

Community Development Research: Opportunities for Collaboration on Racial Equity Work

Equity Advisory Committee

July 16, 2019



Today's discussion

- Research overview
- Rethinking [Areas of Concentrated Poverty] project & next steps

Community Development Research

Mission

Metropolitan Council's Community Development Research Team advances a better Twin Cities region for all by delivering trusted, useful information.

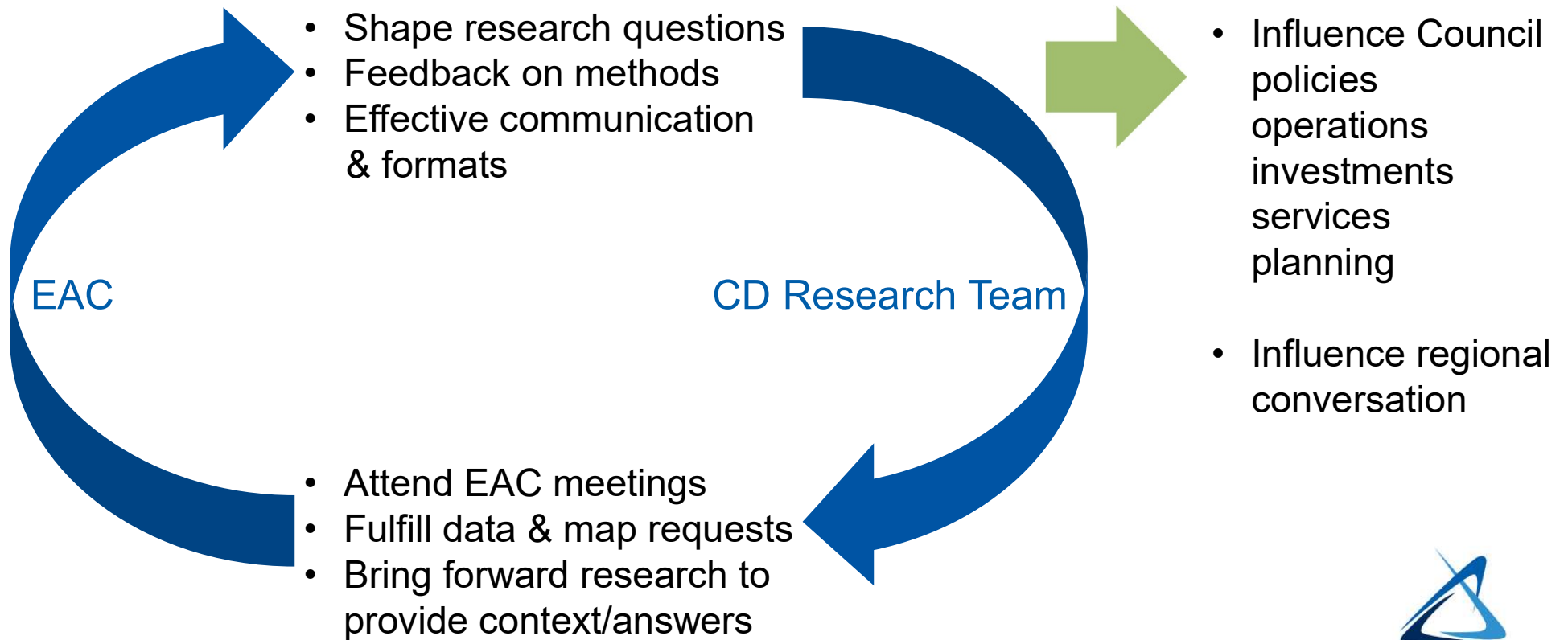
Vision

We envision equitable policy, planning, service, and investment decisions at the regional and local level that result in tangible benefits and opportunities for all residents of our region. We see our skills, creativity, and platforms as resources that further shared understanding about regional issues that matter.

Questions we're asking ourselves

- How can our research enhance the lives of residents across the region?
- What research questions are most pressing?
- What do we need to consider as we answer those questions?
- How can we make those answers available and understandable to everyone?

Ongoing partnership can yield actionable results



Research support on EAC workplan items

Examples:

- Parks equity grant program
- Suburban Neighborhood Transition project
- Council equity scorecard
- Extensive demographic data support
- Racial inequities in the region

Brief discussion

- Five minutes
- Comments, questions, suggestions about working with the CD Research Team

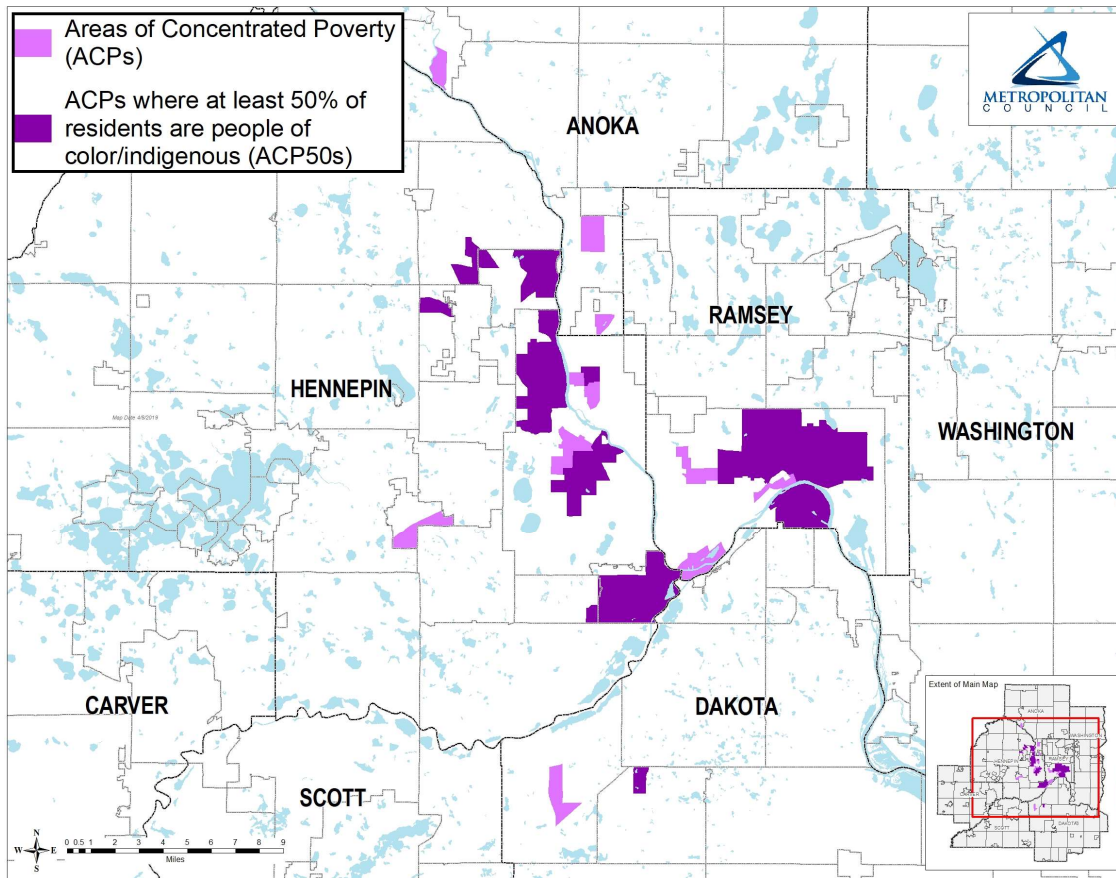
Rethinking [Areas of Concentrated Poverty]



What we'd like help with today

1. Are we headed in the right direction in exploring alternative measures to [Areas of Concentrated Poverty]?
2. We've proposed several other next steps. What do you think about these? What's missing?
3. How should we share our progress with you?

Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACPs)



- Census tracts where at least 40% of residents have incomes below 185% of the federal poverty threshold
 - \$45,510 for family of four in 2017
- HUD metric; adapted and used by Council since 2014
 - Updated annually

Areas of Concentrated Poverty as a measure

Original purpose

Snapshot of segregation by race & income at a metro-area level to inform fair housing needs and strategies

**Concentrated poverty \neq
Legacy of disinvestment due to
racially discriminatory practices**

Thrive MSP

Places where chronic private & public disinvestment has occurred (& where reinvestment is needed)

Places requiring special policy considerations

Community critiques of ACPs

- Only considers poverty (not inequality more broadly)
- Omits decades of history and root causes
- Discusses the harms of ACPs, neglecting their assets
- Problematizes people and places (rather than discrimination and disinvestment)

SHELTERFORCE

THE VOICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Speaking Up On Race, Housing, and Opportunity in Minnesota

Nelima Sitati Munene - January 11, 2019



'City Sidewalk, Saint Paul, Minnesota.' Photo by Tony Webster via flickr, CC BY 2.0

The stories we tell ourselves matter. Narrative plays an important role in defining whose voice gets heard, how issues are framed, and what solutions are developed.

The year 2018 marked 50 years since the Fair Housing Act was passed, and a big question among housing advocates was, are we closer to achieving fairness and equity when it comes to housing?



Distilling feedback and our own concerns

- 1. Concentrated poverty is an inadequate measurement of disinvestment**
 - Demographics are an incomplete proxy for place
 - Demographic data don't capture people's lived experiences
- 2. Unclear goals: what are we trying to accomplish by highlighting ACPs?**
 - Most people in poverty don't live in high-poverty neighborhoods
 - Creates harmful narrative about these communities
 - Sense of equivalency between more recent high-poverty areas in suburbs and places with decades of disinvestment

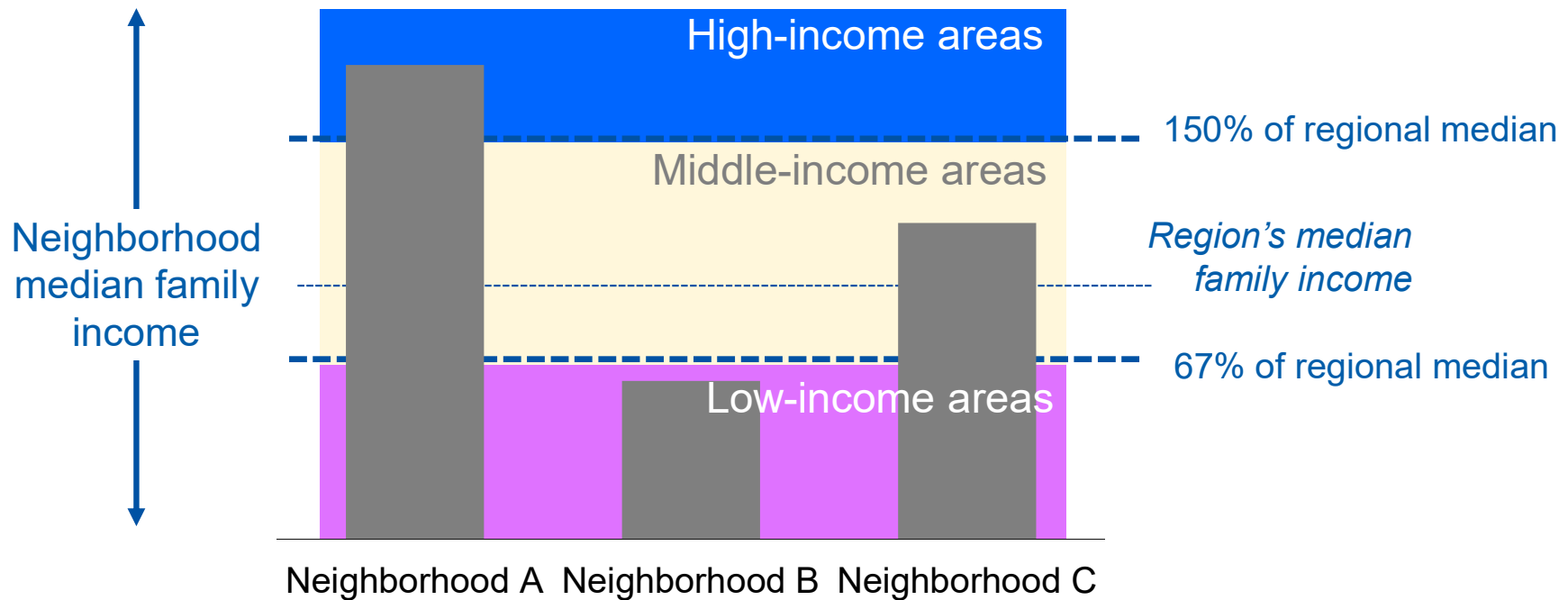
Addressing concerns: proposed next steps

- If Areas of Concentrated Poverty is an inadequate measure, what does a better one look like?
- Understand where/how/why Areas of Concentrated Poverty are used throughout the Council
- Engage community, lift up work that articulates needs and assets

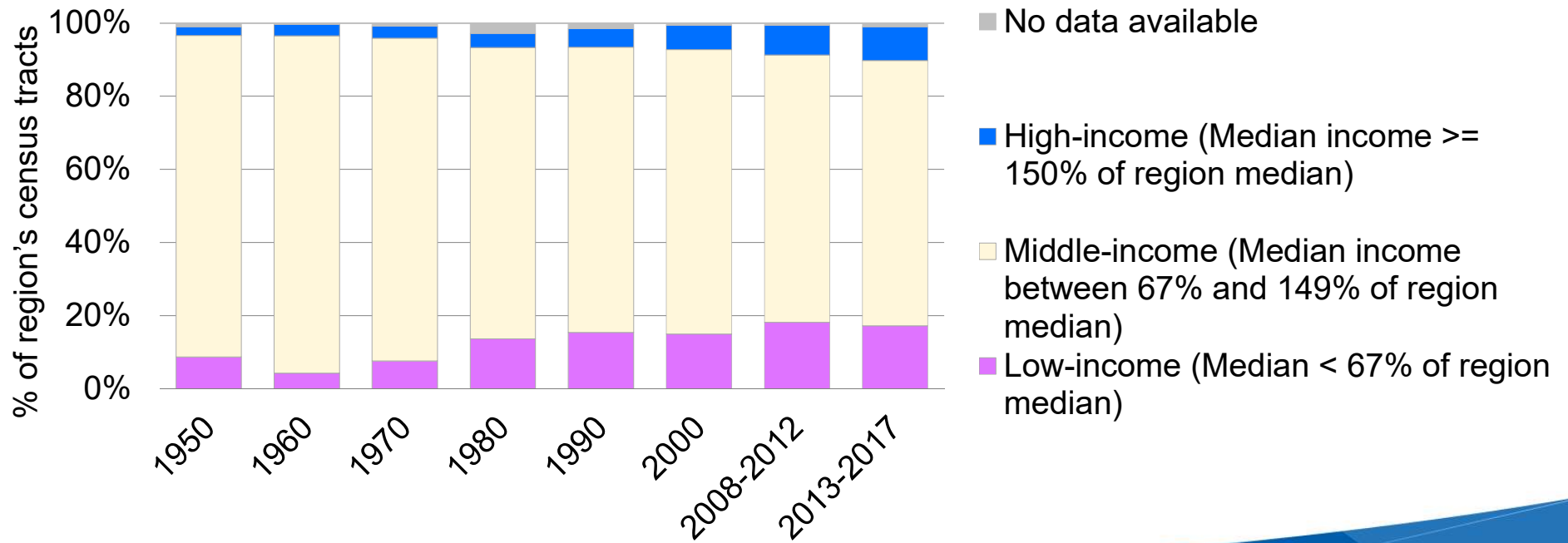
Partial fix #1: Focus on inequality, not poverty

- The idea:
 - The problem IS NOT concentrations of low-income people.
 - The problem IS the broader system that produces inequality.
 - Inequality is increasing across geographic areas, just as it's increasing across individuals and households.

What do we mean by inequality across areas?

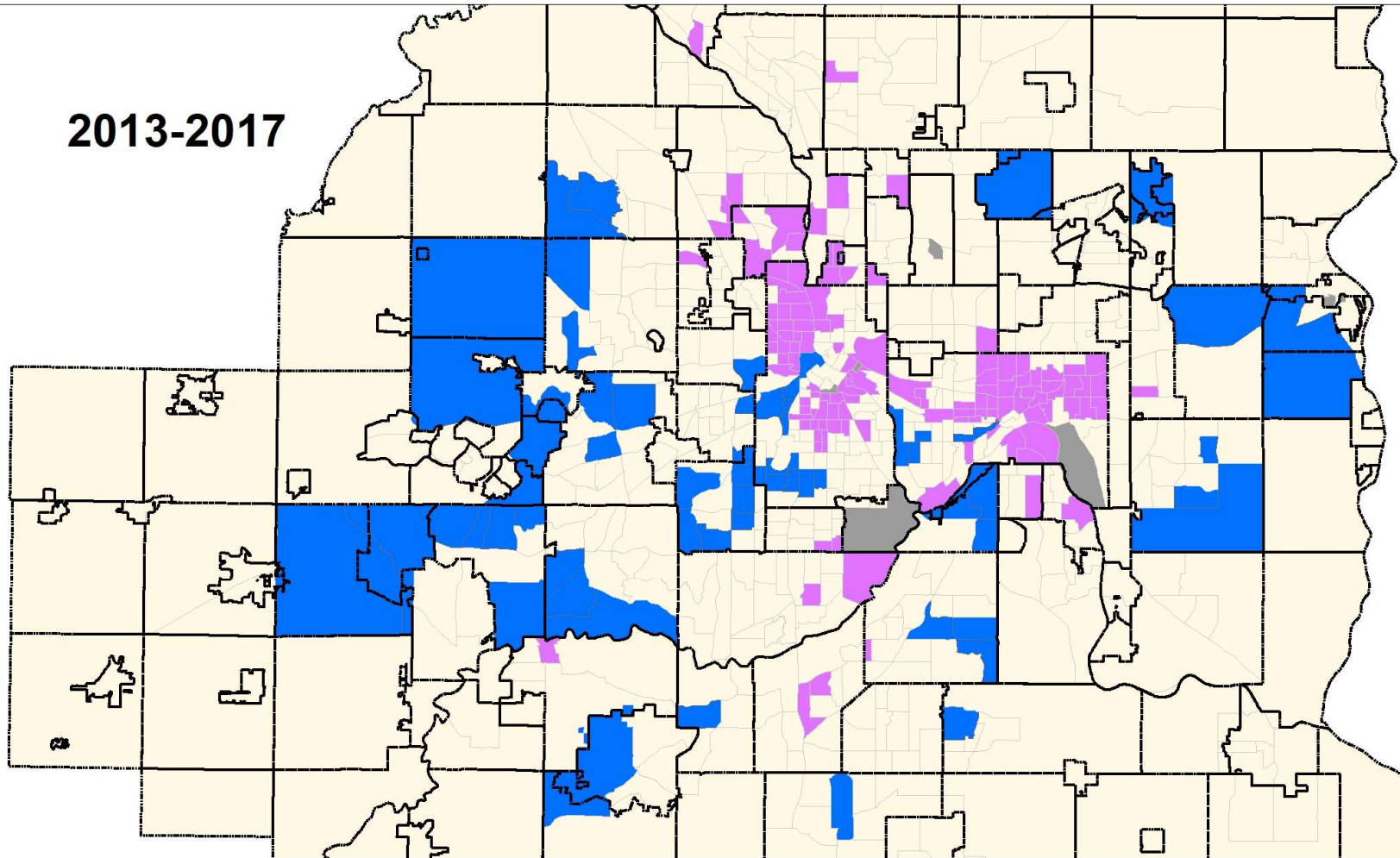


Inequality across areas is increasing



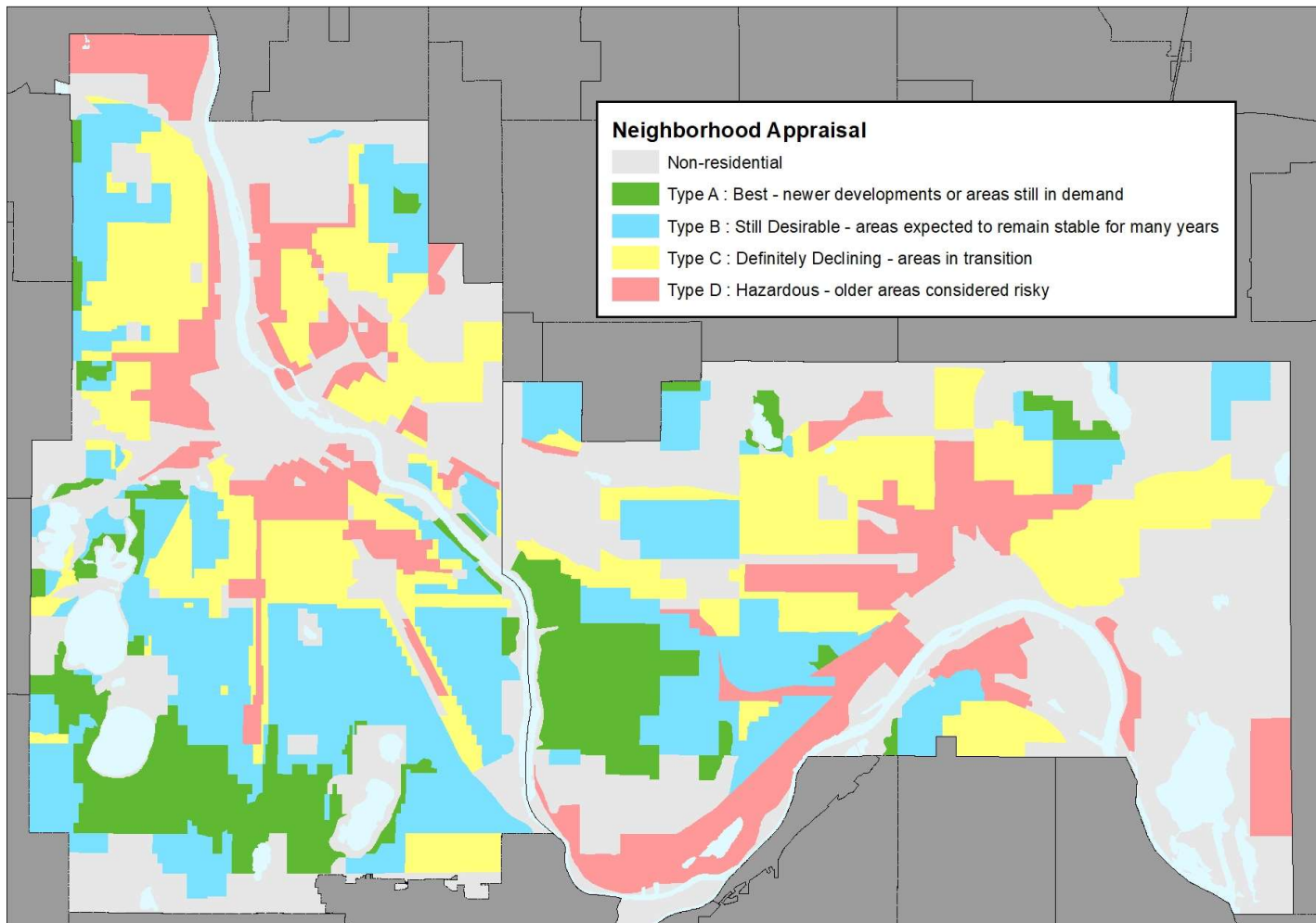
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census data (1950-2099) and American Community Survey five-year estimates (2008-2012 and 2013-2017).

2013-2017



Partial fix #2: Demonstrate disinvestment's impact

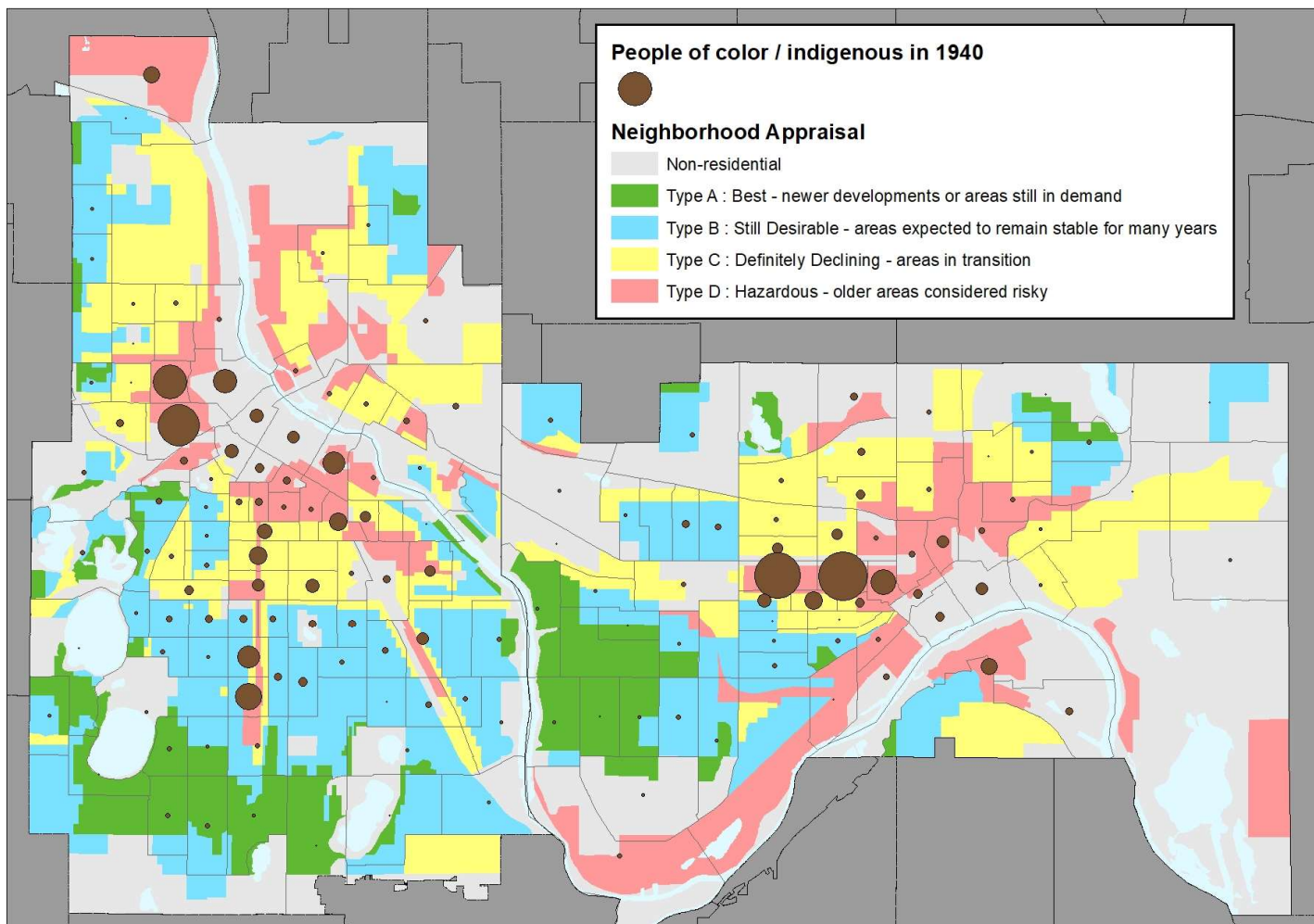
- The idea:
 - Low-income and high-income neighborhoods did not happen by accident.
 - Federal government decisions funneled resources away from some areas toward others.
 - The resulting disinvestment can be seen today as well.
- It's not just about the past! This still happens today; what follows is just one piece of the story.



This map was created in 1934 by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation.

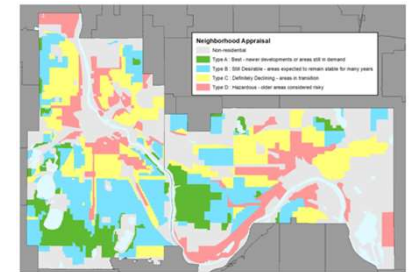
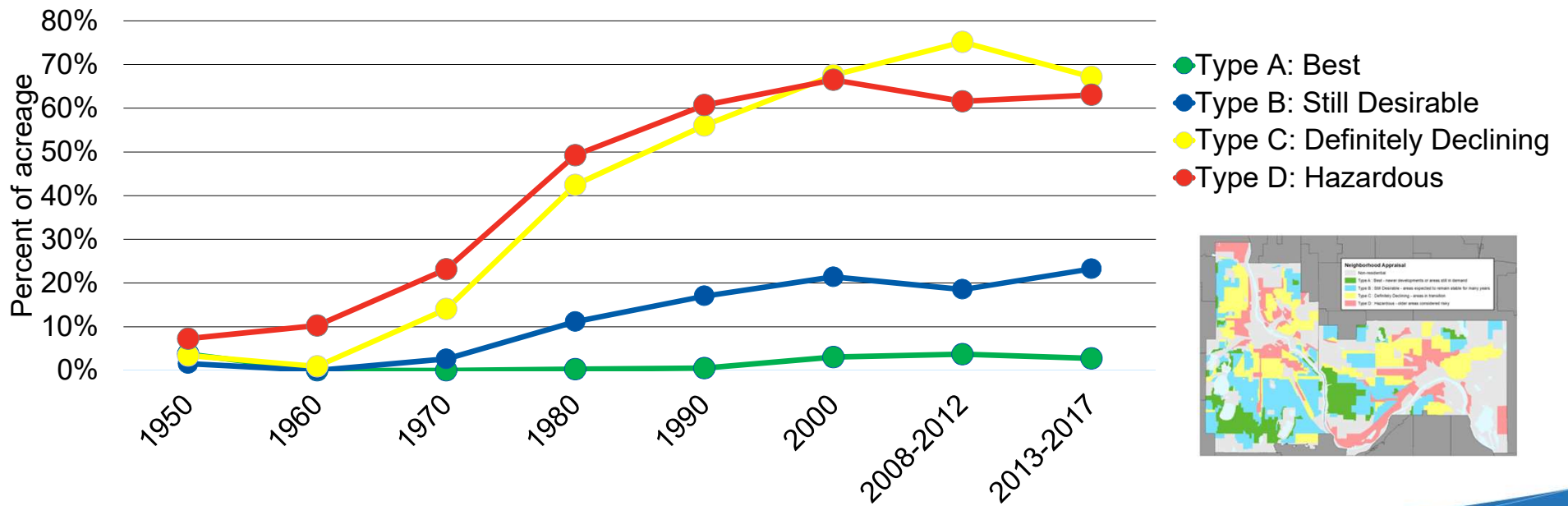
Local real estate professionals rated how risky it would be to insure mortgage loans in each area.

It was difficult to obtain a mortgage in the red and yellow areas.



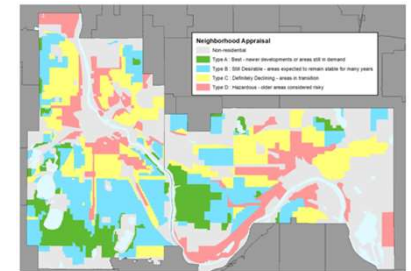
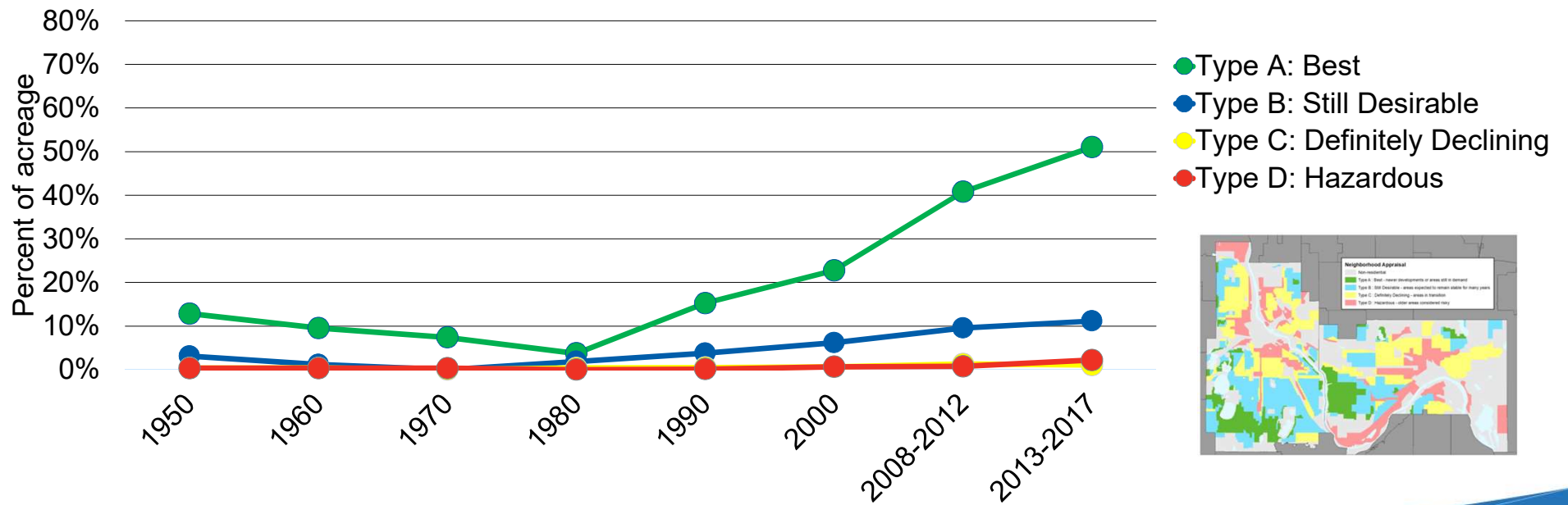
Race was a key factor in their ratings.

Red and yellow areas became lower-income

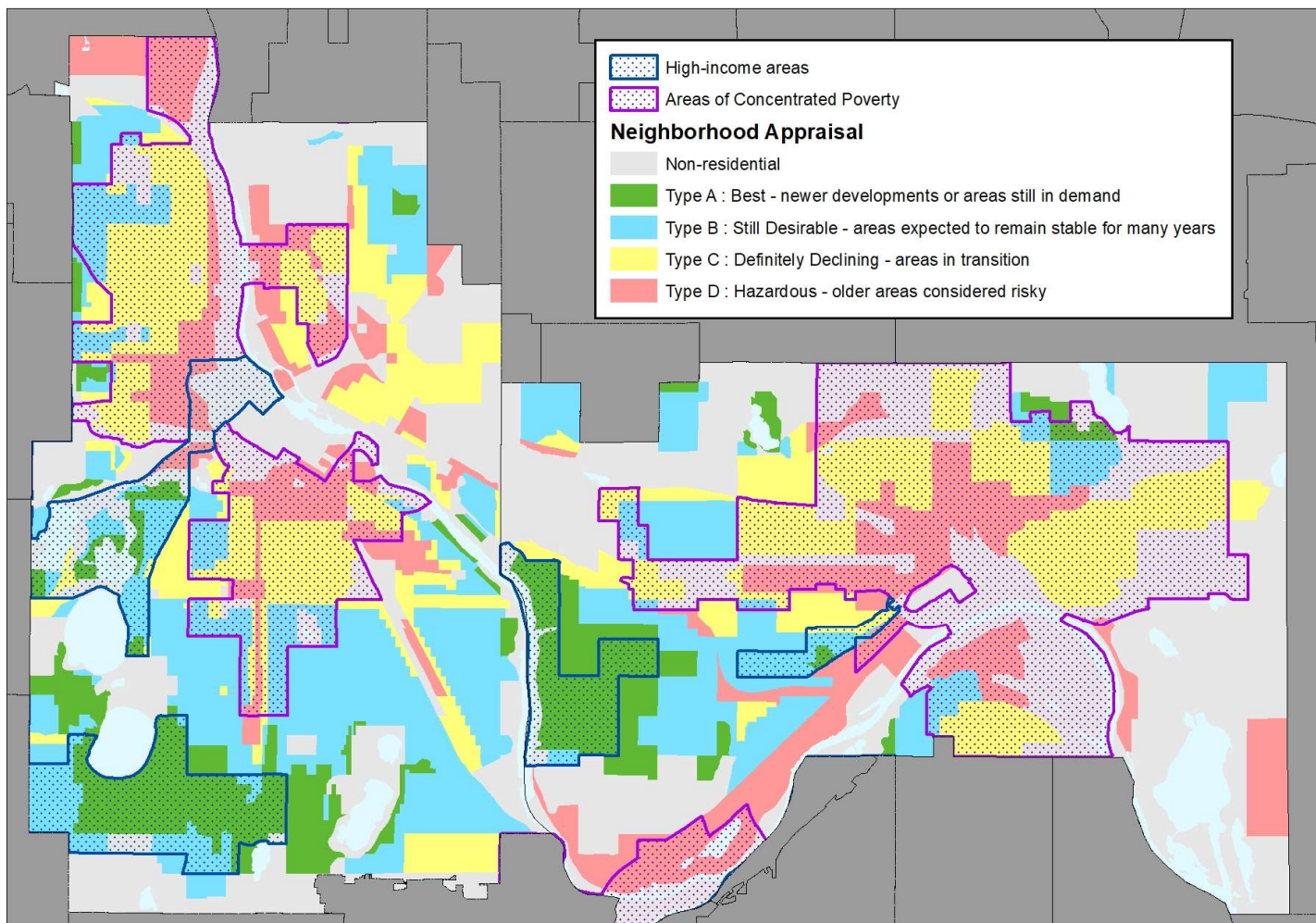


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census data (1950-2099) and American Community Survey five-year estimates (2008-2012 and 2013-2017).

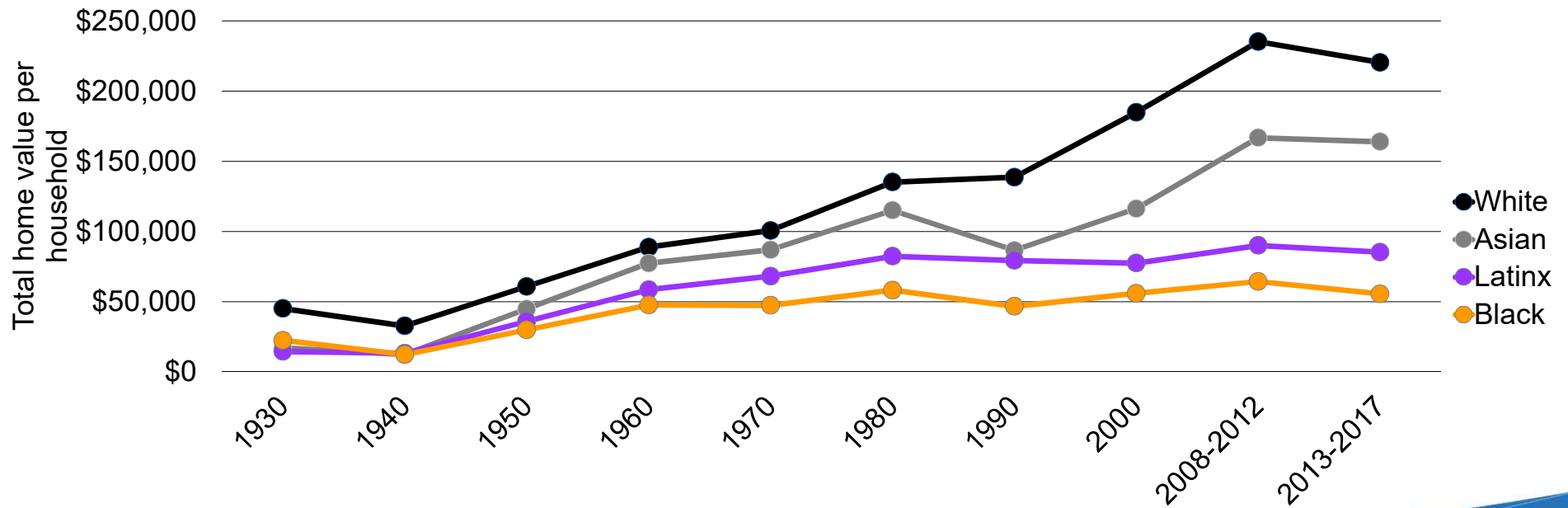
Green areas became higher-income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census data (1950-2099) and American Community Survey five-year estimates (2008-2012 and 2013-2017).



White households gained; Black households didn't



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census data (1950-2009) and American Community Survey five-year estimates (2008-2012 and 2013-2017). Data are not available for indigenous households. For 1950, data are not available, and the chart displays the linear interpolation between 1940 and 1960.

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What we'd like help with today

1. Are we headed in the right direction in exploring alternative measures to [Areas of Concentrated Poverty]?
 - a. Inequality?
 - b. Disinvestment?
 - c. Something else?

2. We've proposed several other next steps. What do you think about these? What's missing?

3. How should we share our progress with you?
 - a. Subcommittee?