LEADING THE TRANSFORMATION OF KING COUNTY

Through community-driven partnerships, we are creating greater racial, economic, and health equity that enables all people in King County to thrive and prosper.
Communities of Opportunity is a growing movement of partners who believe every community can be a healthy, thriving community—and that equity and racial justice are both necessary and achievable. Being housed, healthy, employed, and connected to one’s community are basic human needs. Yet from neighborhood to neighborhood, access to these essentials vary widely. Race, income, and zip code are major predictors of how healthy we are and even how long we will live.

Low-income communities and communities of color regularly experience institutional racism in the form of decisions being made for them, and of having their voices, priorities, and strengths disregarded. Communities of Opportunity believes the most meaningful, just, and sustainable solutions are generated in partnership with communities—who know what they need to be healthy and thrive.

**Communities of Opportunity is dedicated to overturning these disparities and creating a vibrant, equitable King County where everyone thrives regardless of race or place.**
For too long, communities have been subject to outsiders focusing on their “deficits,” while a rich tapestry of strengths, talents, and solutions has largely been ignored. The strengths of communities and their power to own and shape their futures are central to Communities of Opportunity.

**Communities of Opportunity is an inclusive table where community members and leaders, organizations, and institutions share power, voice, and resources.**

We’re setting a course for positive change throughout the county by:

- Establishing community-based priorities
- Tapping into existing community expertise and leadership
- Strengthening community capacity for advocacy and to take on local challenges
- Systematizing a collaborative approach between communities and institutions
- Shaping policies to promote equity and positively impact our communities
- Bringing new resources into communities

“Communities of Opportunity isn’t just about bringing new resources to the areas where they are most needed—it’s also about tapping into existing community assets, and strengthening the capacity of communities to proactively tackle these new challenges.”

*Deanna Dawson, Executive Director, Sound Cities Association*
OUR WORK

Through an extensive, community-led planning process, we defined four intersecting priority areas:

1. **Quality affordable housing for all**—Preservation and development of affordable housing that is in close proximity to transit, jobs, and education.

2. **The right to be healthy**—Access to healthy, affordable food and safe places outside to be physically active, especially for our youth.

3. **Increased economic opportunity**—Workforce development that includes local hires, support of new local businesses, and inclusion of our youth.

4. **Strengthened connections to the community**—Increased civic participation and engagement, cultural preservation, and access to safe public spaces.

“This new process of empowering local communities to identify their priorities, which exist at the intersection of health, housing and economic opportunity will bring positive changes to places throughout King County that have struggled for much too long.”

**GORDON MCHENRY JR., PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SOLID GROUND**
Work occurs through policy and systems change and on the ground.

**Policies and systems play an essential role in equity.**
Affordable housing, local employment, and quality education should be attainable regardless of our race, ethnicity, income, or where we live. Yet our institutions and policies shape who has access to wealth, health, and prosperity.

Communities of Opportunity partners are working to dismantle the persistent racial injustice within our systems by:

- Building community capacity to carry out coordinated advocacy efforts
- Integrating equity into policies at all levels: neighborhood, organizational, city, county, and state
- Advocating for policies that support community priorities and needs
- Expanding representation of cultural communities by stepping into leadership and political roles
Community partnerships and power are central.
The work of three place-based partnerships is leading the direction of this initiative. What these communities test and build upon will be shared across King County.

- **Rainier Valley** community partners are focusing on shared ownership models to prevent displacement of historic cultural communities and to increase economic security.
- **White Center** is anchoring multi-cultural businesses and partnerships in the community to prevent displacement of residents.
- **SeaTac/Tukwila** community partners have established the Food Innovation Network, focusing on expanding economic opportunities and promoting health, particularly through healthy food.

“The vision of COO is possible when we are able to build relationships based on trust for the work of this community. We have partners that listen to what our community is saying and let that voice be the most critical part of their work here in White Center.”

—SILI SAVUSA, RESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WHITE CENTER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY

OUR EARLY MOMENTUM

When communities have voice and power in the decisions that impact their communities, and express it through civic engagement and leadership, it leads to broader community and policy changes that assure racial, health, and economic equity.
White Center Community Development Association surveyed the majority-immigrant community about its priorities and shared the results with local organizations, schools, and businesses. They heard that housing and health matter: Habitat for Humanity is pursuing funding to support home improvements, and schools are now offering more culturally relevant food.

In South Auburn, an area with one of the county’s fastest growing Latino populations, community members sent a clear message to the mayor and city council: Improving health and food insecurity requires addressing jobs, income, and the scarcity of healthy food. This represented the views of 678 people surveyed about food insecurity by Washington Community Action Network.

Dozens of individuals from vital yet under-represented communities are now serving on public boards and commissions throughout King County. A rigorous six-month training on public board involvement led by the Community Leadership Institute prepared them to be strong voices for their respective communities.

A coalition of Ethiopian organizations, community members, and service providers is filling the gap in services for Ethiopian immigrants. This coalition is connecting individuals with needed support, including housing with stable families and services from community-based organizations.

Rainier Valley residents created a model for how to build racial and social equity into transit-oriented development so that residents and businesses are not further displaced as an area grows. They secured a Graham Street light rail stop for their community. Now they are creating a community-led, equitable development plan for the surrounding neighborhood once the station is built.

Representing the cultural communities of Capitol Hill, Central District, and the Chinatown-International District, the Yesler Community Collaborative moved Seattle to apply a race and social justice lens to future neighborhood development. The Collaborative aligned community members around a shared vision for strengthening and preserving their historic presence in these neighborhoods, and led advocacy efforts to achieve it.
Join us in **GROWING THE MOVEMENT**

What started in 2014 as an idea has grown to more than 100 organizations partnering together, with the voices of hundreds of community members guiding the way.

We are residents, communities, decision-makers, and funders working in deep partnership to advance racial, health, and economic equity across the county. In the coming years, we’ll grow our web of organizations, people, and relationships to:

- **Expand the number of places and cultural communities** that are engaged in Communities of Opportunity.
- **Invest in more partners** working to create policies that reverse inequity and contribute to long-term systems change.
- **Accelerate change through a learning network** where communities incubate, exchange, and realize their ideas.
- **Build the capacity of all Communities of Opportunity partners** through technical assistance, training, and deep conversations—we all have something to teach and learn.

**Contact us to learn how you can engage in the movement.**

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THERE IS POWER IN PARTNERSHIP

African Americans Reach & Teach Ministry
African Diaspora of Washington State
Asian Counseling & Referral Services
Ballmer Group
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Black Dollar Days
Boys & Girls Clubs of King County
Business Impact NW
Capitol Hill Housing
Catholic Community Services
Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Centerstone
Children’s Alliance
Chinese Information and Referral Service
Church Council of Greater Seattle
City of SeaTac
City of Seattle
City of Tukwila
Clear Impact
Coalition of Immigrants and Refugees and Communities of Color
Coalition of Refugees from Burma
Colectiva Legal del Pueblo
Craft3
Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition
El Centro de la Raza
Emerald City Bible Fellowship
Enterprise Community Partners
Entre Hermanos
Eritrian Association of Greater Seattle
Ethiopian Community in Seattle
Fair Work Center
Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Community Development
Feet First
Food Empowerment Education and Sustainability Team
Food Innovation Network
Forterra
Friends of Little Saigon
Friends of the Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands
Futurewise
Global to Local
Got Green!
Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King County
HealthPoint
Healthy King County Coalition
Healthy Othello Safer through Environmental Design
Highline College: StartZone and Urban Agriculture
HomeSight
Horn of Africa Services
Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County
Impact Capital
InterIm CDA
International Rescue Committee
King County
King County Housing Authority

power

equity

learning
Communities of Opportunity was catalyzed by private philanthropy and government uniting with each other and with communities to address inequity.

Communities of Opportunity is supported by Seattle Foundation and by King County with the Best Starts for Kids Levy. Since Communities of Opportunity’s launch in 2014, $6.8 million in collective investments have been made to communities and coalitions, accelerating community-driven improvement.