EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLACE-BASED DECISIONS AND ADVOCACY

User Guide

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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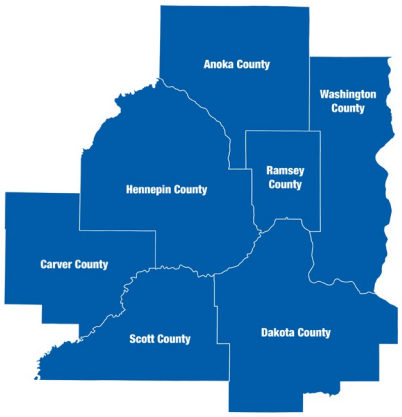

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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Foreword

Since 2014, the Metropolitan Council has published data and reports that highlight "Areas of Concentrated Poverty" (ACPs) as a metric for regional equity.[1] It began with the Choice, Place and Opportunity report, and the inclusion of this data was a starting point for raising public awareness around residential segregation and related impacts.

A subset of this data, "Areas of Concentrated Poverty where at least 50% of residents are people of color" (ACP50s), became an additional focus because these areas also coincide with further race-based discrimination, and residents who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color (BIPOC) are more likely than White residents to live in high-poverty neighborhoods, regardless of their income.

Advocates, academics, and policymakers have raised concern with these measures, because they frame low-wealth communities and communities of color as problematic, while the root causes of these inequities – namely structural racism – go unnamed and unaddressed.[2] Furthermore, the deficit-based narrative of concentrated poverty creates tangible, negative impacts on the neighborhoods within these designations, even within this relatively short timeframe.[3]

These advocates are correct. We unequivocally accept responsibility for our role in overemphasizing concentrated poverty and acknowledge the harm that overemphasis has caused. An early step toward remedy and repair is publishing a new data resource that supports refocusing our regional narrative on a more holistic portrait of neighborhoods and their residents.

We have also discontinued identifying Areas of Concentrated Poverty where the majority of residents are people of color (ACP50s), for reasons detailed later in this document. We acknowledge the reluctance of some stakeholders to abandon ACP50s. Given the widespread focus on how concentrated poverty harms residents' life chances, and the wide availability of poverty data, it is easy for many audiences to use poverty rates as a proxy for many kinds of place-based inequities. Our own research and policies have encouraged this, and some cities have followed our lead by adopting ACP50s as "equity areas"—places where additional investments or assistance will help reduce or eliminate our region's large and persistent inequities by race and ethnicity.

After taking a closer look at the use and impact of poverty-based measures, however, we offer that holistic data and people-centered approaches are preferable to the blunt tool that ACP50s may present. Poverty and race simply cannot stand in for everything a community wants and needs. We're providing technical assistance to local jurisdiction staff and other users on transitions to alternative equity measures, emphasizing the limitations of data when not paired with community engagement and partnership. This document is one part of those efforts.

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[1] The Twin Cities' regional development guide, *Thive MSP 2040*, identified Areas of Concentrated Poverty as an equity focus and Special Feature.

[2] For more detail on advocates' perspectives that have shaped this project, see essays by *Nelima Sitati Munene* and *Edward G. Goetz*.

[3] See p. 57-58 of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) 2019 study, *"The Diversity of Gentrification: Multiple Forms of Gentrification in Minneapolis and Saint Paul."* Qualitative findings describe an observed pattern of deficit-based narratives contributing to a disinvestment and devaluation process, increasing economic vulnerability and the risk of gentrification and displacement.

Engagement completes the *Equity Considerations* dataset

> *"As policymakers, elected officials, philanthropists, and nonprofit leaders shift resources to data-driven programs, they must ensure that community engagement becomes a critical element in that shift. Without such engagement, even the best programs—even programs backed by the most robust data—will not yield positive results, let alone lasting change."*[4]

Most of this document describes a new resource—a dataset called "Equity Considerations for Place-Based Advocacy and Decisions"—that we first published in July 2020 and expanded in February 2021. But the most important thing you need to know about it is this: **alone, it is incomplete and inadequate for advancing regional equity in the Twin Cities.**

One of the most consistent themes in our own multiyear engagement effort to "Rethink Areas of Concentrated Poverty" was that without pairing our data with community engagement, without pursuing qualitative methods, without tapping into and bringing forward the wisdom of community members themselves—there would be limits to our shared understanding and therefore to the ideas and policies and decisions that could improve the lives of people through place-based strategies. It's a simple, but not easy—and certainly not new—call to action. We (and, we hope, all users of this data) are committed to accepting these limitations, seeing the opportunity to include other ways of knowing, and meeting that call.

We're building our own engagement practices and qualitative methods within the Community Development Research Team, including how to pivot our own work toward community-based participatory research principles.[5] In other words, we're walking with you and, in many cases, learning from you. Below, we've assembled the resources that have been shared with us and that we found helpful (It is by no means exhaustive and primarily focuses on community engagement in government research or policymaking.)

- *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)* hosts resources, frameworks, and trainings "for use in developing and implementing public participation processes to help inform better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities."

- The Greenlining Institute's 2020 report, *Making Equity Real in Research,* offers key steps to creating partnership-based research and shares learnings, reflections and discussion questions toward that purpose.

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[4] Melody Barnes & Paul Schmitz, *Community Engagement Matters (Now More Than Ever)* (Stanford Social Innovation Review; 2016).

[5] This is in keeping with *Thrive MSP 2040*'s call to "engag[e] a full cross-section of the community in decision-making" as part of its Equity outcome and Collaboration principle. The Council has developed a *Public Engagement Plan* that outlines the principles underlying this effort.

- *Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE)* publishes an array of tools and papers on how to advance racial equity. Particularly relevant to this work is their 2016 paper, *Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity.*

- The Metropolitan Council's Local Planning Assistance unit provides many links to *effective engagement practices for local governments*.

- A series of case studies from *Race Forward* highlights the work of the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) East Salinas Collaborative, and its multiyear process to "redefining partnership and shifting the paradigm of what a true community-driven collaboration between government, community organizations and philanthropy."

- PolicyLink published an *Inclusive Processes to Advance Racial Equity in Housing Recovery: A Guide for Cities during the Covid-19 Pandemic*, a "brief designed to help local government leadership and staff design public processes that use this crisis as an opportunity to further racial equity and build community capacity."

- The City of Hopkins *has used many different ways* to listen actively to what its residents want and need, including holding meetings in multiple locations, using formats other than formal business meetings, and offering a regular program for citizens to learn more about the structure of City government and how it works.

- A few recent examples of engagement-led initiatives from the Metropolitan Council include *Metro Transit's Better Bus Stops program* and the *Regional Parks Unit's 2019 Youth & Parks study*.

- Lastly, we would be remiss not to mention that many communities are already engaged. Community organizations lead the development of "small area" or neighborhood plans that put forward shared visions of the future in the context of current needs.[6] Advocates and organizers are constantly engaging residents on equity issues in large developments or infrastructure projects.[7] Accordingly, we strongly recommend working within your institution/agency to understand what has already been shared through past engagement efforts; it is important to show up informed.

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[6] Most Minneapolis and Saint Paul neighborhoods have planning councils that support the development of these documents. See, for example, Saint Paul's Frogtown Neighborhood Association's innovative Small Area Plan (SMaPL).

[7] Examples include the Blue Line Coalition and The Alliance.

Equity Considerations Dataset

Overview

The Metropolitan Council has published a new dataset, "Equity Considerations for Place-Based Advocacy and Decisions in the Twin Cities Region," that provides equity-relevant characteristics for each of the 704 census tracts in the Twin Cities region.[8] Formerly known as the Areas of Concentrated Poverty dataset, it has been expanded to provide a much more nuanced portrait of neighborhoods and their residents, with data on:

- **Geography** (other areas each census tract lies within, and designations that apply to it)
- **Basic demographic** characteristics (total population, age, household size)
- **Race and ethnicity** (including detailed breakouts of major race categories)
- **Migration** (including when people arrived in the US and how recently they moved to their current house)
- **Disability status**
- **Socioeconomic** characteristics (poverty, affluence, education, and work)
- **Historical discrimination** (redlining and racially restrictive covenants)
- **Housing** (rates of housing cost burden, rent, when units were built, number of bedrooms for rental units, where owners of rental units are located, evictions)
- **Development** (residential and nonresidential)
- **Land use**
- **Environment and climate** (heat island, flood vulnerability, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution)
- **Amenities** (distances to buildings like hospitals and libraries)
- **Employment** (jobs by wage, where workers come from, demographics of workers)
- **Transportation and commuting** (vehicle and transit availability, where residents commute to, how residents get to work)

By bringing together key measures across planning topic areas, we hope to highlight 1) that census tracts are much more diverse and multifaceted than a narrow focus on poverty rates would imply and 2) that advancing equity requires both a holistic understanding of current conditions and historical context.

Changes to poverty measures

The *Equity Considerations* dataset reflects our ongoing dialogue with users and stakeholders on how we can best support people-centered, place-based strategies and narratives that advance regional equity. During an 18-month engagement project, we heard a range of perspectives, concerns, and support; rarely was there broad consensus, even among Council staff and stakeholders.[9] That said, we arrived at the following decisions regarding poverty measures in the *Equity Considerations* dataset:

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[8] For consistency with existing data sources, we use the tracts from the 2010 Census. Once 2020 Census data is released later this year, we will provide data for the new set of tracts.

[9] Please see the Council's *2020 digital report, "Rethinking Areas of Concentrated Poverty,"* for full engagement results.

1. **We heard from various groups that Areas of Concentrated Poverty are useful to have, and we will continue to identify them**.[10] We have also added information on median incomes and other parts of the income distribution to support deeper explorations of economic dynamics in neighborhoods.[11]

2. **However, we've added a counterpoint to concentrated poverty—concentrated affluence.** Areas with high poverty rates are part of the same regional economy and society that produce highly affluent areas. Both poverty and affluence shape people's life chances, so we need to pay attention to the entire spectrum of regional inequity and its root causes. We encourage users to analyze and present data by both measures, to generate information—and discussion—parity.

3. **We are no longer explicitly identifying "Areas of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color" (ACP50s).**
   - The concept of ACP50s links race and poverty in a way that is not justified by data. A focus on places that have both high poverty rates and high shares of BIPOC residents risks reinforcing the stereotype that most BIPOC residents are in poverty and live in high-poverty neighborhoods. In fact, a majority of BIPOC residents are not in poverty and live outside of high-poverty neighborhoods.
   - Calling out majority-BIPOC areas can also imply that concentrations of BIPOC residents are inherently bad. Systemic barriers (created by White and higher-income people) certainly contribute to racial and economic segregation across neighborhoods, but many people choose to live in majority-BIPOC neighborhoods for a variety of reasons, such as staying close to family and friends or appreciating the rich history and culture of these areas.
   - Focusing on the global BIPOC category (versus using disaggregated data) obscures the racial and ethnic diversity of these neighborhoods and the many identities of their residents, treating BIPOC residents as interchangeable. To remedy this, we are now providing more detail on race and ethnicity.

Accessing the data

Users can find the *Equity Considerations* data on the *Minnesota Geospatial Commons*. The complete dataset includes nearly 300 fields. It can be difficult to scroll through that many columns to find the characteristic(s) of interest, and it is also too wide to join with shapefiles in GIS software. In addition to providing the complete dataset, we are making it easier to use by splitting it into five additional pieces listed below. For the complete listing of fields, sources, and the file(s) they can be found in, see the *Equity Considerations Fields Excel file* on our website. All files have basic geographic information and estimates of housing units, households, and population.

The data includes six Excel workbooks:

1. Complete dataset, with all fields
2. Overview, with the most requested fields
3. Geography, basic demographics, migration, and disability status

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[10] We are frequently asked how the Council arrived at its definition of Areas of Concentrated Poverty, which departs from the definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Please see Appendix F (pg. 36) of the *Choice, Place, and Opportunity* report for a full discussion.

[11] For example, CURA's 2019 study noted deepening poverty and declining median incomes alongside growth in very high-income households within gentrifying census tracts. See p. 25-28 of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) 2019 study, *"The Diversity of Gentrification: Multiple Forms of Gentrification in Minneapolis and Saint Paul."*

4. Race, ethnicity, and cultural groups
5. Socioeconomic measures, historical discrimination, and housing
6. Transportation/commuting, jobs, development, amenities, land use, and environment/climate

To assist GIS users, the data also includes geospatial data for census tracts joined with the "overview" file as well as the dissolved outlines of Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Areas of Concentrated Affluence. Finally, two layer files—one outlining the most current set of ACPs and ACAs; the other showing the number of ACS datasets in which tracts have been ACPs or ACAs—provide convenient ways for users to display these commonly requested characteristics.

We anticipate that many users will use the Excel files as stand-alone products outside of GIS software. While the Excel files identify the primary city or township in which each tract is located, you will need to consult other sources to find tract boundaries. Official tract reference maps (organized by county) can be found on *the Census Bureau's website*. You can also explore interactive maps via *PolicyMap* *the Census Bureau's TIGERweb product*.[12]

Highlighting Uses, Recognizing Limitations

Tabular data

This dataset shows the characteristics of geographic areas, not the characteristics of individual people or households. Accordingly, it is not well-suited for certain research and policy questions. (For more detail, see the *"Use cases"* section below.) Specific cautions include:

- **You cannot necessarily infer anything about individuals from patterns across geographic areas**. For example, tracts in this dataset with higher shares of children also have a higher median household income—but it would be absurd to use this as evidence that children earn more money than adults. Similarly, tracts with higher shares of BIPOC residents also have higher shares of single-person households. One might argue from this that BIPOC households are smaller than White households, but this is not the case when we look at individual households. Even when the associations are supported by theory—for example, tracts with higher shares of BIPOC residents also have lower homeownership rates, in line with well-documented inequities in homeownership—researchers should not use this to draw any conclusions about the *degree* to which BIPOC residents are less likely to own their homes.
- **Patterns found in geographic areas may arise for many different reasons**. One major lesson of this dataset is that not all high-poverty areas are the same; it is worth emphasizing this point for other characteristics as well. For example, some areas have relatively high shares of people who haven't worked in the past year, but the underlying dynamics can be quite different. There are several reasons why people would not have worked for a year or more: some have retired, some have disabilities that prevent them from working; some stay at home to care for friends or family; some attend school full-time; some are discouraged workers who have not been able to find a job.
- **The patterns found in geographic areas should not be used to "explain away" or justify inequities.** For example, tracts where higher shares of people have a college degree have higher median household incomes as well. While education certainly influences income, this does not imply that income gaps would be closed if everyone got a college degree, because

[12] In the future, we hope to develop interactive maps for this dataset so that users will be able to visualize patterns directly, without needing GIS or Excel software.

BIPOC people would still face more discrimination in the labor market than White people with similar credentials.

Geography

Census tracts are not necessarily the most relevant geography for examining place-based equity—for example, there may be pockets of advantage and disadvantage within a single tract. They don't necessarily align with local jurisdictional boundaries. Further, they often lack resonance with the lived experience of neighborhoods. However, compiling this data at census tract level was our attempt to strike a balance between data availability, reliability, and coverage for most areas within the Twin Cities region.

Census block groups are another, finer-grained option, though sampling error tends to be much larger than for tracts. For information about block groups or measures of sampling error, contact us at *research[at]metc.state.mn.us*.

Use Case Examples

Through this project we've learned much more about how regional stakeholders have used Areas of Concentrated Poverty or ACP50s in their work—and, more broadly, metrics considered most frequently in discussions about equity. On the following pages, we've summarized some examples of how and where the *Equity Considerations* dataset could fit into these conversations (in conjunction with community engagement).

Best Use Cases		
If you are trying to…	**…then consider using…**	**…because…**
Examine the amount or nature of physical/capital investments across places to assess current disinvestment	Areas of Concentrated Poverty/Affluence Poverty rates Share of newly built housing Building permits	Areas with high poverty rates are at risk for disinvestment, and areas with little new development may currently be experiencing disinvestment. It is also worth examining areas with high rates of *affluence* to determine if they are receiving a disproportionately high share of investments (raising the possibility that middle-income or lower-income areas are receiving disproportionately low shares of investments).
Examine where additional investments might be needed	Various characteristics of neighborhoods, tailored to the kinds of investments you're analyzing	No single characteristic can be a successful proxy for all kinds of investments. For example, areas with high rates of housing cost burden may need additional housing investments, while areas with long transit commute times may need additional transportation investments. The degree of overlap between these sets of areas will not necessarily be large. You might also consider looking at demographics and housing together—for example, identifying areas with high shares of large households but not many rental units with 4+ bedrooms. Or you could examine higher-income areas with a shortage of housing affordable to lower-income households, in order to identify opportunities to promote more housing options across the region.
Identify who may be most impacted by place-based decisions in order to tailor engagement efforts accordingly	Poverty rates, homeownership rates, racial composition, languages, immigrants, etc. Look for low poverty/homeownership rates and/or high shares of BIPOC residents relative to city averages to identify areas whose	Low-income people, BIPOC residents, and renters are likely to be left out of traditional outreach/engagement processes. BUT also recognize that place-based engagement efforts may not be enough. Targeting low-homeownership *neighborhoods* for

Best Use Cases		
If you are trying to…	**…then consider using…**	**…because…**
	residents are least likely to be heard by traditional planning processes.	engagement around housing may still reach the homeowning *households* in those neighborhoods without reaching renters. Community organizations (renters' alliances, for example) may do a better job of connecting you with the specific people you are hoping to listen to.
Identify neighborhoods to focus on for pilot programs serving individuals	Various characteristics of neighborhoods, tailored to the kind of program you're looking at	If you are simply trying to find potential participants quickly or efficiently so that you can get a program up and running, then focusing on certain areas may be a good idea if you do not have another way to reach your target population. For example, an eviction prevention program pilot might advertise primarily in lower-income areas with low homeownership rates.
Measure economic segregation in the region or a community	Areas of Concentrated Poverty Areas of Concentrated Affluence	Examining the share of residents in poverty who live in high-poverty areas, or the share of affluent residents who live in affluent areas, is a generally accepted way to look at different facets of economic segregation.
Remedy the effects of historical disinvestment and discrimination (for now, this data is available for Hennepin County and Saint Paul only)	ACPs with a high share of acreage in the "Definitely declining" (yellow) or "Hazardous" (red) zones of the redlining map; ACAs with a high share of acreage in the "Best" (green) or "Still desirable" (blue) zones of the redlining map; areas with a high share of White residents and many racially restrictive covenants	ACPs that were mostly redlined or "yellowlined" are still suffering the harms of disinvestment. ACAs that received favorable treatment in the redlining maps, along with mostly White areas with many racially restrictive covenants, are likely still experiencing the exclusivity generated by historical discrimination.

Good Use Cases—with caution and care		
If you are trying to…	**…then consider using…**	**…because…**
Evaluate or score proposed projects according to the areas they fall into	Various characteristics of neighborhoods, tailored to the kinds of proposed projects you're analyzing	Efforts to prioritize lower-income areas for projects, while well-intentioned, should consider how neighborhoods vary across multiple dimensions. If you are evaluating proposals for transit improvements, for example, you may want to prioritize projects in lower-income areas that *also* have high shares of households without vehicles or long commute times—particularly those projects that can show how they will satisfy the needs that the neighborhood itself has identified.
Determine eligibility of individual people or households for certain programs	The characteristics of those individuals or households, perhaps in combination with characteristics of places that have a causal effect on residents' outcomes	While it might be possible to construct a rationale for using the characteristics of areas rather than individuals to determine program eligibility, it would require some thought about why place matters. If the characteristics of places have a *causal effect* on outcomes, then they could be one consideration in program eligibility. For example, if teenagers living in areas with high teen birth rates are considerably more likely to get pregnant than similar teenagers in areas with low teen birth rates, then a program to reduce teen pregnancy may want to prioritize residents of those areas. On the other hand, if you are attempting to assist cost-burdened renters, then you would probably want to make *those households* eligible for your program, rather than all households in areas with high cost-burden rates (since not all households in those areas are cost-burdened renters).

Uses Not Recommended		
If you are trying to…	**…then consider using…**	**…because…**
Determine the demographic composition of program participants from the characteristics of the neighborhoods they live in	Administrative records or a survey of individuals *instead of this dataset*	Program participants may not be representative of the neighborhoods in which they live.
Examine opportunity in different neighborhoods	More direct measures of opportunity, such as the *Child Opportunity Index* or the *Opportunity Atlas*, *instead of this dataset*	While poverty rates are commonly used as a proxy for all kinds of opportunity, other datasets will offer a more complete picture. We have concerns about using the Child Opportunity Index and Opportunity Atlas datasets because they reflect in part the advantages of neighborhood residents rather than truly place-based opportunity features, but they are still more appropriate measures of "opportunity" than this dataset provides. While some parts of this dataset (like environmental, amenities, and employment fields) lend themselves to analyses of opportunity, there are many more features of everyday life that affect children's outcomes.

Data Sources

This dataset provides variables by census tract from a wide range of local/regional and national sources. To ground users in data that may not be familiar with, we've described these sources and their known limitations in the table below. In particular, the *Equity Considerations* dataset draws heavily on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which may be a more familiar data source but also comes with some cautions:

- The total numbers of housing units, households, and people given in ACS data is not an official Census Bureau estimate. As the Census Bureau's general handbook for ACS data users states, "the ACS was designed to provide estimates of the characteristics of the population, not to provide counts of the population in different geographic areas or population subgroups." The Council's small area estimates provide estimates of tract housing units, households, and people that better reflect recent changes in residential development and occupancy rates. This dataset provides both, distinguished by the suffix of the column name (*_MC for Metropolitan Council estimates; *_ACS for American Community Survey estimates).
- American Community Survey data is based on a sample and contains estimates that are subject to sampling error (as well as non-sampling error). Change over time in the estimates may not be statistically meaningful; the same is true of concentrated poverty and affluence statuses. Sampling error (measured by margins of error) can be considerable, particularly for smaller population groups.
- We define concentrated poverty and affluence statuses using a threshold that creates a necessary but artificial distinction among census tracts. Conditions in tracts with a poverty rate of 40% (which qualify as ACPs) may not differ substantially from those in tracts with a poverty rate of 39% (which do not qualify as ACPs). When examining high-poverty or high-affluence areas, you may wish to look beyond the most recent set of ACPs/ACAs. Options include the "persistence" of ACP/ACA status (ACP_NYRS / ACA_NYRS) or the degree of poverty/affluence (POV185RATE / POV500RATE).

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
CoStar	CoStar gathers data on multifamily apartment building characteristics and rents. This is a proprietary data source to which the Metropolitan Council subscribes.	Data on rents comes from CoStar's research as well as listings on websites like Apartments.com. For buildings where these data sources do not provide information, CoStar estimates rents based on other similar buildings.
Eviction Lab	Eviction data come from public records and include both the number of eviction *filings* (which may or may not result in tenants moving) and *evictions* (in which tenants are forced to leave a home). The numbers included in this dataset reflect only actual evictions.	Not all landlords pursue evictions through the formal court system, so these numbers probably understate the true prevalence of evictions. Also, the latest year of data available for most counties in the region is 2016, so the numbers in this dataset do not reflect recent years.
Historic Home Owners' Loan Corporation Neighborhood Appraisal Map	In 1934, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) rated the riskiness of insuring mortgage loans in different areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, assigning them a "zone" of risk that was influenced by the race and class of residents. As other lenders adopted such classifications, it became difficult to get mortgages in lower-wealth neighborhoods with many people of color, locking in disparities for the future.	This data was digitized from a non-georeferenced, photographic image of the original map. The accuracy is unknown, though the boundaries align well with our modern street networks. Small discrepancies between this dataset and modern tract boundaries can lead to imprecise "zone" classification, but such errors are likely to be very small. Additionally, the HOLC redlining maps were probably less influential in mortgage lending than the Federal Housing Administration mortgage risk maps that were developed shortly thereafter. We are unaware of a digitized version of these maps for the Twin Cities, but *new research suggests* that they would show an even stronger relationship between mortgage risk designations and present-day outcomes.
Mapping Prejudice Project Ehrman-Solberg, Kevin; Petersen, Penny; Mills, Marguerite; Delegard, Kirsten; Mattke, Ryan. (2020). Racial Covenants in Hennepin County. Retrieved from the Data Repository for	Racially restrictive covenants forbade the sale of the property to members of the groups specified in the covenant -- typically Black and Asian households -- until the Supreme Court declared them illegal and unenforceable in 1948. Researchers at the University of Minnesota digitized property deeds and had a computer scan the text to identify potential covenants in Hennepin	Some deeds with covenants may have been missed by the computer scanning. Data quality depends on the accuracy of the volunteer analysts, though the Mapping Prejudice team filtered out data from less reliable volunteers.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
the University of Minnesota, https://doi.org/10.13020/a88t-yb14.	County. Volunteer analysts then identified gathered data on these deeds. For more information, see *https://www.mappingprejudice.org*.	
MetroGIS Regional Parcel Dataset	On behalf of the MetroGIS collaboration, the Metropolitan Council receives parcel data from counties, assembles it into a common structure, and provides information on data availability.	Some fields lack information for some counties, though the characteristics used in this file – homestead exemptions, estimated market values, and year built – are mostly complete. We use homestead exemptions as a proxy for owner occupancy, but this indicator may be inaccurate. Additionally, estimated market values may not reflect recent changes in housing markets.
Metropolitan Council analysis of *University of Minnesota's Twin Cities Metropolitan Area 1-Meter Land Cover Classification data*	The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area 1-Meter Land Cover Classification dataset provides very detailed classification of different land cover features. Council staff used this to identify impervious surfaces, then linked those with land use data, parcel boundaries, and building footprint data to identify nonresidential buildings and parking lots large enough to support an array of solar panels or a green roof.	This data shows only the potential for solar energy production; not all sites may be suitable.
Metropolitan Council, Annual Small Area Population and Household Estimates (2019 vintage)	The Metropolitan Council creates population and household estimates for census tracts and other small areas to assist planners across the region. These estimates provide a more precise and timely picture of current conditions than the American Community Survey.	Housing unit estimates depend on accurate reporting of building permits by cities and townships. While we make reasonable assumptions about occupancy rates and average household sizes, estimates may be higher or lower than what a full enumeration of the population would find.
Metropolitan Council, Generalized Land Use 2016	Based on aerial imagery, assessor information, and other development datasets, Metropolitan Council staff assign generalized land use categories that are consistent across counties to all properties in the seven-county Twin Cities region.	Land uses provided in this dataset are meant to show general patterns, not precise acreage. Although parcel-based, land use delineations are not confined to properties. In other word, a property may have more than one use and uses are not necessarily coterminous with property boundaries. For example, local streets and small bodies of water (under 3 acres) *are not delineated separately*; they are given the land use classification of adjacent areas.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
Metropolitan Council, Housing Affordability Estimates (2019 vintage)	The Metropolitan Council combines data from several different sources to estimate the number of housing units in different "bands" of affordability (measured in terms of Area Median Income). Data on the estimated value of ownership units comes primarily from the MetroGIS Regional Parcel Dataset; assessors' estimates have been adjusted to better match sales data from Zillow and the Federal Housing Finance Administration. Data on rents comes from HUD's CHAS data, CoStar, and HousingLink's Rental Revue data (the first two of these are discussed elsewhere).	Ownership units are defined as affordable at a certain level if a mortgage payment (principal, interest, property taxes, hazard insurance) is no more than 29% of monthly income for that level. While in keeping with other organizations' measurement of affordability, it may overstate affordability because it does not include utilities, maintenance, repairs, and other expenses associated with homeownership. Additionally, lot rent is not factored into the calculation of affordability for manufactured homes; this adds several hundred dollars to monthly housing payments and will be reflected in future updates to this dataset.
Metropolitan Council, Land Surface Temperature for Climate Vulnerability Analysis	This data shows the surface temperature (measured by satellite thermal imagery) around noon on July 22, 2016. This was the third day of a regional heat wave, and while temperatures overnight had dipped down to around 74 degrees Fahrenheit, temperatures had climbed up to a maximum temperature of 97 degrees by early evening, resulting in the hottest day in roughly three years (Midwestern Regional Climate Center, 2016). At the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the air temperature was 90 degrees. Other areas were several degrees cooler or hotter; this variation in surface temperature points to urban "heat islands."	This is a one-day snapshot of temperature patterns in the middle of the day. Measurements over a longer period of time could provide more representative measurements, and changes in land use since 2016 affect what surface temperatures look like in 2021. Additionally, temperatures were measured for grids of 30x30 meters, and surface temperatures may vary within those grids. Accordingly, this dataset shows general patterns, not precise measurements.
Metropolitan Council landmark data (internal)	Metropolitan Council staff have maintained a dataset with the locations of buildings like hospitals and libraries.	The data have not been updated since 2018, so some facilities in this dataset may have closed, while others may have opened. This dataset includes only the kinds of facilities whose locations tend to be stable, and based on our manual checks, we are relatively confident in their accuracy. We will continue to examine other data sources. Additionally, these distances are measured "as the crow flies," not taking into

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
		account the road network; we plan to refine these calculations in a future update.
Metropolitan Council, Localized Flood Map for Climate Vulnerability Screening	This dataset uses detailed elevation data to find areas that are at risk of flooding during extreme rainfall.	This dataset measures only *potential* flooding. Flood vulnerability is also affected by stormwater infrastructure, for which no region-wide data is available.
Metropolitan Council, Nonresidential Building Permit data	The Metropolitan Council surveys cities and townships every year to determine the permit value of nonresidential construction, including commercial, industrial, and public/institutional uses.	While we perform various checks to ensure that permit data is consistent, accuracy ultimately depends on what cities and townships report to us. Also, we collect data on only projects with a permit value of at least $100,000 (or at least $1,000,000 for remodeling/renovation projects), so this is not a complete measure of investments.
Metropolitan Council, Residential Building Permit data	The Metropolitan Council surveys cities and townships every year to determine the net change in housing units. We gather data for five different housing types on the number of units added (including new constructions, conversions, and other miscellaneous additions) and lost (including demolitions and other miscellaneous losses).	While we perform various checks to ensure that permit data is consistent, accuracy ultimately depends on what cities and townships report to us. During the annual population estimates cycle, a few cities per year correct their permit data. Also, we do not gather information on remodeling or renovation permits under $1,000,000, so this data is not a complete measure of residential investments.
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency defines Areas of Environmental Justice Concern as federally recognized tribal areas along with census tracts where the poverty rate (the share of residents with income less than 185% of the federal poverty threshold) is at least 40% and/or where BIPOC residents are at least 50% of the population. Tracts not meeting these thresholds are included if 40% is within the margin of error for poverty, or if 50% is within the margin of error for BIPOC population share.	This dataset accurately reflects the set of Areas of Environmental Justice Concern.
StatsAmerica (Indiana University)	The Indiana Business Research Center (part of Indiana University) identifies tracts that meet unemployment or income thresholds for grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. In general, tracts qualify for EDA	This dataset accurately reflects the set of Economically Distressed Areas.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
	grants if their unemployment rate is at least one percentage point higher than the national unemployment rate, or if their per capita income is 80 percent or less of the national per capita income.	
U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates	Each year, the U.S. Census Bureau surveys approximately 2% of the nation's households to collect information on housing, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics. The print questionnaire can be viewed at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.html.	The ACS does not survey people who are living outdoors, in domestic violence shelters, or other uncommon forms of housing. Respondents may interpret the survey differently depending on their background or the language in which they take the survey, and some people in the sample do not respond to the survey or omit answers for certain questions. Additionally, because the ACS estimates are based on a sample, there is a margin of error around each estimate. For more information, see the U.S. Census Bureau's report on "Accuracy of the Data" at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/code-lists.html . See also the "Comments on race and ethnicity" section.
U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics data	The U.S. Census Bureau partners with states to collect data on employment, earnings, and addresses of employers and employees. It then combines this with other data sources to produce data on the demographics and commuting patterns of workers.	The data cover almost all jobs in the formal economy. Missing from the data are workers in the informal economy, business owners and self-employed workers, and others who are not covered by quarterly payroll reporting to the state. To protect individual identities, the Census Bureau applies methods that add random noise to the data and slightly obscure the actual location points of homes and workplaces.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2021 classification)	The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes this list each year. "Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Census Tracts must have 50 percent of households with incomes below 60 percent of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of 25 percent or more" (https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html).	This dataset accurately reflects the set of Qualified Census Tracts for 2021.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
	Affordable housing projects in these tracts can receive preference for tax credits and higher values of tax credits if they are one part of a "concerted community revitalization plan."	
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013-2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data	CHAS data is a special tabulation of American Community Survey data that provides characteristics of housing units and households not available in the original ACS estimates. These characteristics include household income and housing affordability in terms of HUD's Area Median Income definitions, housing cost burden by race and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and overcrowding by income level.	In addition to the items noted with the American Community Survey data above, all numbers in CHAS data are rounded to the nearest 5. This prevents disclosure of respondents' identities but adds noise to the data. Calculations of household income and housing affordability use Area Median Income figures that do not necessarily match HUD's official income limits.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (2020 vintage)	The EJSCREEN tool provides data related to environmental justice. We provide the EJSCREEN environmental indicators.	Some data sources used in EJSCREEN are relatively old (for example, some air pollution data dates from 2014). The EPA also cautions that some environmental indicators are estimates from a model, and that uncertainty exists in small areas. Finally, the data indicate only *risk*, not actual *exposure* or public health consequences.
U.S. Internal Revenue Service	The Internal Revenue Service publishes a list of tracts approved as Opportunity Zones. Investments in these tracts may qualify for federal tax credits.	This dataset accurately reflects the set of tracts designated as Opportunity Zones, but not all tracts identified as having high poverty rates were selected as Opportunity Zones.
Urban Footprint	The Metropolitan Council subscribes to this proprietary source of a wide variety of data, used for assessing current conditions as well as scenario analysis. It contains estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for areas as small as census blocks; we have summarized these to census tracts.	Greenhouse gas emissions are estimates, calculated by applying national-level and state-level multipliers to local data on demographics, housing, and land use. To the extent that our region's multipliers differ from the ones Urban Footprint uses, estimates may be biased. For example, if the average household vehicle in our region gets more than 22 miles per gallon of gasoline (the fuel economy assumed by Urban Footprint), our actual greenhouse gas emissions from transportation would be lower than Urban Footprint estimates suggest.

Data source	Brief description	Limitations
		We recommend using this data for comparing relative emissions amounts across census tracts, not as a complete greenhouse gas inventory compliant with any particular protocol for community-scale greenhouse gas emissions accounting. The Council provides a sector-based greenhouse gas accounting at: *https://metrotransitmn.shinyapps.io/ghg_tool/*
Zillow Transaction and Assessment Database (ZTRAX) *Data provided by Zillow through the Zillow Transaction and Assessment Dataset (ZTRAX). More information on accessing the data can be found at* http://www.zillow.com/ztrax. *The results and opinions are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the position of Zillow Group.*	This is a proprietary data source of many characteristics of buildings, which Zillow makes available to academic, nonprofit, and government researchers under restricted-use licenses. See *https://www.zillow.com/research/ztrax/* for more information.	Zillow compiles data from multiple sources, including county parcel data, real estate listings, deed transfers, and other public records. Any errors in those data sources may show up in the Zillow database as well.

Race and Ethnicity Methodology

Classifying people's extraordinarily complex individual identities into meaningful racial and ethnic groups requires care. For those unfamiliar with these terms, it is important to understand that race and ethnicity are conceptually distinct. Despite the common image of "race" as an inherited trait, race has no biological basis. Instead, humans take physical differences across people (primarily skin color) and assign a social meaning to them. "Ethnicity" generally refers more to cultural differences across people, such as language, traditions, foods, music, and others. Both race and ethnicity influence each other, though, and both kinds of classifications have changed over time.

Major race/ethnicity groups

The Census Bureau uses the standards from the United States Office of Management and Budget, in which there are five "major" race groups: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. People may self-identify their race, and they may choose more than one race.

The Office of Management and Budget also recognizes one ethnic category – "Hispanic or Latino origin." It considers this to be separate from race; people who identify as Hispanic or Latino are also asked to report one or more races. (In the Twin Cities region, most people who identify as Hispanic or Latino identify as White or as a race that does not fit cleanly into the five major categories.)

Many analysts combine these classifications into one set of groups that are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The Metropolitan Council has traditionally used the following six categories:

- White, non-Latino
- Black or African American, non-Latino
- Asian, non-Latino
- Hispanic or Latino
- American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Latino
- Some other race (including the small number of Pacific Islanders in our region) or more than one race, non-Latino

These major categories obscure a lot of diversity, though. For example, the Black or African American category contains both African immigrants and African American descendants of enslaved people; the Asian category groups together Asian Indian people, Chinese people, Hmong people, and many others. Furthermore, people who trace their origin to the Middle East or North Africa do not fit cleanly into one of the major categories. And these categories cannot shed much light on the growing share of people who identify with more than one race.

Defining Cultural Groups

To meet the demand for more detailed data on cultural groups, the Metropolitan Council is now providing estimates of approximately 50 different groups. The following material provides some detail on what is available and how it was estimated, including cautions about the data.

American Community Survey data

- In general, the best available portrait of the region's diversity is in the American Community Survey microdata--which provides detailed information on individuals' race, ancestry, birthplace, language spoken at home, and so on. In this data, we can identify people who identify as Somali, were born in the US, and speak English at home--as well as people who identify as Hmong, were born outside the US, and speak Hmong at home. For many respondents reporting more than one racial identification, we can also determine the groups they reported.

- To keep respondents' identities confidential, though, the Census Bureau does not provide much detail on where these individuals live. This detailed information would be available for only one city in our region (Saint Paul). So, to get tract-level information, we need to use the more limited data available in the American Community summary file, which has only aggregate counts of the number of people falling into certain categories. In this data, we can still obtain the number of people who identify as Somali or Hmong, but we cannot know the number of Somali or Hmong people who were born outside the US or the number who speak English at home. For respondents identifying multiple race groups, we also lack detail on which combinations they specified.
- Estimates in this file are drawn from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates and represent the averages for the entire 2015-2019 period. Because they come from a survey, they are subject to sampling error, and differences across estimates may not be statistically meaningful. Please use special caution in less populous census tracts, where estimates may be based on a small number of sample cases.
- Furthermore, the relatively small sample size (about 10% of the total population over a five-year period) means that estimates for smaller groups may have a lot of variation from year to year.
- Immigrants and other BIPOC residents are also less likely to respond to the American Community Survey. Responses are weighted to population estimates for different race groups, which mitigates the nonresponse bias somewhat, but it does reduce the reliability of estimates of smaller population groups.
- Despite its shortcomings and imperfections, the American Community Survey is still the best available source for estimating the composition of the population, and so we have used it extensively in this work.

Black or African American ancestry

- Before 2020, the ACS questionnaire did not allow respondents who identify as Black the opportunity to provide a more specific race. It did, however, give all respondents the option to write in their "ancestry or ethnic origin." Nearly 90% of respondents did so, and this rate does not vary substantially by race.
- We have disaggregated the Black or African American population via the ancestries they identify (for example, "Somali" or "Liberian"). Because the ACS summary file does not provide separate ancestry breakdowns for each race, though, we need to interpret the results with caution.
- The ACS summary data does provide the number of people who identify a sub-Saharan African or West Indian ancestry, but it does not provide the number of people who identify as "African American." So that "African American" category needs to be estimated. This is complicated for a couple reasons:
    - Based on region-wide estimates from microdata, about 2% of identifications with a sub-Saharan African ancestry, and 9% of identifications with a West Indian ancestry, do not come from people identifying as Black for example, White people whose ancestors lived in South Africa.
    - Native-born African Americans descended from enslaved people may identify a sub-Saharan African or West Indian ancestry group if they know where their ancestors were stolen from. These could be mis-identified as being part of a distinct African or West Indian cultural community, rather than African American. According to ACS microdata, about 7% of native-born Black people who are age 35+ (who are unlikely to belong to immigrant groups) identify a sub-Saharan African ancestry group.

- To estimate the African American population, we take the total population identifying as Black or African American (even if they identify with another race as well), then subtract the estimated number of Black people identifying a sub-Saharan or West Indian ancestry group, calculated as:
    - The number of people identifying any sub-Saharan African ancestry group (multiplied by 98% to account for the 2% of such identifications from people who do not identify as Black)
    - The number of people identifying any West Indian ancestry group (multiplied by 91% to account for the 9% of such identifications from people who do not identify as Black)
- We then take that remainder and assume, based on region-wide microdata, that 89% identify as African American, and that 26% identify with some other Black ancestry group.
- Nevertheless, because African American residents may instead report sub-Saharan ancestry, this process probably slightly overestimates the sub-Saharan African population and slightly underestimates the African American population.
- Following the questionnaire redesign in 2020, which allowed people who identify as Black to provide more detail, future Census Bureau data releases may allow for a more accurate breakdown.
- People may identify with more than one group, so the different categories may sum to more than the share of the population that identifies as Black or African American.

Detailed Asian races

- ACS respondents who identify as Asian may identify more specific groups they belong to, but not all groups are listed explicitly on the form. For example:
    - People who identify as Chinese or Vietnamese can check a box indicating that.
    - People who identify as Hmong or Thai are prompted to write in those groups.
    - People who identify as Burmese may (but are not specifically prompted to) write in that group.
- We have provided the most common Asian race groups in our region. Keep in mind, though, that some of these groups are more difficult to report on the form than others and may be underestimated as a result.
- These numbers include everyone who identifies as Asian, even if they also identify with another race. People may identify with more than one of these detailed Asian race groups, so the different categories may sum to more than the share of the population that identifies as Asian.

Hispanic/Latino origin

- All ACS respondents may report Hispanic/Latino origin, regardless of their race. Respondents can choose only one origin.
- As with Asian races, not all Hispanic/Latino origins are listed explicitly on the form:
    - People who identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban can check a box indicating that.
    - People who identify as Dominican or Salvadoran are prompted to write in that origin.
    - People who identify as Ecuadorian may (but are not specifically prompted to) write in that origin.
- We have provided the most common Hispanic/Latino origins in our region. Keep in mind, though, that some of these origins are more difficult to report on the form than others and may be underestimated as a result.

Indigenous/Native American/American Indian tribal identity

- On the ACS questionnaire, people who identify as "American Indian or Alaska Native" may (but are not required to) add their tribal affiliation. A substantial number of them do not specify a tribe.
- These numbers include everyone who identifies as "American Indian or Alaska Native," even if they also identify with another race. People may identify with more than one tribe, so the percentages may not sum to the total Indigenous population.

Middle Eastern or North African ancestry

- The federal government does not yet recognize Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) as a distinct race group, so the data does not allow us to identify the total share of each tract's residents who identify as MENA. It is possible to examine certain groups through the ancestries they identify, though.
- We have provided the most common MENA ancestries, which cover about 75% of all MENA ancestry identifications in our region (according to ACS microdata).
- Keep in mind that ancestry must be written into the form, so some groups may be underestimated.

White ancestry

- Before 2020, the ACS questionnaire did not allow respondents who identify as White the opportunity to provide a more specific race. It did, however, give all respondents the option to write in their "ancestry or ethnic origin."
- We want to emphasize that, compared with the groups above, ancestral identity means something different for White people, whose families may have come as voluntary migrants and lived in America for several generations and whose ancestry may be a source of privilege rather than a target of discrimination. Still, we believe it is important not to portray diversity as a characteristic of only our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) residents, thereby "othering" them even more. So, we are providing information on the eight most common White ancestry groups for balance.
- These numbers include everyone who identifies as White, non-Latino.
- The "Some other White ancestry" was calculated by taking the total White, non-Latino population and subtracting the estimated number of people identifying with one of those eight most common White ancestry groups, calculated as:
    - The total number of identifications of one of those eight most common White ancestry groups…
    - …multiplied by 97% (because 3% of those ancestry identifications come from people who do not identify as White)…
    - …then multiplied by 69% (to account for the fact that many people report more than one ancestry group; this specific number comes from ACS microdata)
- People may choose multiple ancestral groups, so the different categories may sum to more than the share of the population that identifies as White, non-Latino.

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