Protecting Property Values, Not People

Discriminatory Land Use Policies in Pittsburgh, 1910s-Today

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Report Scope

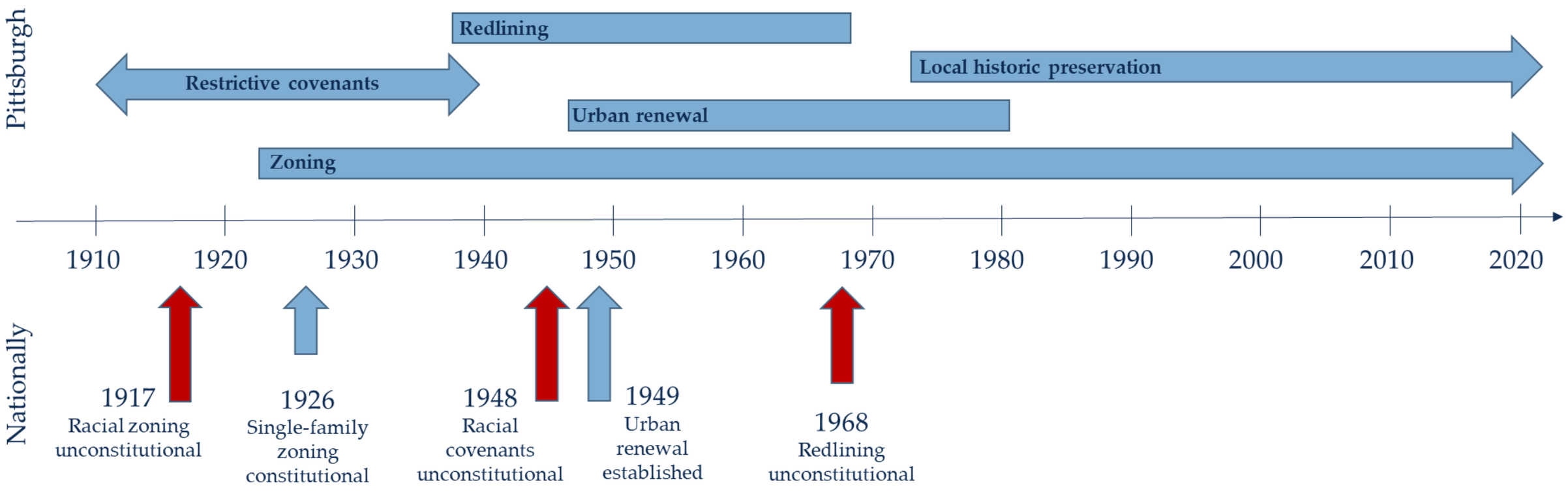
Throughout Pittsburgh's history, Black, immigrant, and low-income communities have endured the effects of discriminatory land use policies and practices. These policies continue to shape various aspects of the city's geography and social fabric, impacting housing access, economic and educational opportunities, health outcomes, environment and climate resilience, and more. In 2024, Details Reviewed and UrbanKind Institute teamed up to study the history of Pittsburgh's land use policies to understand how they reinforced racial and economic disparities over time. By shedding light on past harms, our research aims to inform strategies for more equitable and just future planning.

This is a multi-phase, multi-year research endeavor. In the first phase, we explored academic research and Pittsburgh archival records to investigate the actors and motivations behind some of the city's major land use policies. This phase also began conversations with residents, housing advocates, and planners to learn from people's lived experiences of these policies and their impacts.

We focus on five policies and practices used in Pittsburgh since the 1910s: restrictive deed covenants, zoning, redlining, urban renewal, and local historic preservation. These policies share a common motivation to protect property values, often with seemingly good intentions. However, in practice these policies worked together to reinforce patterns of segregation and perpetuate disparities over time through explicit and implicit forms of exclusion. While many other policies, such as building and fire codes, tax foreclosure, and federal historic preservation, also played a role in shaping inequities, they are outside the scope of this project.

This report is divided into four parts. Part one provides an overview of each of the five policies and practices, how they sought to protect property values, and their role in exacerbating disparate outcomes by race or class. Part two shares lessons on power and public participation in land use decision-making based on people's lived and professional experiences. Part three provides a summation of the findings and recommendations for policy and community action based on the research. Part four provides resources to learn more about the policies in this report.

Policy timeline



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This phase of our research is funded by the Heinz Endowments.

Cover Photo: Carolyn Ristau

DETAILS REVIEWED

UrbanKind INSTITUTE

Restrictive Covenants

Years Active: Late 1800s-Present; Peaked 1910s-1940s

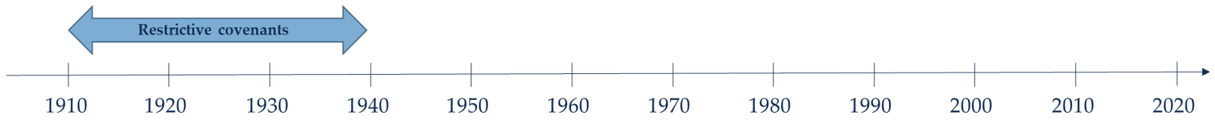
Lead Actor(s): Private—Property owners

Definition: Clauses in a property deed that restrict the use of a property in some way, such as racially, economically, architecturally, or by land use.

Primary Goal: To protect property values and neighborhood exclusivity by prohibiting actions or people perceived as detrimental.

Disparate Impacts: Excluded Black, immigrant, and low-income people from using property in certain areas through explicitly racial or implicitly discriminatory restrictions, resulting in housing segregation.

Public Role: None



The Story of Restrictive Covenants

Restrictive covenants, also known as deed restrictions, are a private tool for property owners to place limitations on the use of their property, legally binding all current and future property owners in perpetuity or until a set expiration date.

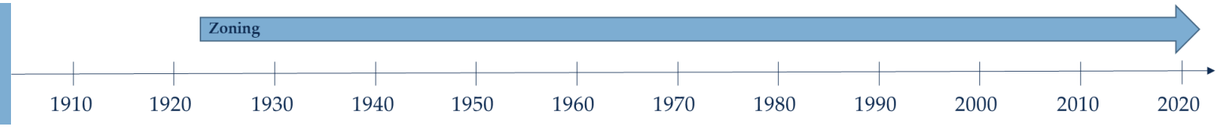
Deeds containing economic or racial restrictions were popular in the first half of the 20th century. These deed restrictions were often incorporated into new housing subdivisions in the name of protecting property values and the exclusivity of all-white neighborhoods. They explicitly prohibited non-white people from buying or occupying property or placed restrictions on lot sizes and building costs that made homes unaffordable to Black, immigrant, and low-income people.

While the Supreme Court ruled explicitly racial covenants unconstitutional in 1948, removing their legal enforceability, this ruling did not expunge these covenants from deeds, and many still appear in deeds today. In addition, the Supreme Court ruling did not affect economic and other restrictions, which may still be added and enforced today.

In Pittsburgh, restrictive covenants that created or reinforced housing segregation directly influenced future land use policy decisions. Deed restrictions were believed to be a good, but limited, tool for protecting property values. Proponents of Pittsburgh's first **zoning** ordinance believed that municipal zoning would expand city-wide the protections offered by restrictive covenants, which were often referred to as "private zoning."

The decision to apply restrictive covenant-like restrictions city-wide through zoning, led by middle- and upper-class, white men, perpetuated the exclusionary effects of deed restrictions for decades.

Zoning



Years Active: 1923-Present

Lead Actor(s): City—Department of City Planning

Definition: A city ordinance that regulates land development by use, area, height, parking, and more.

Primary Goal: To protect property values by stopping haphazard development to create confidence and predictability in Pittsburgh real estate.

Disparate Impacts: Created economic barriers that prevented Black and low-income people from buying or renting property in certain areas, while permitting more dense and hazardous development in existing Black and low-income areas, exacerbating housing segregation and environmental injustice.

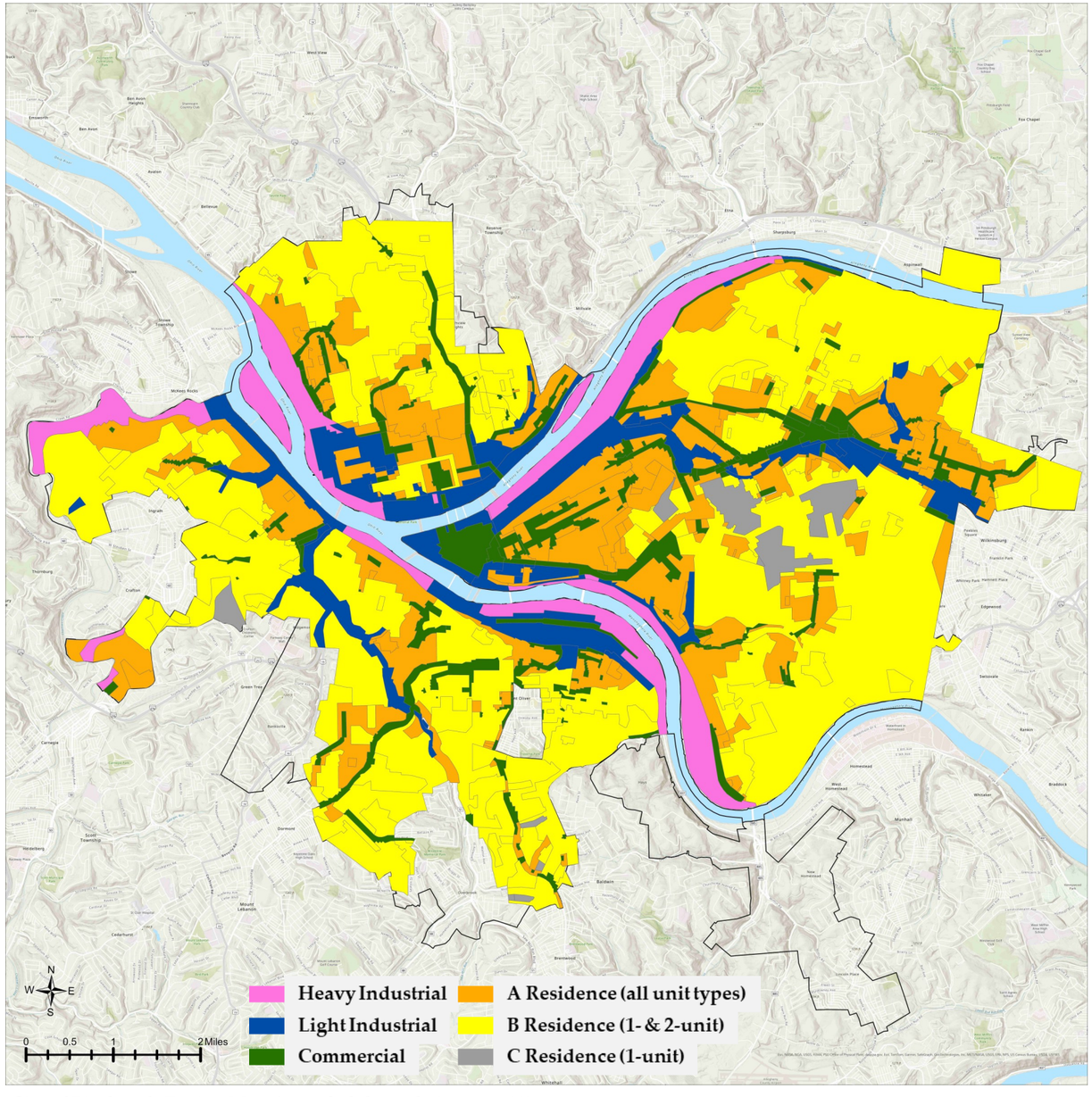
Public Role: Participate in hearings on proposed developments or amendments to the zoning ordinance before the Zoning Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission.

The Story of Zoning

Pittsburgh adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1923. It regulated all land in the city by use, density, and height. The early proponents of zoning argued that it would protect property values by stopping "haphazard development," as well as solve a laundry list of other issues such as overcrowding and disease exacerbated in a growing city hampered by the era's limited technologies. While many of these motivations were well-intentioned and race-neutral, zoning regulations often created highly disparate impacts that served to protect wealthy, white neighborhoods while encouraging dense and hazardous uses in Black and low-income neighborhoods.

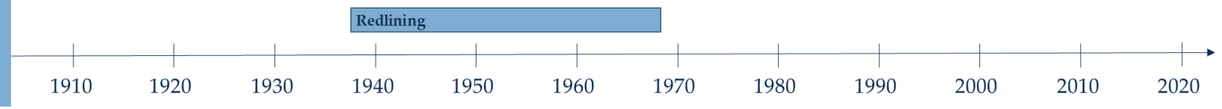
The best example of this is the single-family zoning district, which remains the largest and most exclusionary zoning district today. While ostensibly designed to create a healthy environment with plenty of light and air and to promote the middle- and upper-class ideal of detached single-family homes in low density neighborhoods, single-family zoning creates economic barriers to housing access for Black and low-income residents by restricting denser development and driving up housing costs.

By the 1940s, Pittsburgh policymakers, still predominantly middle- and upper-class, white men, decided that zoning was an effective, but limited tool. To fix the limitations, they adopted **urban renewal**, rewrote the zoning code, and redrew the zoning map. The resulting 1958 zoning ordinance, which forms the basis of the city's current zoning code, further depressed housing development and reinforced patterns of racial and economic segregation set in motion by **restrictive covenants** and the first zoning ordinance.



City of Pittsburgh Zoning Map Amended through August 1927
Source: Pittsburgh City Archives and Zoning Office, City of Pittsburgh
Digitized by Carolyn Ristau

Redlining



Years Active: 1937-1968

Lead Actor(s): Federal—Homeowner's Loan Corporation (HOLC)/Federal Housing Administration (FHA)
Private—Banks and other mortgage lenders; Real estate professionals

Definition: The practice of assessing residential mortgage lending risk based on economic and housing conditions, as well as race, that mapped areas considered the highest risk in red.

Primary Goal: To protect mortgage investments from severe losses, such as those experienced from foreclosures during the Great Depression or from damage following major flood events like the 1936 St. Patrick's Day Flood in Pittsburgh.

Disparate Impacts: Discriminated against Black and low-income neighborhoods by reducing access to private and federally backed mortgages in these areas, which blocked access to homeownership for Black and low-income people and reinforced housing segregation.

Public Role: None

The Story of Redlining

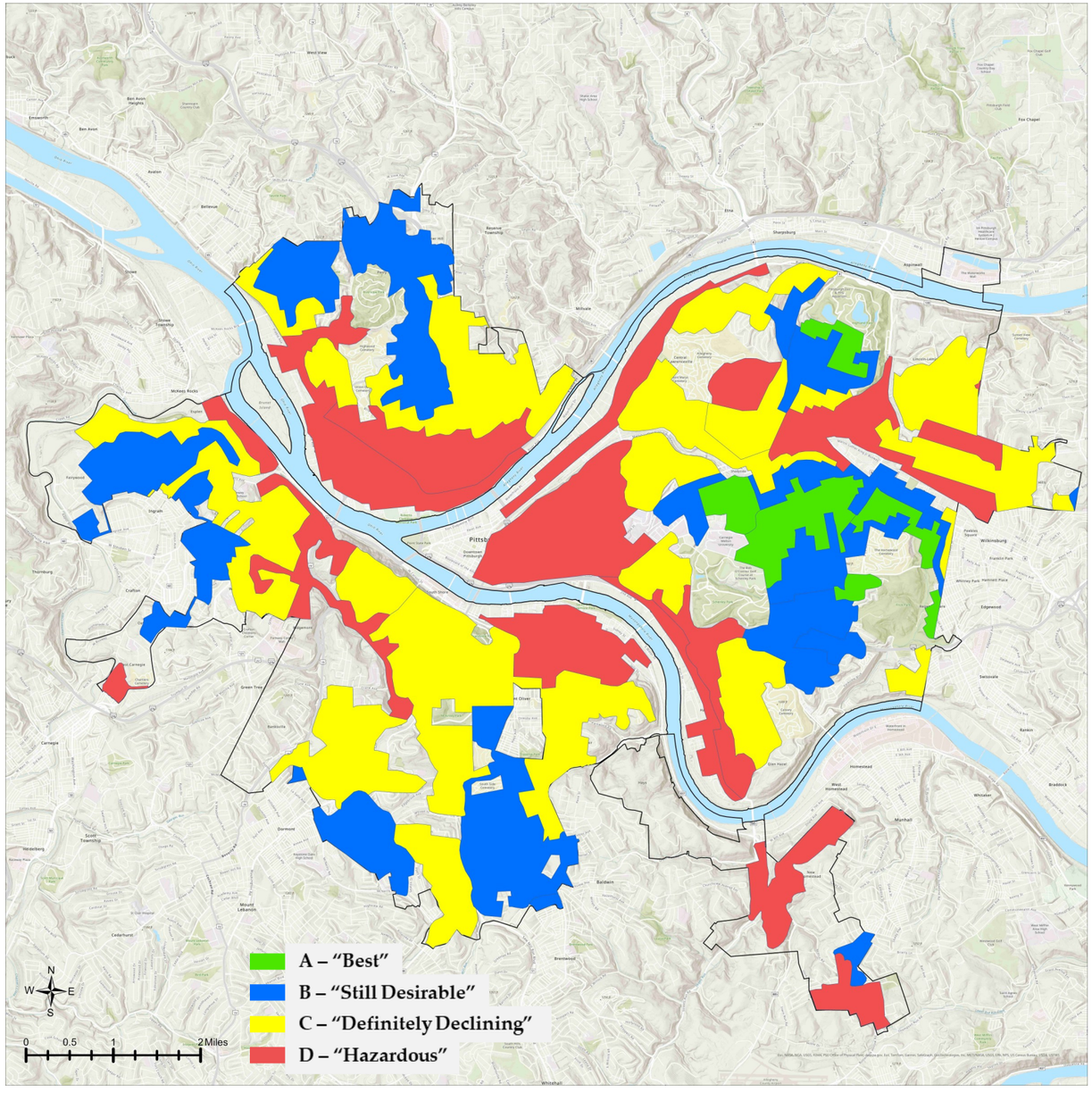
Redlining is a mortgage lending practice that became popular in the 1930s. Skyrocketing foreclosures and the collapse of the housing market during the Great Depression spurred a revolution in mortgage financing that increased availability of mortgages, but only for some people.

As part of the changes, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), private banks, and real estate professionals developed systems to assess and map levels of mortgage lending risk for different neighborhoods. These assessments were based on economic and housing conditions but also applied explicitly racist interpretations of race and ethnicity as justification for high risk designations.

The practice of redlining is illustrated by HOLC's 1937 Residential Security Map of Pittsburgh, which graded neighborhoods from "A-Best" to "D-Hazardous" for lending, with D areas colored red. HOLC frequently assigned C and D grades to areas being "invaded by undesirables," specifically identified as Blacks, Jews, Italians, or families on welfare.

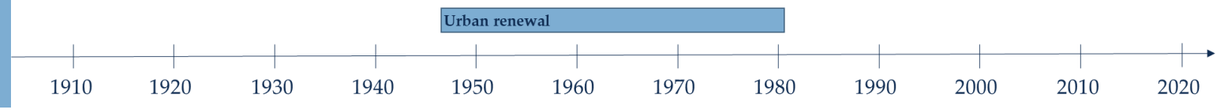
The FHA and many private banks used similar grading systems to justify discrimination in mortgage lending against Black, immigrant, and low-income communities. This public and private disinvestment impacted housing options and quality in these neighborhoods for generations, even after the Supreme Court ruled the practice of redlining unconstitutional in 1968.

Today, echoes of HOLC's redlining map can be seen in the **zoning** map that continues to influence disparities in housing access, economic conditions, health outcomes, and more, across the city.



HOLC's Residential Security Map 1937
Source: Mapping Inequality

Urban Renewal



Years Active: 1949-1970s

Lead Actor(s): Federal—Department of Housing and Urban Development
City—Urban Redevelopment Authority/Department of City Planning

Definition: Federally subsidized redevelopment of urban areas labelled "blighted" or "slums," often involving large-scale demolition to make way for civic spaces, highways, parking lots, housing, and more.

Primary Goal: To enhance and protect property values by removing blocks or neighborhoods perceived to be declining.

Disparate Impacts: Resulted in the destruction and displacement of predominantly Black and low-income communities, including homes, businesses, and community institutions intensifying housing shortages and segregation.

Public Role: Attend community meetings where plans were discussed for at least some of the urban renewal projects.

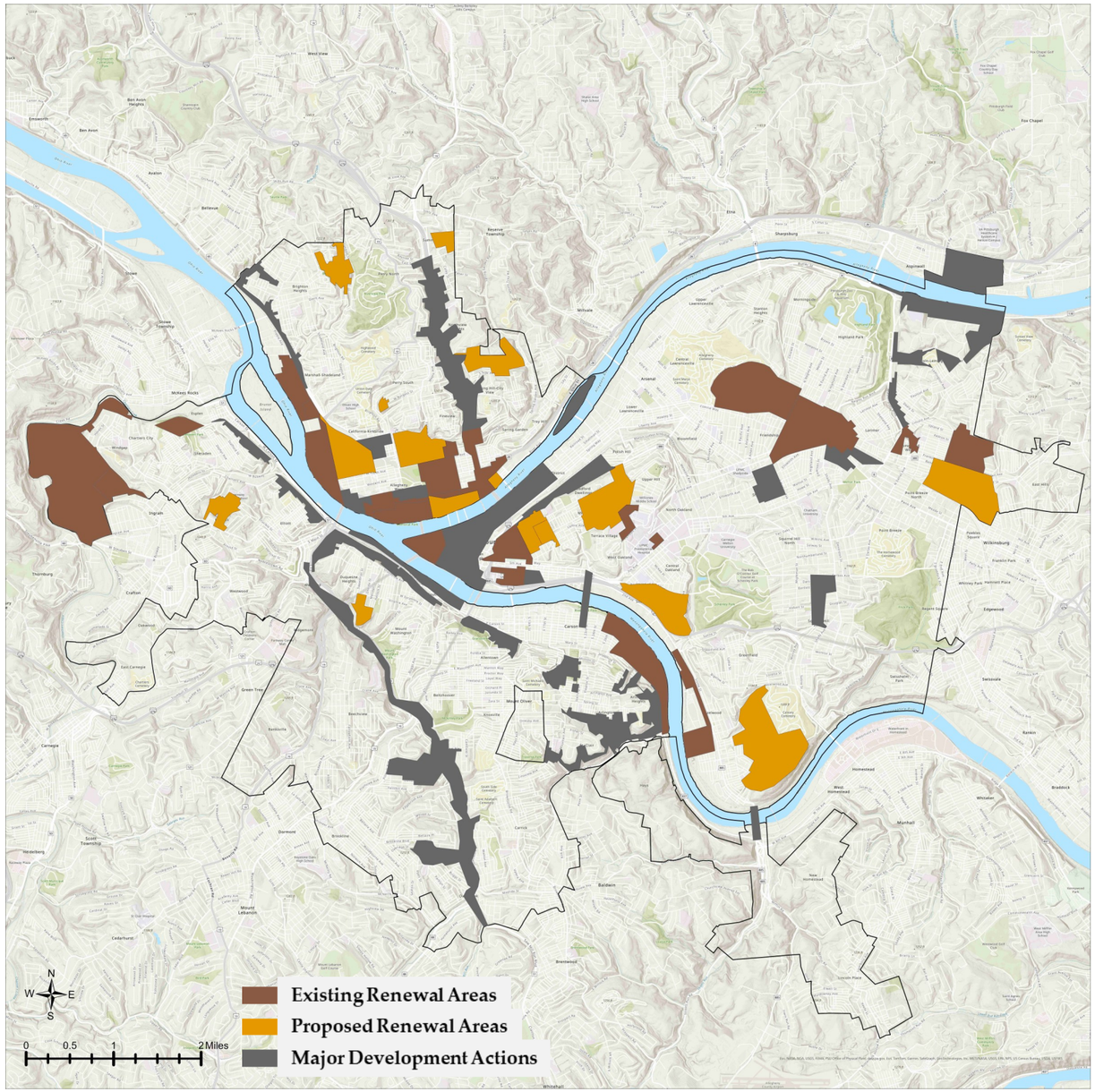
The Story of Urban Renewal

One of the perceived failings of **zoning** in its early decades was its inability to eliminate existing uses thought to lower surrounding property values. Pittsburgh's policymakers, again those middle- and upper-class, white men, turned to urban renewal to fix that gap. Launched by the federal Housing Act of 1949, urban renewal marked an era of federally subsidized redevelopment efforts across the US, often involving the large-scale demolition of urban areas deemed "blighted" to make way for the construction of new civic spaces, highways, parking lots, and other large developments.

These urban renewal projects in Pittsburgh often intentionally targeted **redlined**, Black, and low-income neighborhoods, resulting in the extensive destruction of homes, businesses, and community institutions, and the displacement of thousands of residents. Urban renewal intensified housing shortages and segregation and had far-reaching impacts on social and economic wellbeing, health, and sense of place for many affected communities.

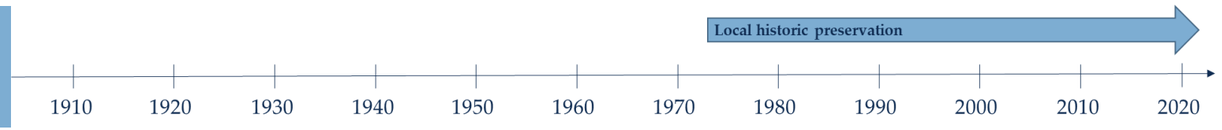
Despite its intent to revitalize, urban renewal efforts left many communities in further decline, failing to stabilize property values or protect remaining residents from future displacement. While the official "urban renewal" program of the 1940s-1970s is now over, cities including Pittsburgh continue to see federally backed private and public development with similarly harmful effects, including large-scale demolition, road reconfiguration, and the forced displacement of low-income and Black communities.

In part due to outrage voiced by the affected communities in the 1960s, Pittsburgh's policymakers decided to counterbalance the destruction of urban renewal with **historic preservation**.



Map of the Pittsburgh Development Program 1969-1974 from *A Development and Renewal Program for Pittsburgh Summary Documentation, February 1970*
Source: Pittsburgh City Archives
Digitized by Carolyn Ristau

Local Historic Preservation



Years Active: 1971-Present

Lead Actor(s): City—Department of City Planning

Definition: A city designation of a neighborhood or landmark of historic significance to protect its exterior historic features and contribution to the city character.

Primary Goal: To protect property values and neighborhood desirability by preserving historically significant buildings and structures.

Disparate Impacts: Led to gentrification and the displacement of Black and low-income residents in the absence of other protections, often by increasing maintenance and other costs of retaining housing in designated neighborhoods.

Public Role: Nominate properties for historic designation, as well as participate in hearings before the Historic Review Commission for nominations or applications for renovation, construction, or demolition of properties with a historic designation (district or landmark).

The Story of Local Historic Preservation

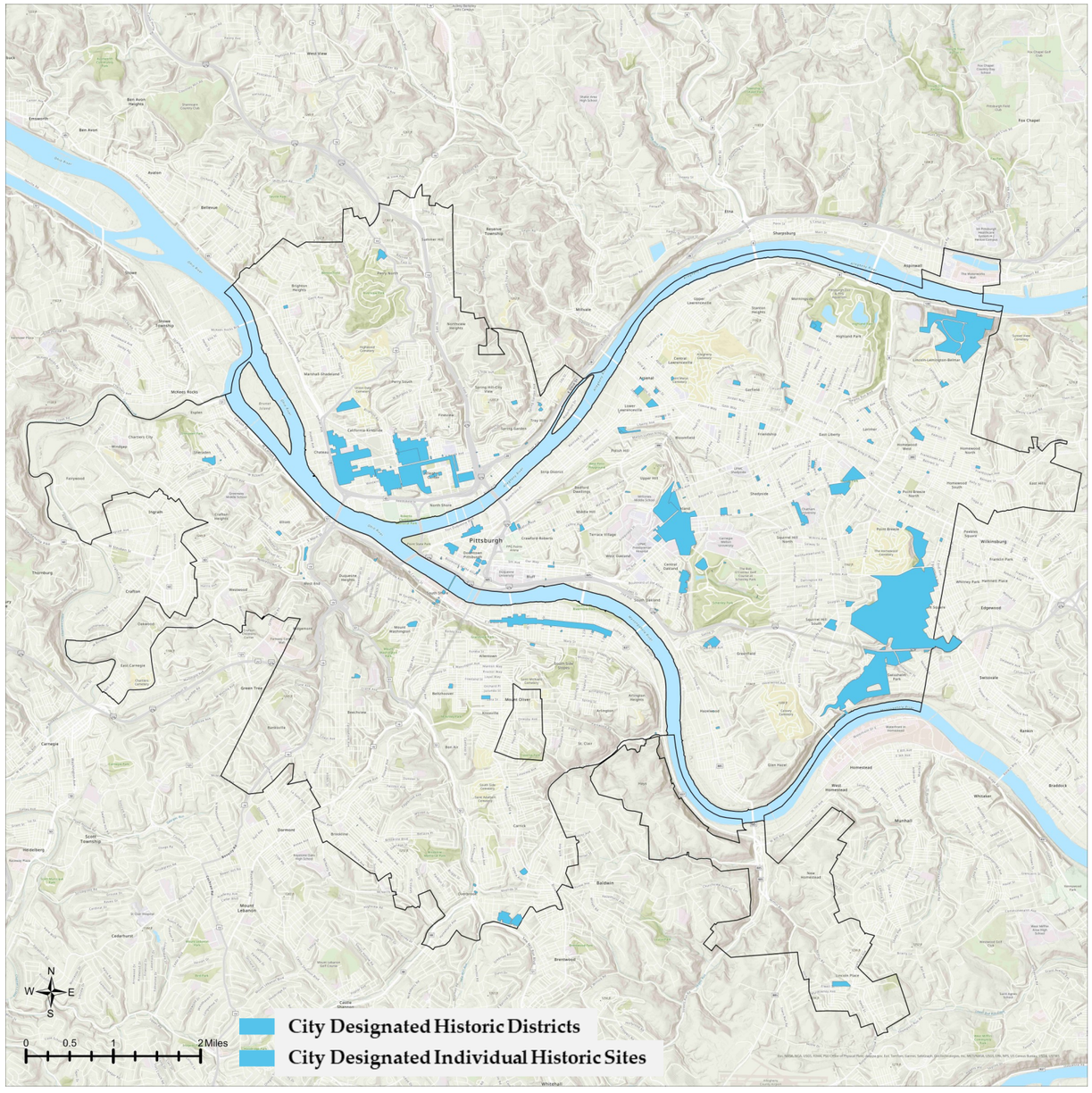
Pittsburgh's local historic designations, both neighborhood and landmark, establish guidelines for building renovations and development and oversight to reduce demolition of historically significant architecture in designated areas.

In Pittsburgh, historic preservation emerged in direct response to community organizing against the destructive effects of **urban renewal**. The preamble of the City's first historic preservation ordinance (No. 128 of 1971), which was replaced in 1979, states:

> "Urban and suburban growth, attended by massive demolition of existing housing in and about the center city for highway construction and other forms of urban redevelopment, and accompanied by deterioration of existing housing, civic unrest and discontent has created the need to pause and find safeguards to preserve the architectural heritage of our past and stability of our present." (Section 1.a)

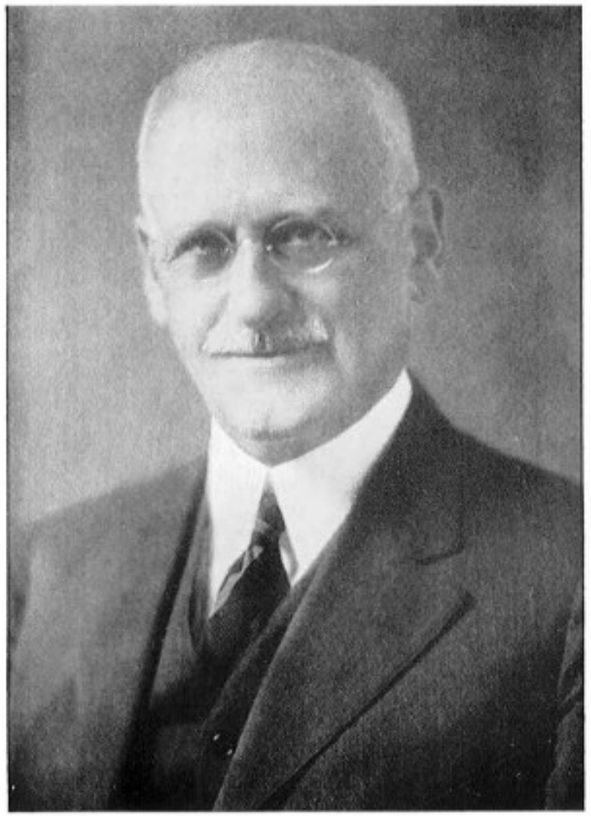
Over the last few decades, historic preservation has enhanced property values and neighborhood desirability in areas like Schenley Farms and Manchester where it has been adopted. However, once again, this seemingly well-intentioned land use policy has had disparate long-term impacts.

For example, in Schenley Farms, it has enhanced the stability and exclusivity of this wealthy, white neighborhood just as **restrictive covenants** and single-family **zoning** did before. In the historically Black neighborhood of Manchester, on the other hand, it has meant rising maintenance and other housing costs, opening the door to gentrification and the displacement of existing residents.



Pittsburgh City Designated Historic Districts and Pittsburgh City Designated Individual Historic Sites as of September 9, 2024
Source: City of Pittsburgh

Community, Power, and Process



Above: Charles D. Armstrong
President of Armstrong Cork Company
President of the Citizens Committee on City Plan, the largest zoning advocacy group in the 1920s
Photo Source: Brooks, C. A. ed. (1923)

Right: Charles "Teenie" Harris's photo of a 1969 billboard installed by the community in protest of the city's demolition and displacement of thousands of homes, businesses, and community institutions in the urban renewal of the Lower Hill neighborhood
Photo Source: Young, D. (2015)

Not surprisingly, power over land use decision-making in Pittsburgh has been historically uneven. Our archival research finds that major land use policies from zoning to urban renewal were led largely by middle- and upper-class, white men, including many of the city's most prominent industrialists, businessmen, and politicians, who exerted substantial influence over city government and development. Guided by technocratic visions of the "ideal" city, these policymakers and their wealthy allies were concerned with protecting property values, health and safety, and "morals" of middle- and upper-class American life.

The Black and low-income residents most negatively impacted by these policies were rarely afforded a seat at the table. Indeed, much like the policies themselves, processes for public participation in land use decision-making were exclusionary from the start. For example, public hearings on policy issues held by City Council throughout the 20th century were often held midday, downtown during weekdays, making them largely inaccessible to working-class residents who could not afford to skip work or travel.

Despite such barriers, the story of discriminatory land use policies in Pittsburgh has not been without resistance from fair housing advocates and the community. In the 1920s, for example, union and other labor advocates voiced opposition to single-family zoning on the grounds of class bias. As mentioned earlier, community organizing against the destructive forces of urban renewal in the 1960s-1970s, bolstered by the broader Civil Rights Movement across the US, succeeded in halting second waves of demolition in historically Black neighborhoods like the Hill District and Manchester. These efforts also resulted in incremental shifts in development policies and processes toward greater inclusion of community voices through mechanisms like Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs).

However, inequalities in power and public participation remain major barriers to equitable development and land use planning today. Here, we share insights from our conversations with residents, housing advocates, and planners on some of the current challenges and opportunities for enhancing equity in land use decision-making.

Making Processes More Transparent

"These land use decisions are always tied, in the end...to people having some understanding, some fairly sophisticated understanding too, about land use and land use decisions and who gets access to what tools. [… The process] is very opaque."

Interview #4, resident & community organizer

Informed participation in land use decision-making requires adequate knowledge of complex policy and regulatory landscapes, as well as the tools, mechanisms, actors, and institutions involved in the process. Governmental bureaucracy, red tape, or lack of internal alignment on policy priorities and engagement strategies can also make navigating the process confusing and onerous. For example, the Department of City Planning, Urban Redevelopment Authority, and City Council may all have different approaches for engaging with the public to address issues such as vacant land.

In this way, development processes can be highly exclusionary, especially for Black, brown, and low-income communities and advocates, who face many other barriers to participation. To enhance equity, there is a need for greater transparency, consistency, and communication by the City and its various entities regarding land use issues and decision-making processes.

Centering Community Voices

"We can steward, and we can ask the community for as much voice as we want, but if we do not hold ourselves to being truly data informed and center community voice, it's performative."

Interview #5, planning professional

Even when historically underrepresented groups are afforded the opportunity to participate, their voices, visions, and needs are not always taken into account. This type of superficial engagement, often for the purposes of box checking, does not advance goals of greater equity and inclusion in land use decision-making. Truly equitable decision-making must *center* community voices, especially those who have been most harmed by past policies. For those stewarding the engagement process, this means listening, understanding, and ensuring that community voices and needs are truly incorporated into policy frameworks and decisions, even if they are not aligned with more powerful corporate, developer, or political interests.

Meeting People Where They Are

"I think part of it is about taking the time for those conversations and having funders and planners and government folks and CDC [Community Development Corporation] folks all on board. That if you want to get an answer, you got to make sure that you're doing stuff that reaches the people who never come to meetings."

Interview #1, resident & community organizer

Public participation in decision-making tends to be dominated by those with greater time, resources, and savvy to navigate the onerous engagement process, from submitting public comments and attending meetings to building the coalitions needed to affect change. Black, brown, and low-income residents may often have competing day-to-day priorities that limit their ability to engage.

Ensuring wider and more equitable public participation requires that those stewarding the engagement process, including government agencies, developers, and community development organizations, meet people where they are, at times and in spaces that are accessible to them. This may mean holding meetings during evenings or on weekends in familiar community spaces (churches, schools, etc.) or tabling at events in different neighborhoods. Effective public engagement also requires outreach and communication strategies that are culturally appropriate and tailored to different groups by language, style, and media. It is essential to budget adequate time and funding to conduct meaningful and long-term public engagement.

Educating on the Issues

"That public process often gets coopted by the NIMBYs of the world who just think that everything is going to be terrible if there is some type of dense housing that's gone up, let alone if it's for poor people. […] And it's usually rooted in a misunderstanding of what these type of projects are and a lot of fearmongering around what it means to have affordable housing in the neighborhood."

Interview #7, housing advocate

Despite a growing national reckoning with the current housing affordability crisis, there remains considerable misunderstanding and misinformation about the root causes of and potential solutions to systemic housing disparities. Raising awareness about the history and legacies of discriminatory land use policies, as well as the wider societal benefits of fair housing, is a first step toward informed public engagement on the issues. We must understand and acknowledge past harms before we can begin redressing them.

A New Policy Framework

The last 100 years of land use policies and practices in Pittsburgh prioritized the protection of property values. While this priority was often guided by good intentions — such as a desire to protect and enhance property values for all residents — the implementation of the policies and practices created disparate effects. Wealthy, white communities frequently reaped the benefits while Black, immigrant, and low-income communities frequently suffered harm.

This approach of prioritizing the protection of property values failed. None of the five land use policies and practices stabilized and enhanced property values city-wide. Instead, some areas, typically white, enjoy high property values while others, often Black or low-income, suffer from low property values. As each land use policy or practice failed to change that imbalance, those in power — typically middle- and upper-class, white men — chose to layer on a new policy, which then exacerbated existing harms to Black and low-income communities.

- Restrictive covenants protected property values only in pockets of the city, typically middle- and upper-class, white areas.
- Zoning failed to protect and enhance property values citywide for property owners large and small through the application of the same kinds of restrictions as found in deed covenants. As implemented, it often protected and preserved white neighborhoods while encouraging the devaluing, disinvestment, and erasure of Black and low-income communities.
- Redlining's appraisal of high risk and low risk investment areas failed to protect and enhance property values citywide through the stabilization of financial investments. As implemented, insured, affordable mortgages were frequently approved for middle- and upper-class, white residents and frequently denied for Black, immigrant, and low-income residents.
- Urban renewal failed to protect and enhance property values citywide through major redevelopment projects. As implemented, it frequently erased Black or low-income neighborhoods deemed low value and replaced them with uses geared toward middle- and upper-class, white residents and commuters, which was thought to enhance property values but often did not.
- Historic preservation protected property values only in pockets of the city. As implemented, these areas were mostly middle- and upper-class white areas, but the few Black and low-incomes areas experienced increased displacement through preservation.

Property values are important. They are the largest source of funds for the city budget and cover the costs for much needed services such as fixing potholes and repaving roads. Property values are also a primary source of intergenerational wealth. However, 100 years of using property values as the guiding principle for land use policy has failed to stabilize and strengthen property values citywide and has created unequal outcomes for city residents based on race and class.

Pittsburgh needs a new priority to guide its land use policies. An alternative approach that we suggest is prioritizing people with compassion. We believe that placing people first will lead to more equitable and just decision making.

Reframing the priority for land use policies requires restructuring existing land use policies, including zoning, to reflect the new priority. Refocusing zoning to prioritize people with compassion starts with housing.

- Step one is diversifying the housing types allowed in zoning to promote affordability and align with the needs of Pittsburghers, based on conversations with the people who need the housing.
- Step two is allowing each housing type in areas where the residents can easily access the jobs, amenities, and services they need.
- Step three is coordinating with other policies that might create roadblocks to the creation of the new housing types, such as financing policies and building and fire codes.
- Step four is encouraging developers to build the new housing types.

Changing frameworks is difficult, especially when it's a multigenerational idea like this one. It requires a change of thinking across all players: government regulators of multiple disciplines, financers, developers, and the community. Such a shift takes time, but fixing a broken system is worth the effort. In the meantime, the next page introduces some smaller steps that can fit within the existing framework, but that help move existing land use policies toward a justice-oriented, people-centric approach.

"The way the system has over the various decades dealt with housing has not been to meet the needs of folks. It has been to meet the profits of the institutions that surround the whole housing industry."

Interview #11, resident & community organizer

Allow More Housing and Reduce Economic Barriers

Over the last 100 years, the city has continually increased the amount of land only available for single-unit housing. This places a hard limit on the amount of housing that can be built in the city. Limiting housing exacerbates today's housing crisis of an insufficient number of units to safely house all residents of Pittsburgh at rates that they can afford, which disproportionately harms Black and low-income residents. Amending the zoning code in three particulars can open the door for more housing to be built.

A. Allow two or more units to be built in more areas of the city.

B. Reduce or eliminate minimum lot size requirements to permit more affordable and retainable housing to be built on existing lots.

C. Reduce or eliminate setback requirements that make existing lots unbuildable.

Check for Implicit Bias

As our report shows, while explicitly racist tools like racial covenants and redlining are no longer legal, implicit forms of bias against Black, immigrant, and low-income people are still baked into zoning and other land use policies today. Working toward greater equity requires checking for implicit biases in land use policies and decisions, even if they may otherwise appear unbiased and well-intentioned.

One way to check for implicit racial bias is to analyze the relationship between the policy and the racial demographics of the city. For example, today, 77% of the city's exclusive detached single-family zoning districts are in areas with a supermajority of white residents. This suggests an implicit racial bias in the location of this type of zoning district.

Increase Inclusive Public Participation

As we advocate for in the Community, Power, and Process section, ensuring broader and more inclusive public participation in decision processes is another way to mitigate policy biases and ensure that policies reflect the needs and visions of residents from diverse backgrounds, including those who have been harmed by past and on-going policies.

Deeper Dives

This report provides only a short overview of the land use polices featured. Below are a few of the many resources available to learn more about these policies and their impacts.

Restrictive Covenants

Explore David Rotenstein's work on restrictive covenants in the Pittsburgh region in *Public Source*: Racist deeds still echo and Built for white people.

Zoning

1. Visit the city's website for more on Pittsburgh's current zoning ordinance including public hearings and how to participate.

2. Explore Details Reviewed's guide to Pittsburgh's current zoning districts.

3. Explore the 1923 zoning ordinance and the 1958 zoning ordinance in the Pittsburgh City Archives.

5. Watch the Urban Institute's video on zoning and how its shapes our lives.

6. To learn about more ways to reform zoning read Sara C. Bronin's book *Key to the City: How Zoning Shapes Our World* and M. Nolan Gray's book *Arbitrary Lines: How Zoning Broke the American City and How to Fix It.*

Redlining

1. For more on redlining in general, explore the University of Richmond's Mapping Inequality project and view NPR's "Housing Segregation in Everything" video.

2. For more on redlining's impact on fair housing in Pittsburgh, explore CMU CREATE Lab's EarthTime Story: Affordability and Fair Housing, April 2020.

3. For more on the correlations between zoning and redlining in Pittsburgh, explore Details Reviewed's research project Residential Zoning by Race.

Urban Renewal

Read Mindy Thompson Fullilove, M.D.'s book *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It.*

Historic Preservation

Visit the city's website on historic preservation and website on the historic review commission for more on Pittsburgh's current historic preservation program including public hearings and how to participate.

How to Get Involved

Throughout Pittsburgh's history, land use policy discussions have been largely dominated by the city's middle- and upper-class, white residents, particularly men, often to the exclusion of Black, immigrant, and low-income voices. Greater and more diverse public participation is needed to advance equity in the development and implementation of land use policies. Today, zoning, local historic preservation, and other development and land use policies are being actively debated with the potential to dramatically shape the future of the city.

Below are some ways to get involved.

Comprehensive Plan

Pittsburgh is currently developing a Comprehensive Plan, which establishes the guiding vision for future land use decisions in a city. Public engagement will be sought throughout the process, likely through multiple formats. Visit the EngagePGH page on the Comprehensive Plan for more on how to participate.

Zoning Amendments

From time to time, the zoning ordinance is amended, either to change the zoning district of a particular area or to change or add regulations based on the current needs of the city. Proposed amendments are heard by the Planning Commission and City Council. Public hearings are held throughout the process to gather public comment on proposed amendments.

It is common for cities to update or rewrite their zoning ordinances after adopting a new Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the ordinance aligns with the vision in the plan. In that case, there are typically additional opportunities for public engagement as the new ordinance is drafted.

Historic Nominations

The public may nominate landmarks or districts to receive historic designation. Nominations are heard by the Historic Review Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council. Public comment is welcome at these hearings.

"Nobody raises the question about it being an 'and' proposition. You don't have to do this to the exclusion of the community, but how do you do this with the community? And how do you think about small businesses, affordable housing? How do you make that part of the equation?"

Interview #1, resident & community organizer

Development Activities Meetings

Development Activities Meetings (DAM) are an opportunity for the public to engage with proposed development projects that require zoning or historic approval. A DAM is a meeting between the community and developers whose projects meet certain thresholds in areas where there are one or more Registered Community Organizations. The meetings are typically held prior to a public hearing at one of the boards or commissions of the Department of City Planning. While a developer may choose to modify the proposed project based on community feedback at these meetings, they may not be required to make changes to get approval.

"…[it was] not just what happened physically to communities, but what happened to people emotionally and spiritually when they started to lose like these relationships, these connections to buildings and streets...it gets transmitted generationally."

Interview #1, resident & community organizer

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