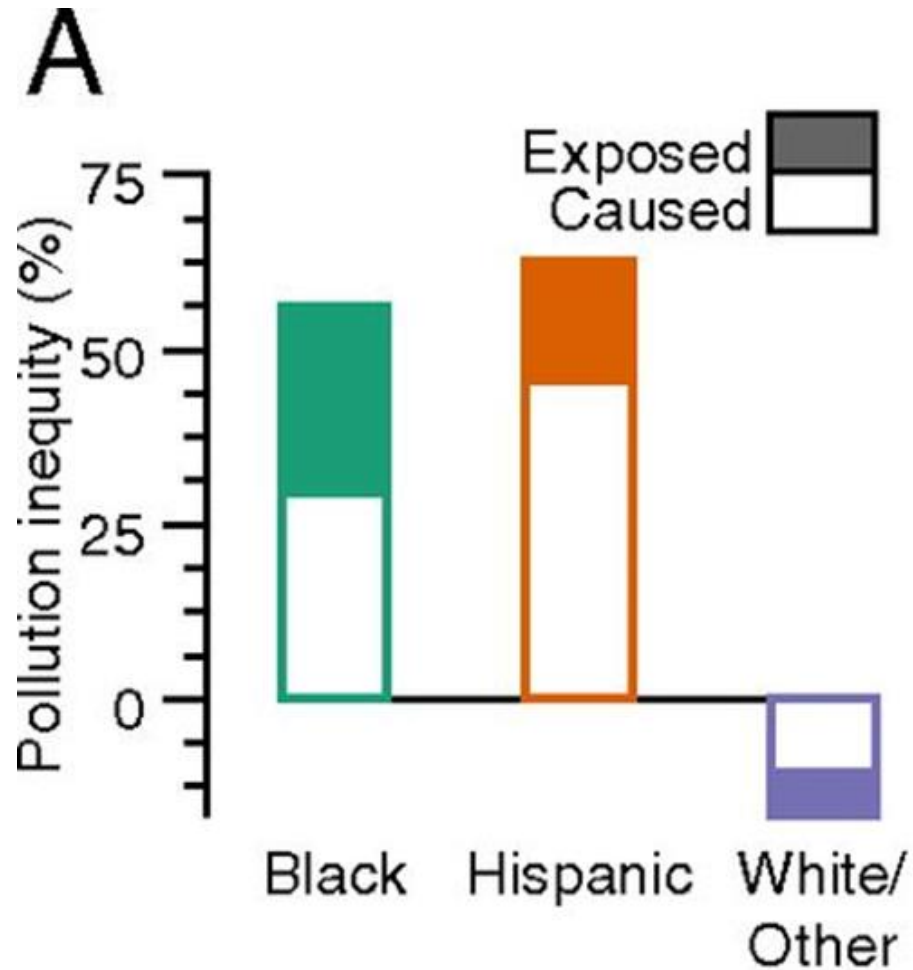
Source: ACS 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates.

Racial Wealth Gap



American Community Survey data
(2019) created by City staff

Who Pollutes, Who is Impacted?



2019 Academy of the Sciences study found while white Americans are majority polluters, Black & Latinx people are impacted by...

- increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- respiratory illness
- diabetes
- birth defects

What do you know about Austin's racial history?





Media ▾

Resources ▾



[Support Us](#)



Languages

Search your address, or toggle switches above to add shapes. Click around! **Think critically about this map.**

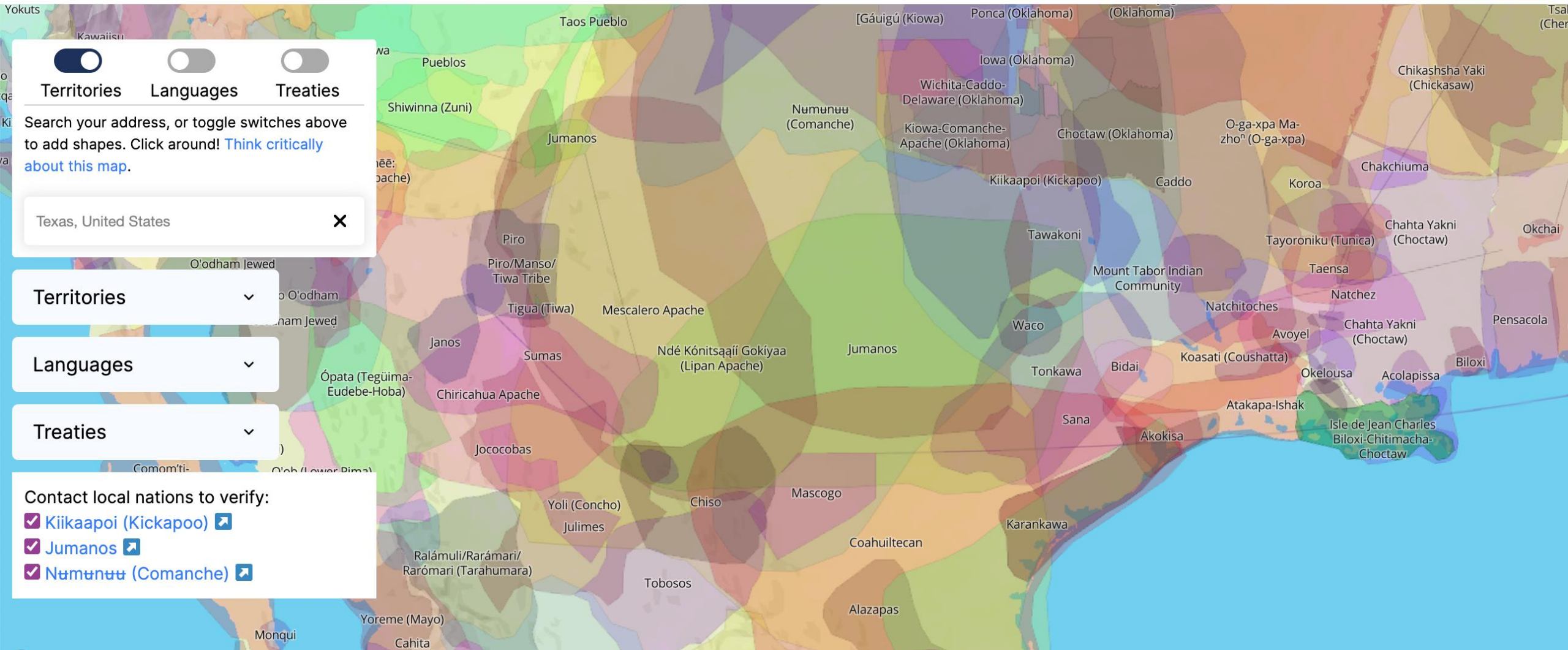
X

▼

✓ Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) ↗

 Jumanos 

✓ Numuntu (Comanche) ↗



Indigenous Peoples in Texas

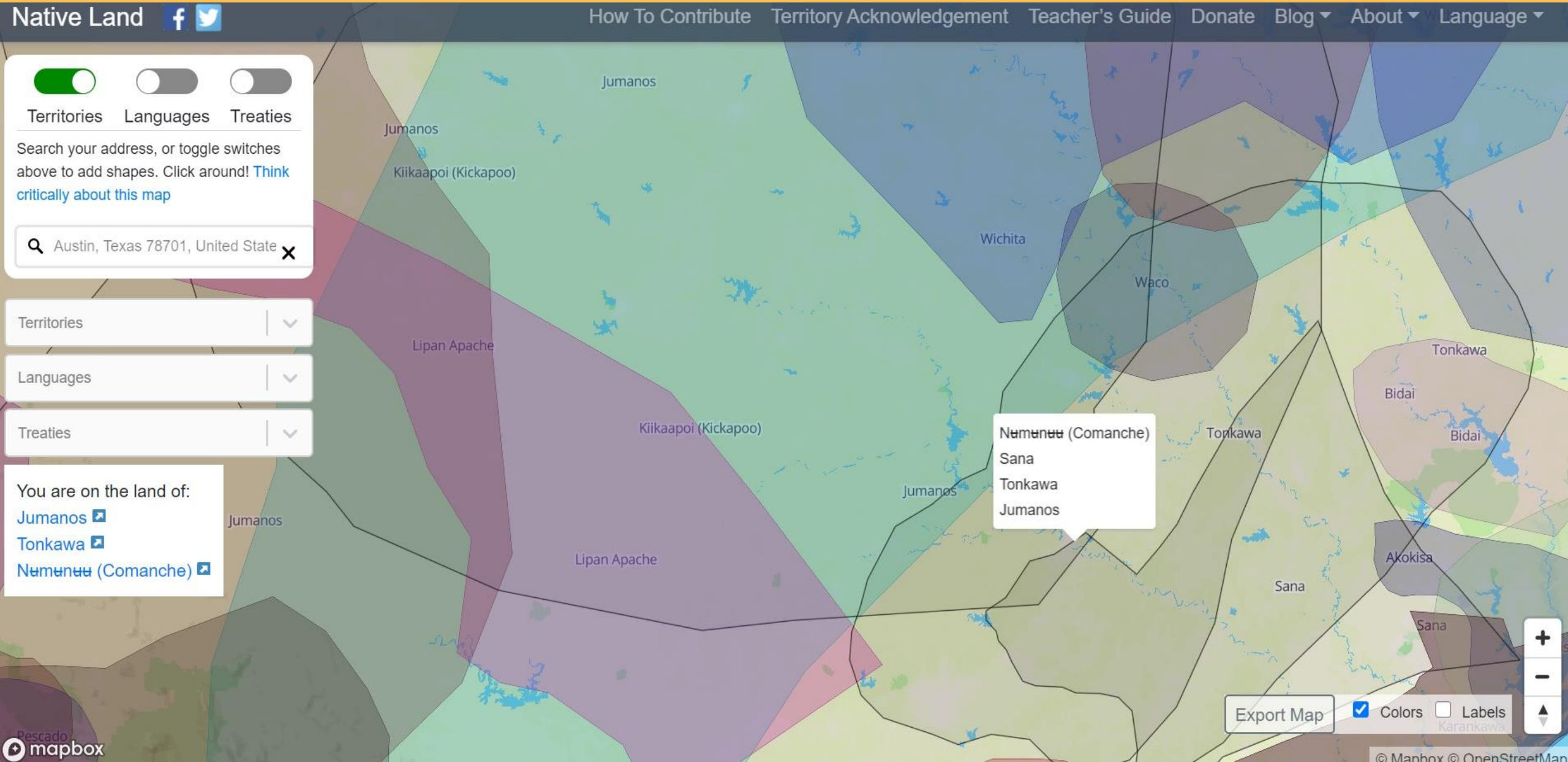
Reservations in Texas



Indigenous Peoples in Texas



Indigenous Peoples in Austin



1928 Plan

“There has been considerable talk in Austin, as well as other cities, in regard to the race segregation problem. This problem cannot be solved legally under any zoning law known to us at present. Practically all attempts of such have been unconstitutional.” pg. 66

6
tening Waller Creek through this area, a wonderful neighborhood play ground site can be claimed from property which is now very low in value and, in its present condition, is a menace to health of the neighborhood. These two incidents are cited as examples of which it is easily possible to provide the necessary land for the recommended neighborhood play grounds.

The high school located at Twelfth and Rio Grande Streets, we have pointed out heretofore, has a nucleus for a play-field just west of the school grounds. We have already recommended in this report that this play-field be enlarged and developed to provide for a modern play-field. We also recommend that other play-fields be established in various parts of the city. If it is the intention of the school board to provide additional high schools, such play-fields should preferably be located at, or adjacent to, these high schools.

There has been considerable talk in Austin, as well as other cities, in regard to the race segregation problem. This problem cannot be solved legally under any zoning law known to us at present. Practically all attempts of such have been proven unconstitutional.

In our studies in Austin we have found that the negroes are present in small numbers, in practically all sections of the city, excepting the area just east of East Avenue and south of the City Cemetery. This area seems to be all negro population. It is our recommendation that the nearest approach to the solution of the race segregation problem will be the recommendation of this district as



Housing Act of 1937

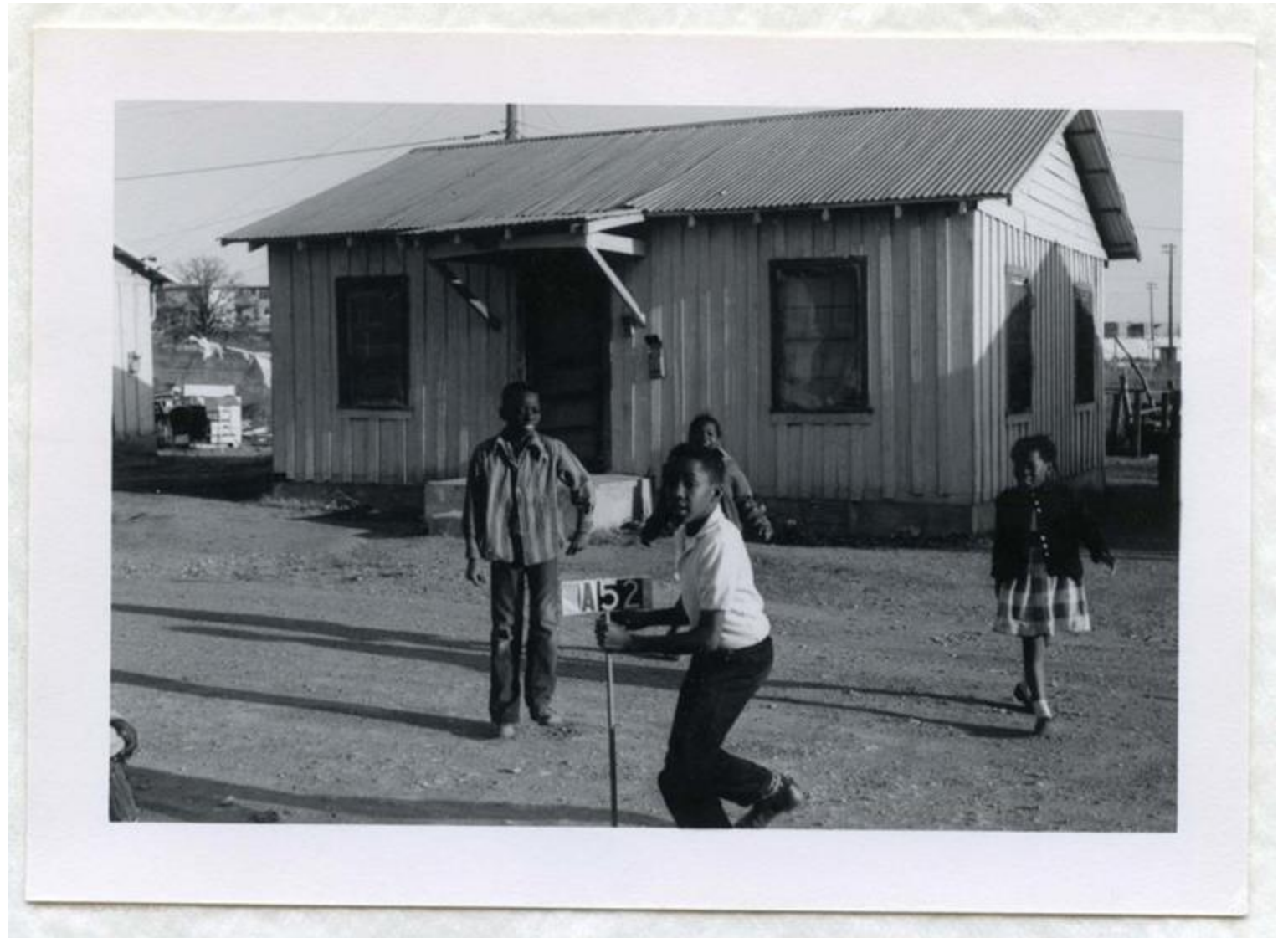
1930s: City of Austin built Rosewood Courts through eminent domain, destroying Emancipation Park, to the dismay of East Austin residents.



Urban Renewal/Removal

Who benefited from urban renewal projects?

How does “urban redevelopment” continue to impact communities of color?

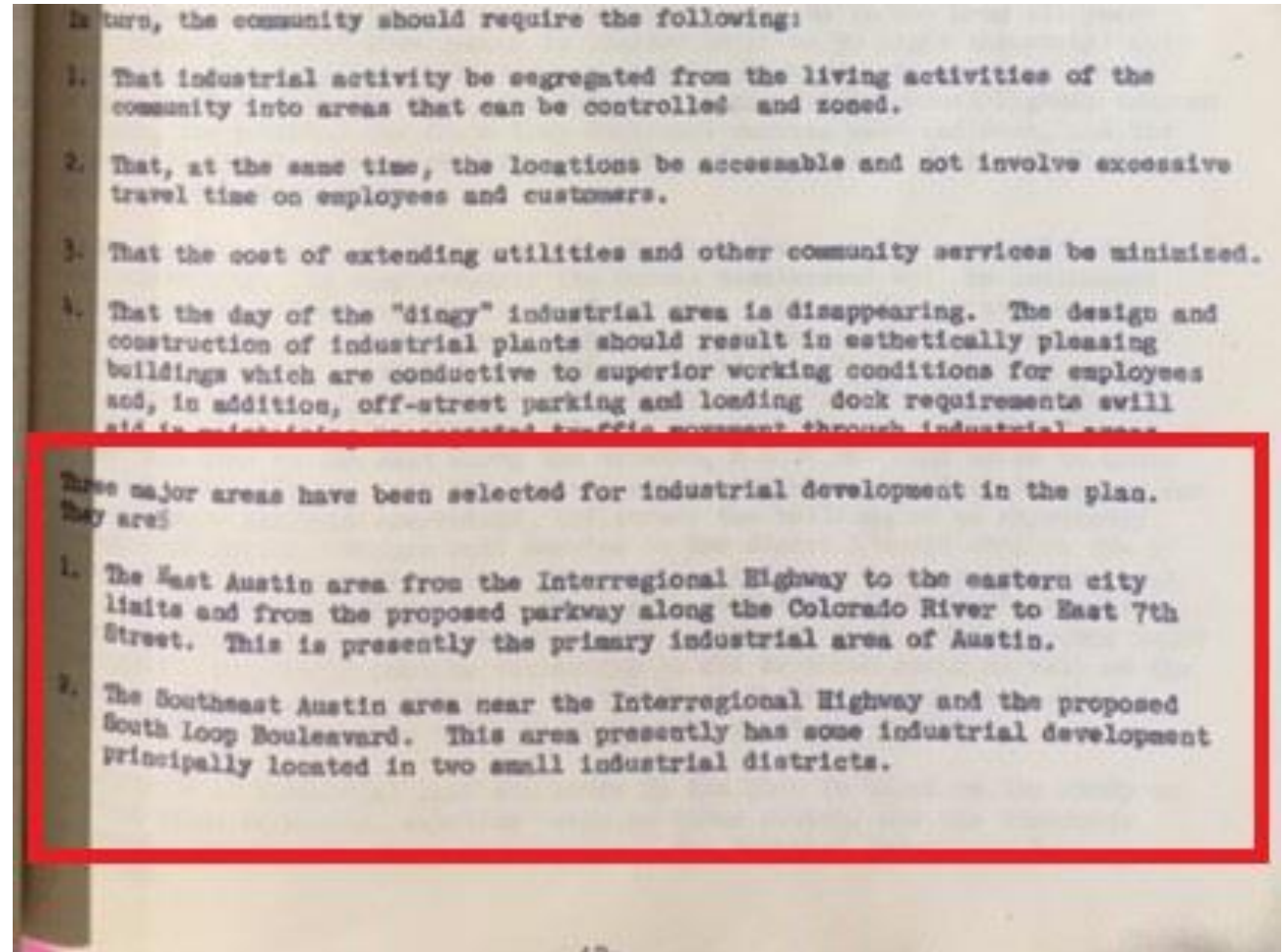


1956 Master Plan

“The East Austin area... is presently the primary industrial area of Austin”

Over 1/3 of this industrial land designated for residential and commercial purposes

- How did this happen?
- What does this say about city planning?
- What does this mean for people living in East Austin?



Austin Tomorrow Plan (1980)

“Discourage development in areas of **greatest environmental or agricultural value**”

- Where were these areas?
- Who lived there?
- What did we value as a city?
- Has this changed?

Objective 311.0	Discourage development in the areas of greatest environmental or agricultural value. The determination of high environmental value is dependent on public goals and public opinions. Environmental value may incorporate such features as lush or mature vegetation; particularly mature trees; habitats capable of supporting varied wildlife; interesting geologic features; interesting topographic relief; natural drainage waterways and their environs; water quality; water recharge to aquifers; and the potential for erosion, as in areas of steep slope. Agricultural value refers to the capabilities of the land for field crop use.
Policy 311.1	City policies concerning utility extension and annexation should include the consideration of environmental value. Consequently, these policies should be used to discourage development in areas of high value while encouraging development in more appropriate locations. Large scale decisions involving creek watersheds or other large areas should, therefore, be influenced.
Policy 311.2	Require impact assessments for all major extensions of utilities and roads. All extensions of utilities and roads should be analyzed according to their direct and indirect effects on the environment and land use. Public and social benefits must be weighed against public and social costs. This should particularly apply to all Capital Improvements Program projects.
Policy 311.3	Direct utility expansion away from areas of high resource value. A growth management policy should determine areas in which growth will be facilitated, and areas where growth will be discouraged. This policy should be based, to a large degree, on the preservation of natural resources with high public value.



THOSE WHO LEFT

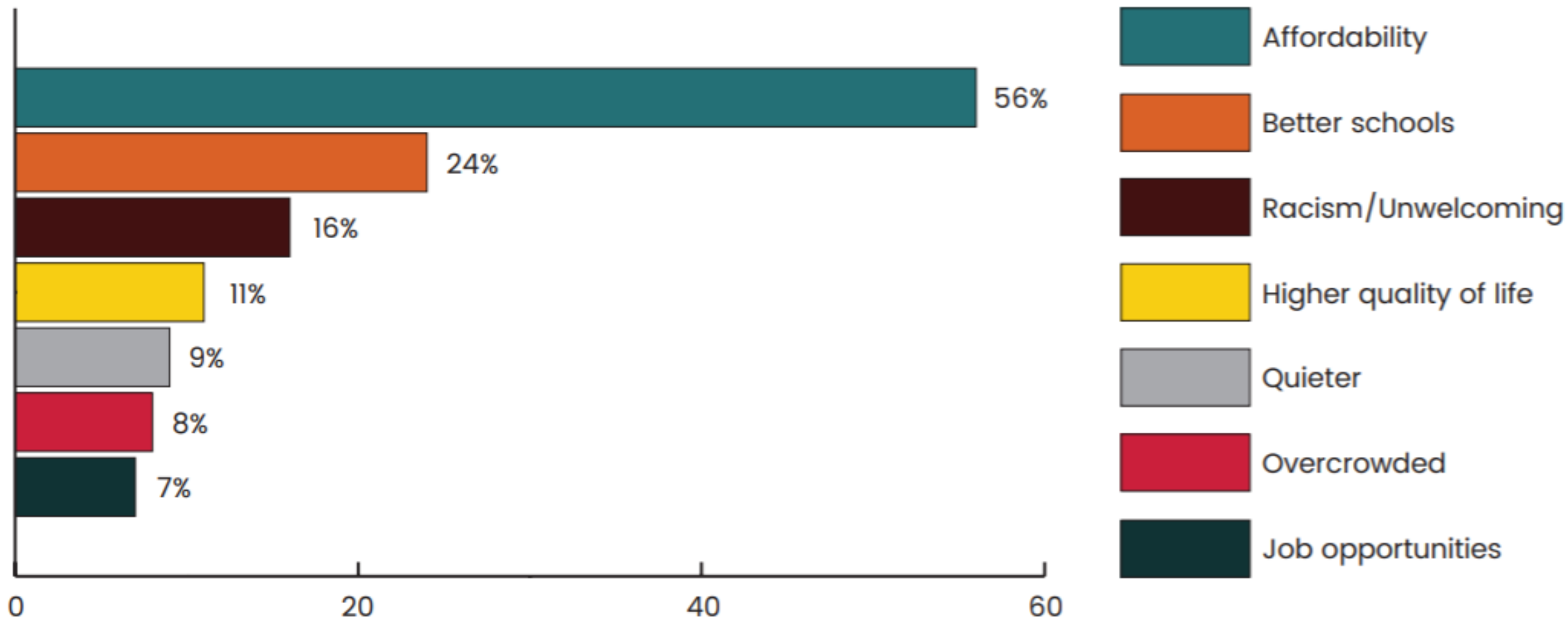
Austin's Declining African American Population

AUTHORS: Eric Tang, Ph.D., associate professor, faculty fellow at Institute for Urban Policy Research and Analysis and Division of Diversity and Community Engagement; Bisola Falola, M.A., Ph.D. candidate, Department of Geography and the Environment

CONTRIBUTORS: Chelsi West Ohueri, M.A., Ph.D. candidate, Department of Anthropology; Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, Ph.D., professor, African and African Diaspora Studies

Despite being one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, Austin's African American population has been in steady decline for nearly two decades. The discrepancy between Austin's huge population growth and its decline in African American residents is greater than that of any other fast-growing major city in the U.S. Why are they leaving and where are they going?

Top Reasons for Leaving Austin



The Tank Farms



"I get real bad headaches, my hair is falling out, my house shakes from the vibration of the tanks. All of the trees are dead..."



The Tank Farms

- 52-acre site in East Austin operated by 6 oil companies
- Site processed toxic chemicals known to damage bone marrow, liver & kidneys, cause birth defects & brain damage
- Facility subject to environmental regulation but rarely enforced
- Leaks, emissions, contaminated wells were common, poisoning air, water, and foliage
- Surrounding area was residential
- 6 schools were within 1 mile of the site



The Tank Farms



PODER

People Organized in the Defense of Earth and her Resources

A grassroots effort redefining environmental, economic and social justice issues.

- In 1992, companies set to expand the farm even further
- But community organized and fought back, forcing the State to act
- After 13 months of fighting, the companies to relocate

Sources: [A Case Study of the East Austin Tank Farms](#) and [Environmental Racism: Tank Farm Update \(1992\)](#)



Austin Water & Tesla's Gigafactory

- Tesla Gigafactory on 2,100-acre property in eastern Travis County/Del Valle
- Property divided by State Highway 130
 - Eastern tract in Hornsby Bend Utility (subsidiary of SouthWest Water Company) service area
 - Western tract in Austin Water
- January 2021: Public Utility Commission approves Tesla's "expedited release" from SouthWest while low-income neighborhoods closer to Austin, like Garden Valley, remain on private utility

Sources: ["Tesla urged to use water-saving measures" Jo Clifton, Austin Monitor](#);
["Environmental groups call on city to hold off on approving further development at Tesla gigafactory"](#)
[Andrea Gúzman, austria](#)



Where are we now?

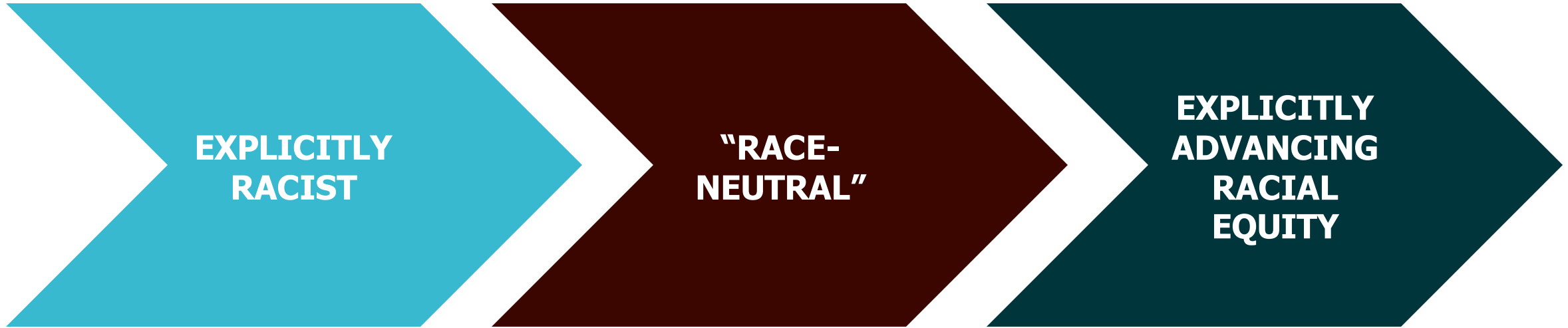


While most explicitly racist laws and policies have been overturned or replaced, explicitly racist laws have had a profound effect on today's racial outcomes in wealth, health, lifespan and every other indicator of wellbeing.

"Race-neutral" laws, policies and practices like the GI Bill — to name just one example — replicate and worsen existing gaps between People of Color and White people.



Where do we go from here?



We can create a future in alignment with our values by **explicitly, proactively advancing racial equity** through rigorous, data-driven strategies. The Racial Equity Here commitment is centered around these strategies, **like using a racial equity tool.**



Closing Reflection

Was some of this history new to you?

How does this history impact your work? Particularly when thinking about the power you have individually and collectively.

How do you think Water Forward teams can address and avoid recreating this history?



Slide Library



Intros

Who are you?

What do you do?

What lenses do you bring to your work?



Our Values vs. Our Realities



Of the people, by the people, and for the people...

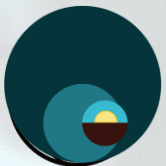
...yet our leaders across all industries don't come close to the diversity of our communities. Women didn't get the right to vote until 1920. People of color weren't granted the right to vote until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.





All men are created equal...

...was revolutionary at the time, but when Jefferson spoke these words, they applied to White male property owners.



Vision Zero Data

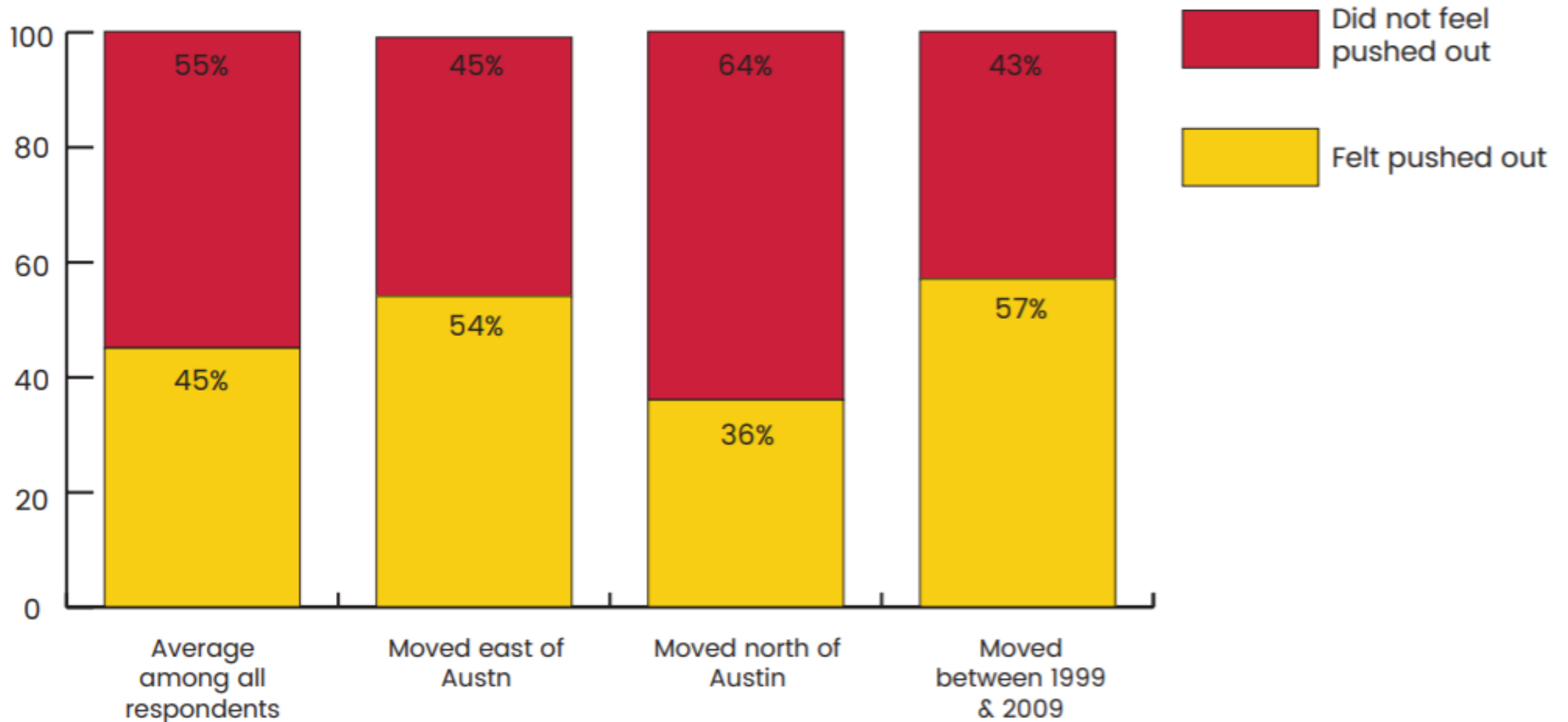
Who is killed or suffers an incapacitating injury relative to the population of Austin?



Latinx & Black residents are more likely to...

- be hit by cars
- die from crash injuries

Percentage of Those Who Felt Pushed Out



Community Sentiments

What respondents had to say about affordability:

- *“I couldn’t afford to live here; pushed out by lack of resources” -Female, 52*
- *“They didn’t want to redo East Austin when we were living in it. We saw what was happening in Austin. They were trying to get all the property in Austin they could get. City was taking land, jacking up prices. The gentrification started settling in. Residents are sick to their stomach seeing what they see. They could have revitalized.” -Male, 63*

“I feel like no one sees me. They don’t value that I’m there.

They only notice me when there’s a problem. Thousands of Black kids who don’t get the same appreciation that a pet gets.”

-Male, 44

What respondents had to say about institutional racism in Austin:

- *“Racial divide. They wanted us out.” -Female, 63*
- *“Austin has never been openly friendly to African Americans or allowed them to develop a significant economic enclave. Austin has an antagonistic atmosphere to African Americans. For example, the Texas Relays. Austin is unwelcoming. It’s a blatant slap in the face.” -Female, 46*

“Cost of living was getting too high in Austin and I get more for my money in Round Rock.”

-Female, 52

Indigenous Peoples in Austin



First Ward

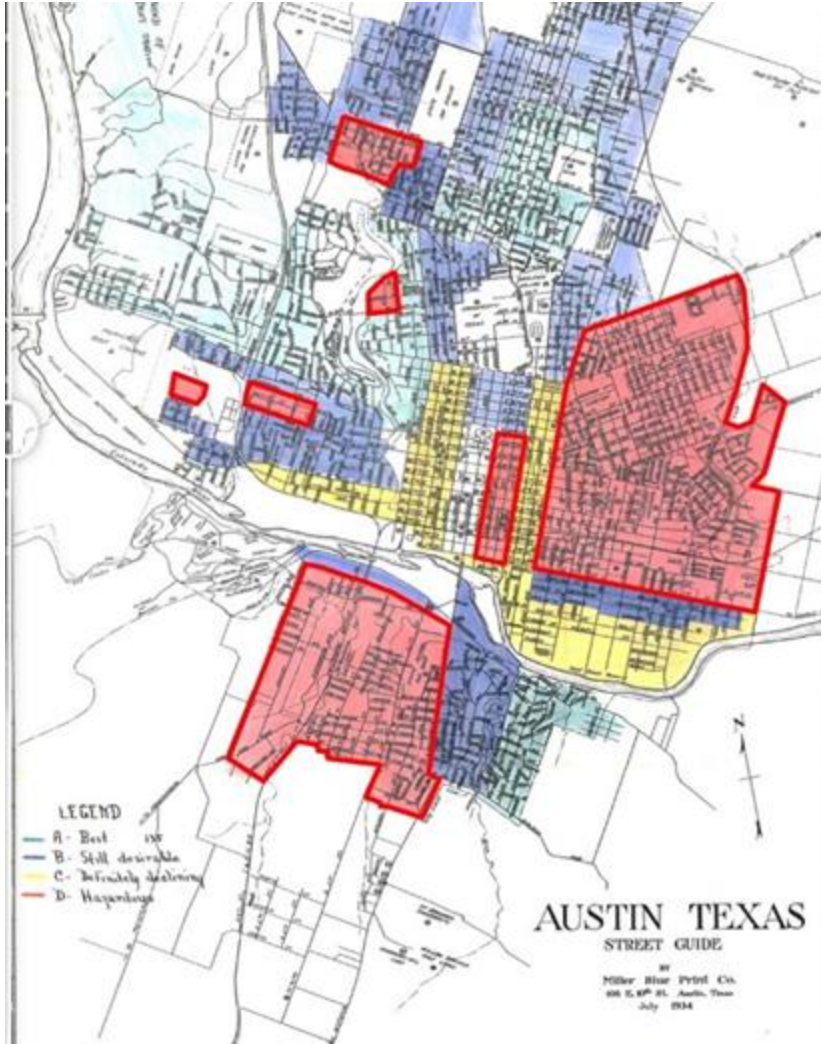
Boundaries of Austin's First Ward
or "**Austin's Mexico**"

- 6th Street to North Colorado River to South Congress Avenue to E Rio Grande Street to the West

Many families settled along Shoal Creek



Creating the “Negro District”



Proposed New Deal program would reinforce segregationist boundaries in Austin and throughout the country.

The program, designed to restore household wealth during the Great Depression, used redlining—the practice of denying goods or services to racially determined neighborhoods—to specifically exclude communities of color.

Restrictive and Racial Covenants

“Hyde Park is exclusively for white people”

HYDE PARK

The most beautiful, healthful, and practical place for homes in the city of Austin. It's the safest place for investment. The terms offered are remarkably easy. The prices are very reasonable. Any person buying two lots WILL BE GIVEN ONE LOT FREE OF COST.

There are six miles of beautiful graded streets in HYDE PARK, and a magnificent

SPEEDWAY FROM THE PARK TO THE CITY.

THE FINEST DRIVE IN TEXAS.



HYDE PARK IS EXCLUSIVELY FOR WHITE PEOPLE.

The main line of Electric Street Cars run into and around a belt in the Park. Free Mail Delivery twice a day. There is no limestone dust. The soil is the best for Fruits, Flowers and Lawns. No one thinks of taking a carriage drive without going to Hyde Park. The drivts are free from mud and dust. The scenery is interesting. The altitude of Hyde Park is 185 feet above the river. Hyde Park is Cool, Clean and Restful. Invest while YOU CAN SELECT, and SECURE ONE LOT FREE. If you wish to buy on the installment plan the terms are \$3.00 per month on each lot. If you pay all cash a discount of 8 per cent will be allowed. If you wish to invest and do not live in Austin, we will pay your fare both ways, if the distance is not over 300 miles. Strangers who wish to see the city can have a Free Carriage by calling at our office.

Extraordinary Inducements Are Offered

To persons who will agree to erect good houses. If parties wish to build in Hyde Park we will trade lots for other Austin property on a fair basis, and DONATE ONE LOT as a Premium. Beautiful Views of Hyde Park, and of THE SPEEDWAY sent free upon application. Write to us, or call at
721 CONGRESS AVENUE, AUSTIN, TEXAS.

M. K. & T. LAND AND TOWN CO.

M. M. SHIPE, General Manager



Rogers Washington Holy Cross Neighborhood



Attention Colored!

Now Ready for You

Holy Cross Heights

Austin's new close in Addition planned
exclusively for colored people.

- Nice size lots
- All streets are now paved and
curbed
- Convenient to stores
- Neighborhood of new homes
- Bus at your front door

OPEN HOUSE

to show you a home already com-
pleted, ready for you to move in!

All tile bath, knotty pine, auto-
matic washer connections, insulat-
ed attic . . . concrete drive.

See this property now . . .
2400 Block East 19th

Choose from 35 full sized lots . . .
Bring your own plans--we'll build
for you.

Another home under construction . . .
See the type homes we offer.

We'll take your lot or present
home in on trade. You will be
proud to live in

Holy Cross Heights

Straight out East 19th in the 2400 block

T. L. HAMMONS

Real Estate and Insurance
Phone GL 3-6654 or GR 7-4350



Acknowledging How We Got Here

Inheriting inequality

"As greater Austin booms, the poisonous legacy of segregation continues to cut off the African-American population from economic opportunities and its own cultural anchors, threatening the whole region's potential."

-An *American-Statesman* three-part series

<http://projects.statesman.com/news/economic-mobility/>



Restrictive and Racial Covenants

2. Any street or part thereof may be closed at any time made to the owner of lots immediately abutting upon the part so closed.
3. The alleys within the several blocks are for the benefit of the lot holders within said block, and a majority in area of such holders may by a written instrument executed by them and concurred in and signed by the Company close such alleys.
4. All lots when sold by the company shall be subject to the following conditions and restrictions, binding upon the Company's grantee or any successor in title, which may be enforced by injunction or other legal process enforcing and compelling observance of these restrictions and conditions:
- a. No lot shall be sold or leased to any Mexican or person of Negro blood or to any corporation or firm composed of Negroes or Mexicans.
 - b. Except upon the written consent of the Company, no residence shall be erected to cost less than three times the selling price at which the company sells the lot, or less than one thousand dollars.
 - c. No lot or part thereof, shall be used for illegal or immoral purposes, or for the sale of spirituous, vinous, malt or other intoxicating liquors.
 - d. Except by written consent of the Company, no building shall be erected nearer than twenty five feet of any street upon which said lot may front, and all barns, stables and stable yards erected on said premises shall be next to the alley and not closer than twenty five feet to any street line.
 - e. All fences, walls, gates and other improvements placed by the lot owner shall be placed