

# Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty

Place is an important dimension of equity, but how we frame this discussion matters.

Metropolitan Council

July 22, 2020

1



# Overview

- Recap 'Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty' project and findings
- Describe our immediate and longer-term responses
  - Changes to our published dataset
  - Further research
- Discussion

## Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty

Place is an important dimension of equity, but how we frame this discussion matters.

Matt Schroeder, Krysten Ryba-Tures & Amy Plambeck  
Community Development Research Team | July 13, 2020



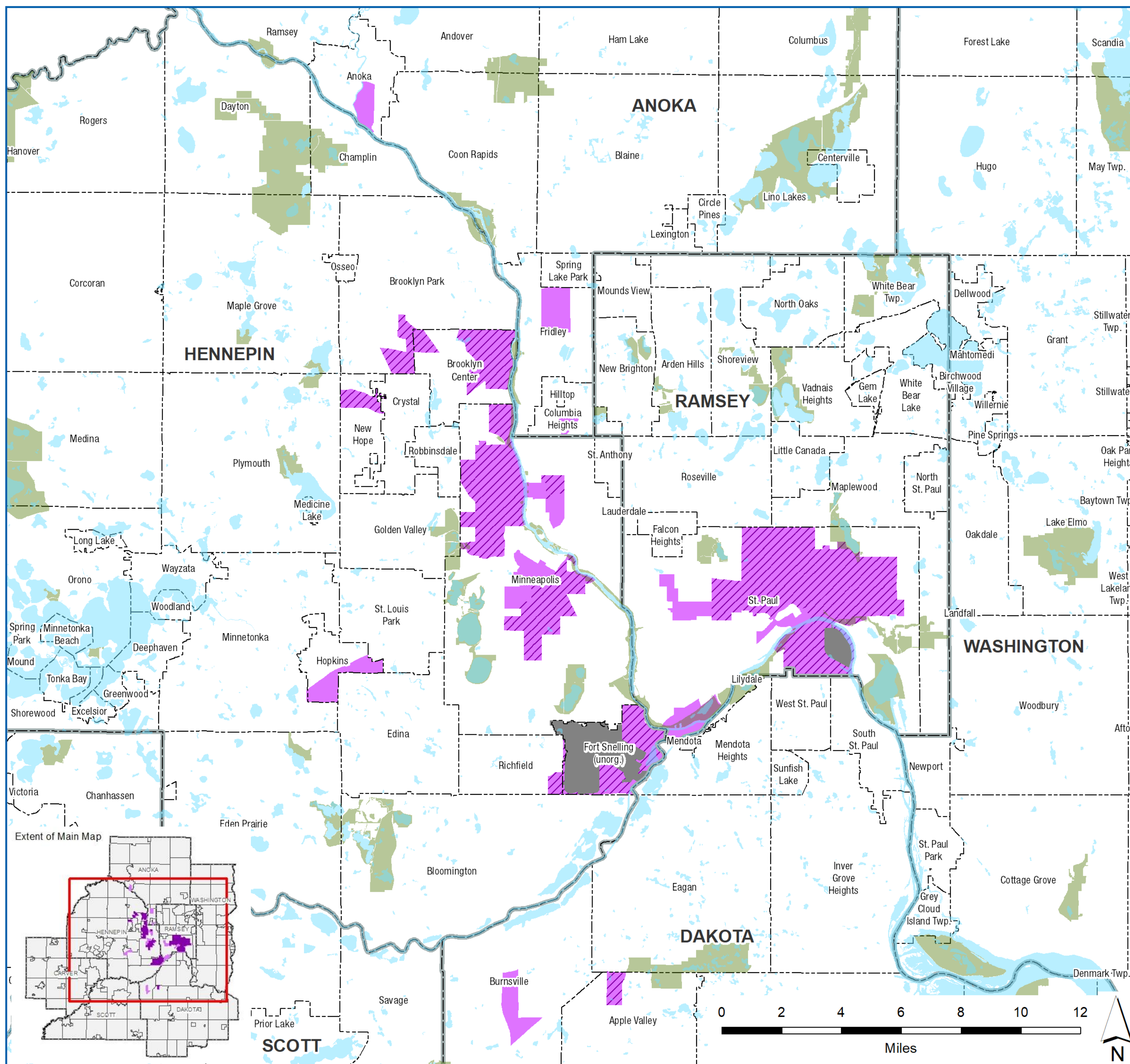
[Read the digital report](#)

# Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACPs)

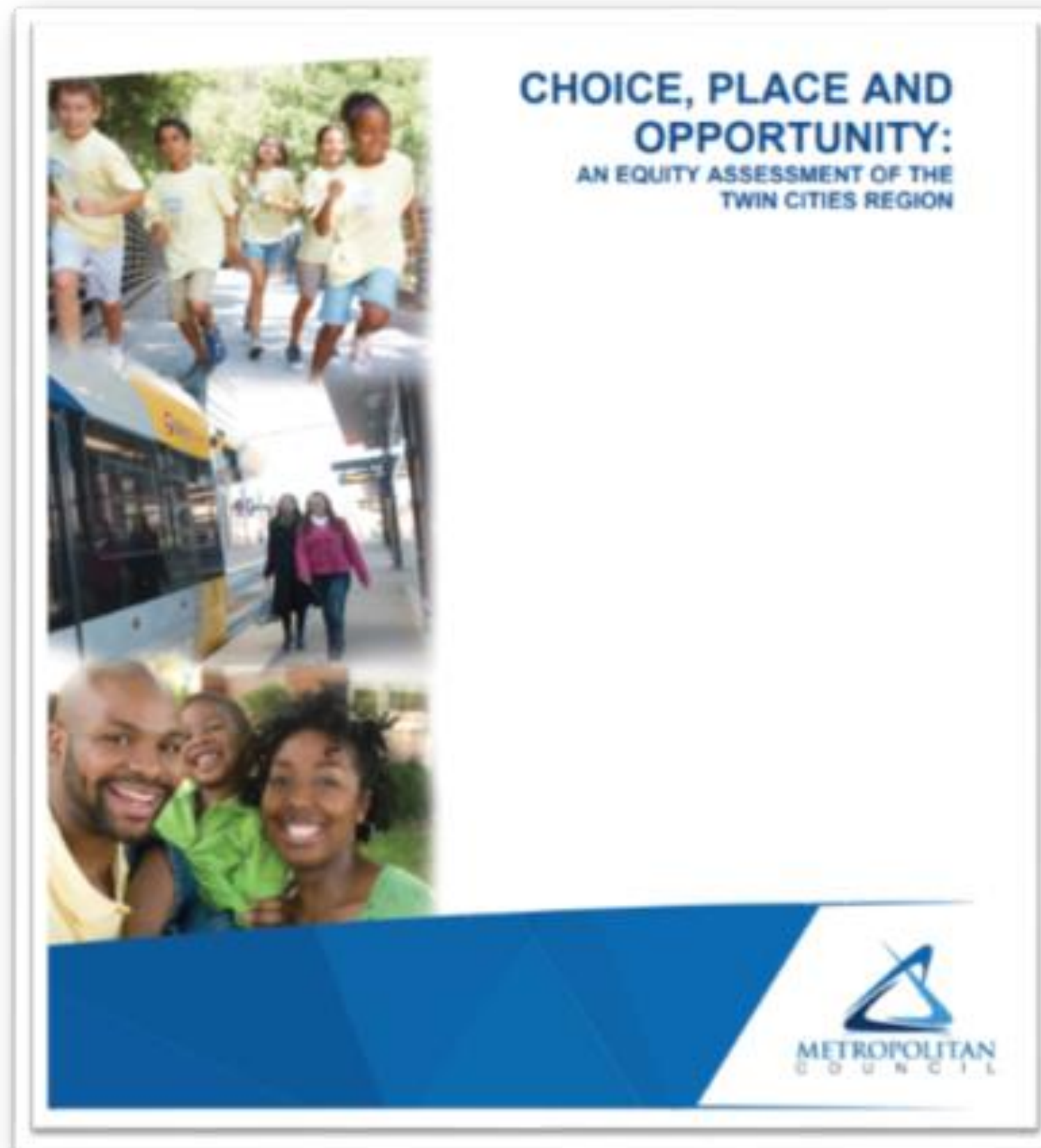
- Census tracts where at least 40% of residents have incomes below 185% of the federal poverty threshold\*
  - \$45,510 for family of four in 2017
- ACP subset: where majority are residents of color
- 2013-2017 mapped



METROPOLITAN  
COUNCIL



# 2014 Fair Housing and Equity Assessment



- Required by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grantees
- Specific analyses of residential segregation patterns and regional opportunity, fair housing issues
- Informed by community organizations, advocates, and regional stakeholders

# Research today supports policy tomorrow



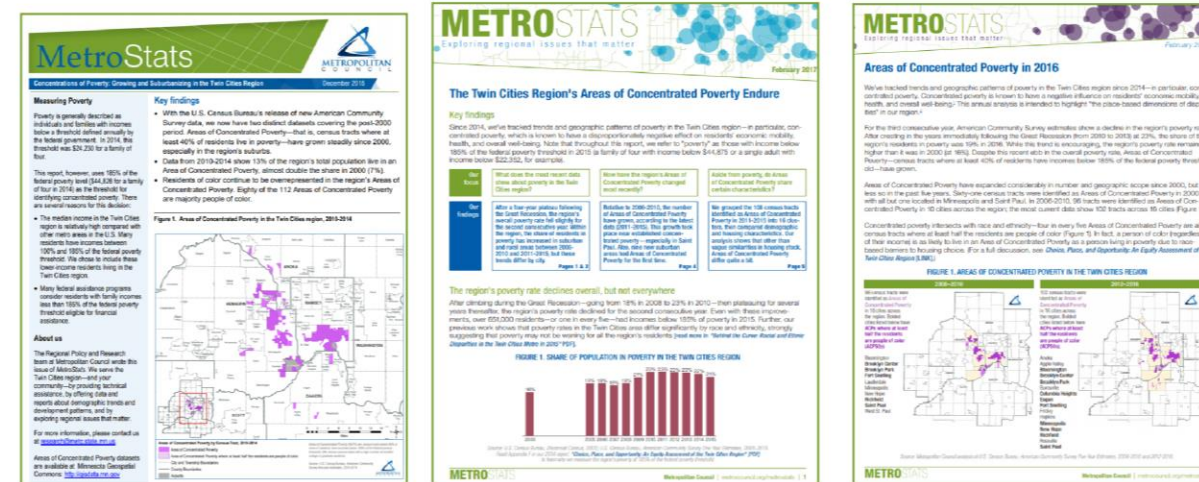
2011–2015

Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program require a Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA), a study of segregation by race & income and its drivers.



2014

The Council adopts its FHEA, *Choice, Place, and Opportunity*, in 2014. The findings influence two regional policy documents, *Thrive MSP 2040* and the 2040 Housing Policy Plan.



2015–2018

Council researchers publish an annual report and dataset on concentrated poverty.

2020–

Planning for the next regional development is currently underway.

2024

The Council adopts the next regional development guide and systems and policy plans.

Are the prevailing narratives and research tools centering concentrated poverty advancing regional equity?



# We listened

- Twenty listening sessions over 2019 and early 2020
  - Council staff (12)
  - Council Equity Advisory Committee (2)
  - Local jurisdictions (5)
  - Other (1)
- Following conversations led by community organizations, advocates
- Academic research and community development practitioners, including practices in peer regions

# We learned

## Overall themes

1. A shared understanding and tools are important to moving the regional conversation on equity forward. Council researchers have an important role to play.
2. That shared understanding needs to include much more than concentrated poverty. Calling attention to the full spectrum of inequality, root causes, and more characteristics of tracts would be helpful.
3. Many stakeholders, including local government staff, struggle with the tension between wanting to promote investment in these areas (and to diversify the housing stock) and fueling gentrification/displacement.

# We heard from you, Council Members:

- Data about concentrated poverty is useful, but our analysis could certainly be improved. This analysis is only one tool among others; data on areas of concentrated wealth would also be valuable.
- To understand how these dynamics play out in suburbs, we need to examine racially restrictive covenants.
- Shared, strong interest in understand how Areas of Concentrated Poverty are changing as well as how current Council policies and investments may be reproducing or creating inequities.
- We need to engage all stakeholders—particularly tribal elders—and let them influence the story.



# We reflected

- Taking stock of the Council's role in overemphasizing concentrated poverty, rather than the root causes that formed and sustain it, like structural racism
- The impact of deficit-based narratives to neighborhoods has tangible, negative consequences
- Narrowing focus on regional poverty trends; around place, equity, and community needs; and broader racial inequities

# We're responding

Now: publish data to support a shift in regional narratives

Changes to our current annual dataset and maps

Soon: research that reflects all voices

Undertake further research that centers community voices, needs and leverages new data to support place-based strategies

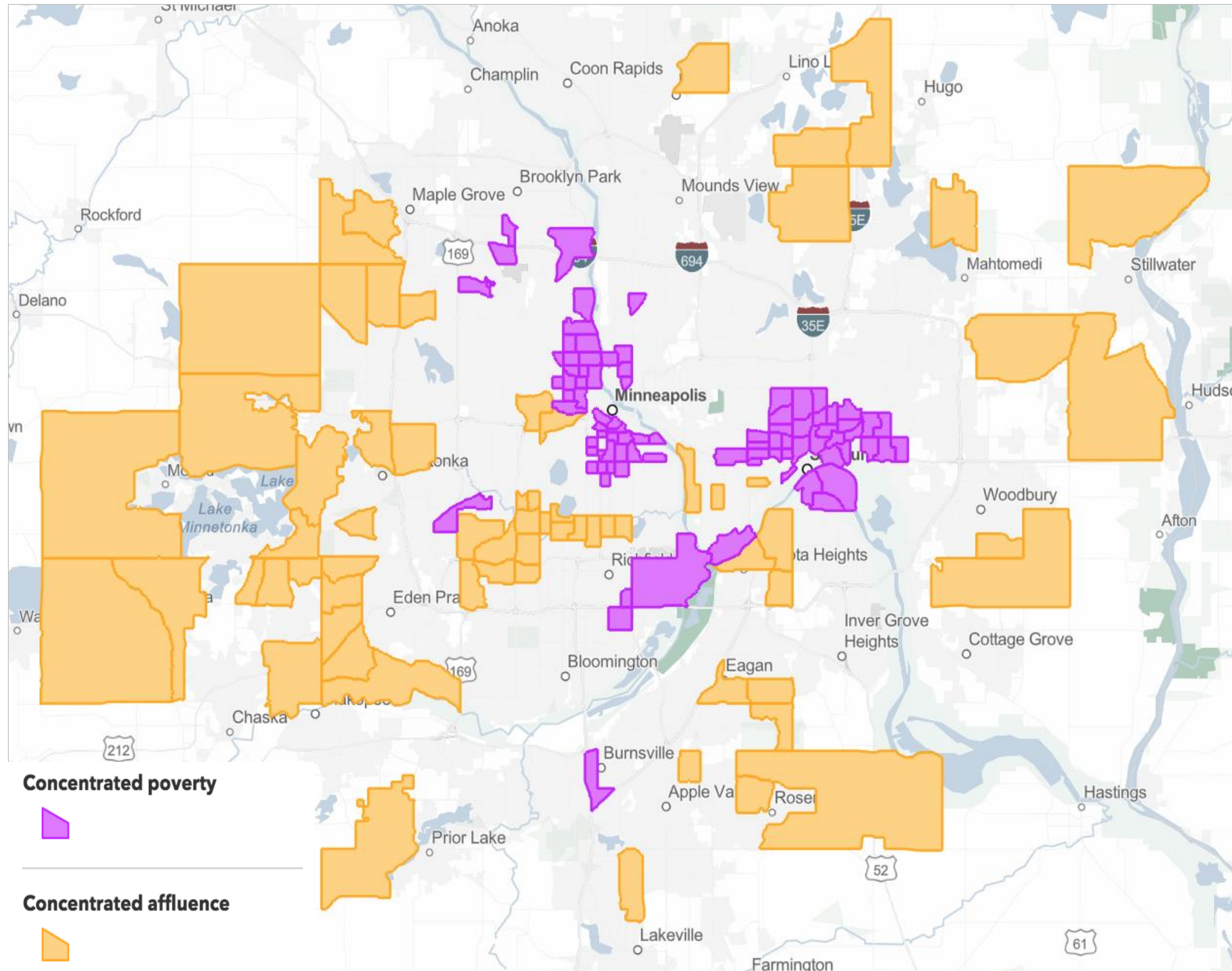
Longer-term influence

Next regional planning cycle

Council policies & practices

# We've added concentrated affluence

- “Affluent” = 500% of poverty threshold
  - \$128,500 for family of four in 2018
- “Concentrated affluence” = Tracts where the share of affluent people is two-thirds greater than the regional share (~65%)

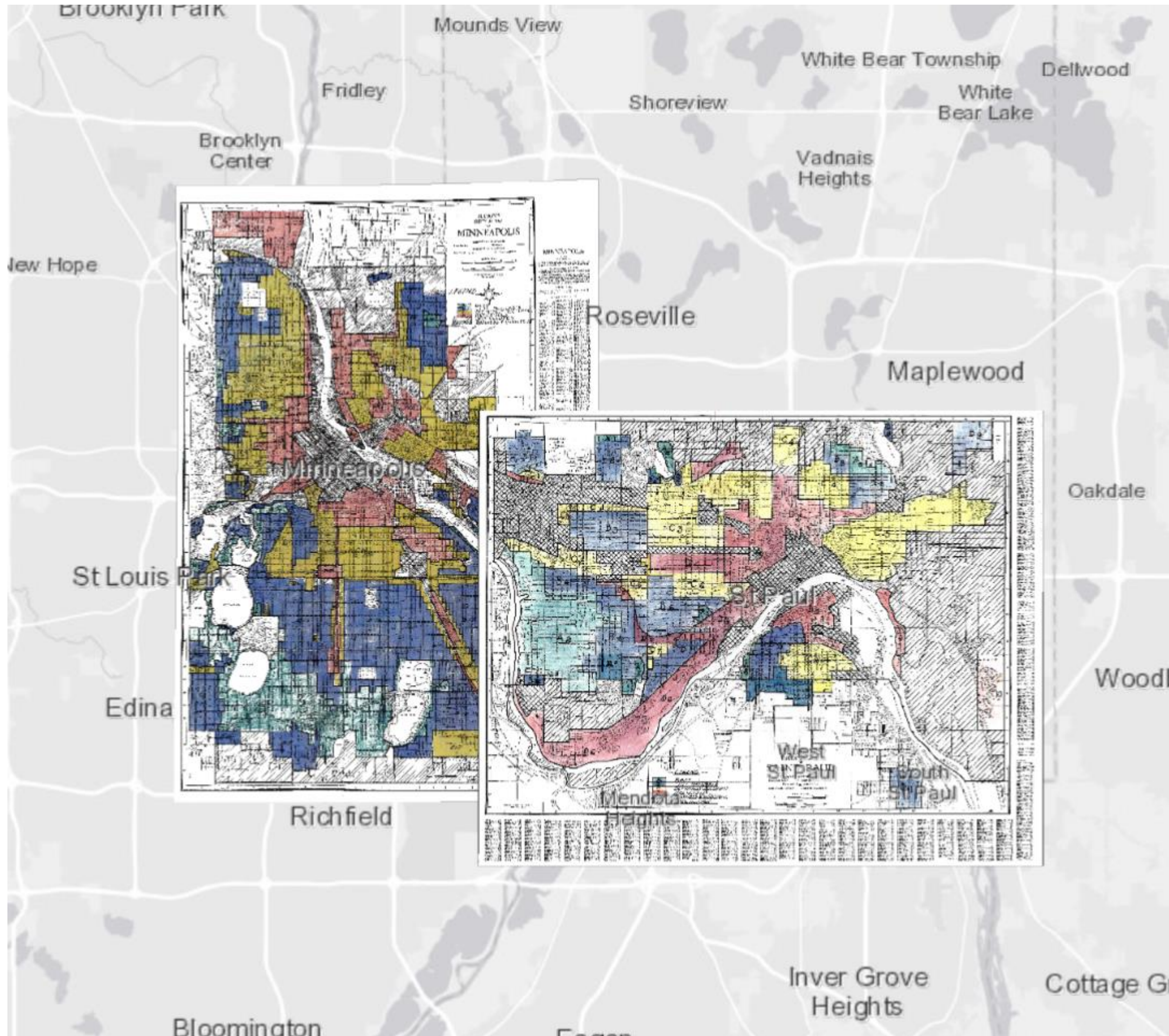


# We've added historical data on racial discrimination

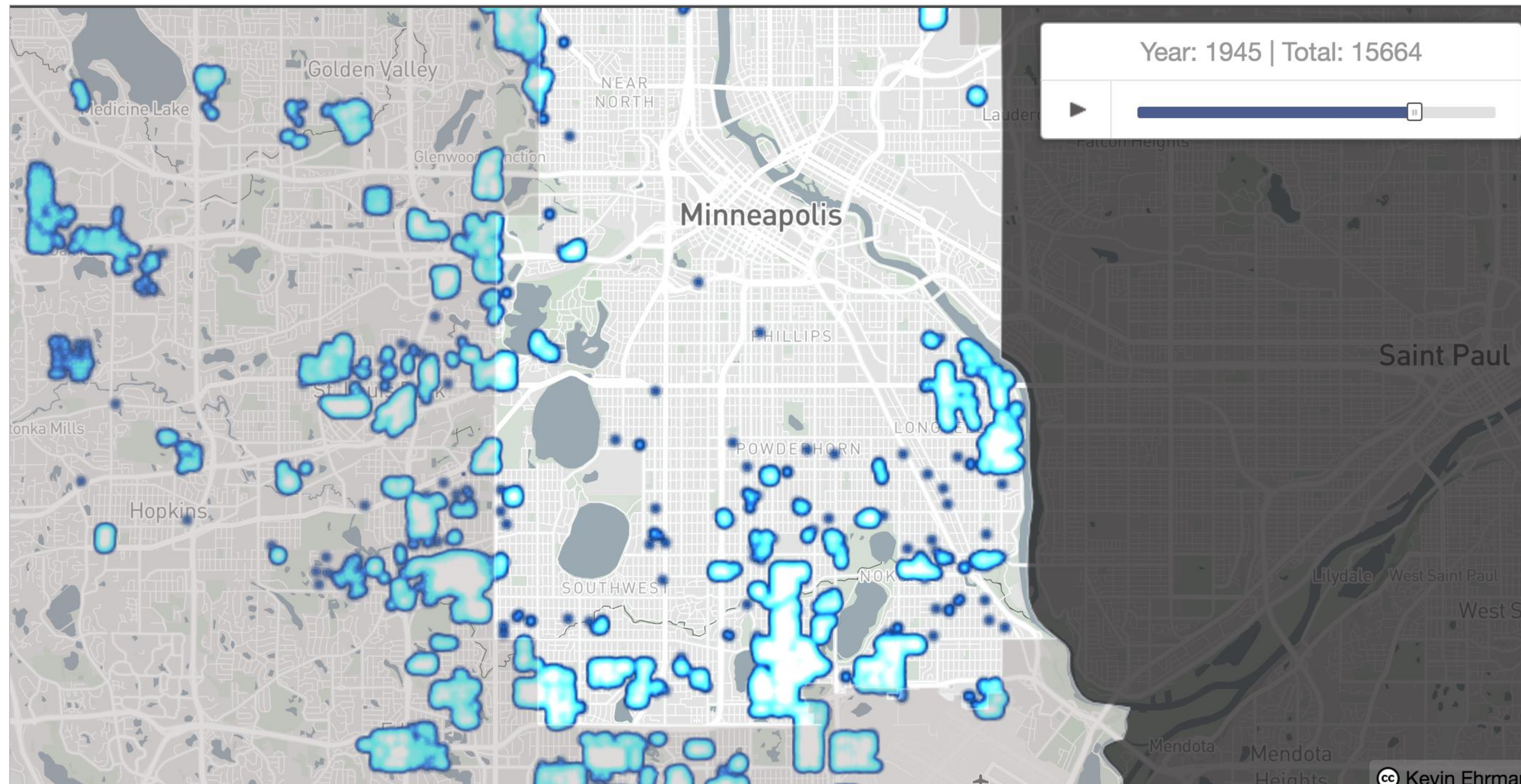
- Share of census tract by Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) "grades"
- Minneapolis and Saint Paul only



METROPOLITAN  
COUNCIL



# We've added historical data on racial discrimination



- Number of racially restrictive covenants by census tract
- Hennepin County now, more areas later
- Provided by Mapping Prejudice Project

# We've added disaggregated data by race and ethnicity

- Areas of Concentrated Poverty where at least 50% of residents are people of color (ACP50s) are no longer explicitly identified
  - Stop reinforcing people's automatic associations of poverty and people of color
  - Discourage lumping together many different groups
- Shift to full distribution of major groups defined in the American Community Survey
- Indicator for plurality (largest group in each tract)

# We've added housing and transportation data

## Housing

- Homeownership rate
- Cost burden
- Rents and home values
- Housing affordable at or below 60% of Area Median Income
- Recent development

## Transportation

- Households without vehicles
- Commute lengths
- How people commute

# Additional data (by December 2020)

- Immigrant communities
- Disability status
  
- Mortgage lending
- Commercial and economic development
- Ownership of rental units
- Environment and climate change
  
- Federal designations, like Opportunity Zones, Qualified Census Tracts, Economically Distressed Areas



# Research to support place & equity (2020—)

1. Residential preferences of low-income households (Metro HRA)
2. Economic Values Atlas (in partnership with GreaterMSP, CEI, others)
3. Place & equity study
  - Mixed-methods
  - Community-centered
  - Leverage new 2020 census data; develop local data with focus on assets, stories
  - Support regional policy (development guide, systems & policy plans)
  - Support Council place-based strategies

# Discussion

1. Reactions to our response so far (updates to our published datasets)?
2. What research questions do you have about place and equity? What do you hope to learn from upcoming projects described today?
3. How would you like to be engaged and/or support engagement efforts in this work?

# For more information

Matt Schroeder,  
Principal Researcher  
[matt.schroeder@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:matt.schroeder@metc.state.mn.us)

Krysten Ryba-Tures,  
Senior Researcher  
[Krysten.ryba-tures@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Krysten.ryba-tures@metc.state.mn.us)

## Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty

Place is an important dimension of equity, but how we frame this discussion matters.

Matt Schroeder, Krysten Ryba-Tures & Amy Plambeck  
Community Development Research Team | July 13, 2020



[Read the digital report](#)