Introduction

Advancing Racial Equity in Housing, Land, and Development

A Toolbox For Racial Equity Practitioners In Government

race forward

LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON
RACE & EQUITY

GROUND WORKS
CONSULTING

MTC
ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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RACE & EQUITY

This resource is published on behalf of the Association of Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

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Introduction

THE ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission have developed a Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program to provide resources for local jurisdictions to advance solutions in the regional housing system. This toolbox is one such resource with a particular focus on addressing racial equity. The toolbox builds on the commitments ABAG has made to advance racial equity such as the Equity Platform and Resolution 4435.

The toolbox aims to broaden and deepen government staff's interest in applying racial equity concepts and tools to their housing and planning practices. It provides an introduction, so they are encouraged to learn more and begin to use the resources with other colleagues and community partners.

What is the toolbox?

The toolbox includes materials to assist local government staff, government leaders, and their community partners in embedding racial equity in housing and planning agencies' structures, policies, and practices. Materials include conceptual frameworks and the tools and best practices to apply these frameworks in a local government setting.

The primary audience for the toolbox is racial equity practitioners within local housing and planning agencies with some understanding of racial equity concepts and terminology and a desire to learn more about how to apply those concepts to housing and land use policy contexts. They subscribe to the premise that racial inequality is a societal problem and that government policy at all levels can and should work to redress it in deliberate ways. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity's resource guide "Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government" and accompanying training are recommended resources for readers who want to first learn racial equity concepts and the government's role in advancing racial equity more broadly.

The toolbox was informed by a Leading With Equity Workgroup[1] (LWE) composed of racial equity driven planners and housing policy staff from 12 Bay Area jurisdictions. The Association of Bay Area Governments convened the workgroup to deepen relationships amongst peers and seed a network of racial equity practitioners supporting each other across jurisdictions. They support each other by sharing resources, ideas, and approaches. Participants

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1   Designed and staffed by Ground Works Consulting

shared experiences and learned about the most relevant concepts, frameworks, and tools at the intersection of racial equity, leadership development, and housing and planning policy.

KEY TERMS

Racial equity practitioners (as defined by the Leading with Equity Workgroup in collaboration with Groundworks Consulting and Race Forward) are government employees who have the drive, skills and relationships to lead and implement system changes designed to eliminate racial disparities. They are skilled at motivating others, working across differences, and building relationships within and outside of government.

Housing Justice[2] is the process and outcome of establishing a housing system in which housing is a human right and a public good and therefore everyone has access to affordable and dignified housing. Housing justice is grounded in an understanding of our country's history of systemic racism and its racialized housing system and centers on the lived experiences of people who have been harmed by these systems.

Systemic Racism[3] includes institutional and structural racism.

Institutional Racism occurs within institutions. It involves unjust policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes that work better for white people than people of color, whether intentional or not.

Structural Racism is racial inequities across institutions, policies, social structures, history, and culture. Structural racism highlights how racism operates as a system of power with multiple interconnected, reinforcing, and self-perpetuating components which result in racial inequities across all indicators for success. Structural racism is the racial inequity that is deeply rooted and embedded in our history and culture and our economic, political, and legal systems.

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2   Definition adapted from GARE's Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas Into Action.
3   Definition from Race Forward's "What is Racial Equity? Understanding Key Concepts Related to Race"

Using the Toolbox

There are immediate and straightforward steps that should be taken to advance housing justice. Moving with urgency toward growing a network of racial equity practitioners to use the tried-and-tested resources in this toolbox will allow housing and planning agencies to build systemic capacity across the field to catalyze broader systems change. Please continue on to explore the Toolbox sections and Resource Library.

Section 1: Leadership provides a leadership frameworks and tools to lead racial equity conversations and manage change within your organization including managing staff skepticism.

Section 2: Racial Equity in Government includes a framework and best practices for making structural changes within housing and planning agencies and across jurisdictions to shift the agencies' culture and behaviors and the housing field more broadly. Structural changes are designed to center racial equity in planning and housing agencies' priorities and bring practitioners together.

Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy includes principles for equitable policy making, a framework for race conscious policies, and examples of housing policy frameworks that center racial equity. Best practices for applying these frameworks are provided.

Section 4: Narrative and Communications provides a research-informed narrative and communications frameworks to effectively engage supporters of housing justice while also reframing dominant negative narratives about housing for audiences who are skeptical or oppose housing solutions.

Section 5: Community Partnership has equitable engagement frameworks and best practices to help guide the long-term work of government building accountable working relationships with communities impacted by housing injustices.

Resource Library for the frameworks and best practices introduced in the Toolbox as well as other research, readings, tools and trainings.

A Case for Housing Justice

The Bay Area is the second most diverse region of the 150 largest metro regions in the country[4]. It is also one of the most prosperous regions in the world, but the prosperity is not evenly shared among this diverse population. In 2019, the median white worker in the Bay Area earned over double the income of Latinx workers and 70% more than Black workers. Over three quarters of white and Asian American Bay Area residents lived in moderate and high resourced neighborhoods as classified by the State, in contrast to less than half of Latinx and Black residents. Black people in the Bay Area suffer six times the rate of homelessness compared to their numbers in the broader population. And more than 6 out of 10 of white families own their own homes, while only 3 and 4 out of ten Black and Latinx families own their own homes respectively, exacerbating the long-standing racial disparity in wealth.

In California, as in every state in the country, access to decent housing is deeply racialized. This toolbox leads with race, but also recognizes that race intersects with class, gender and/or sexuality, and disability, along with other factors, to produce and compound societal inequities. While local governments' housing and planning agencies should focus on racial inequities explicitly, they should not do so exclusively. It is also crucial to address issues of race and racism – rather than avoid them - while using language that highlights the benefits of better outcomes for all members of society when inequities are eliminated, and everyone thrives.

> **"Not everything that is faced can be changed.**
> **But nothing can be changed until it is faced."**
>
> – James Baldwin

The toolbox leads with race based on the recognition that racial inequities are deep and pervasive across all political, economic, social, and cultural systems. The production and perpetuation of racial inequities have been baked into all levels of government over a long history, and thus governments have a responsibility and significant role in eliminating these inequities. Racist ideas have shaped and been served by housing and land use systems since the colonization of what is now the United States and the resulting mass displacement of Indigenous Americans to

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4   An Equity Profile of the Nine-County San Francisco Bay Area Region, PolicyLink and PERE, 2017. All remaining statistics in this paragraph come from this source.

the institution of slavery and its evolution through the Jim Crow era- and still continue in some forms today. Those ideas were embedded into the genesis of the modern form of racialized housing policies and financing through the New Deal of the 1930's, cementing a two-tiered system where housing is an investment commodity for some and a precarious shelter for others.[5] This tiered housing system fueled and cemented segregated housing patterns and the racial wealth gap in the decades to come.[6]

Racialized housing inequality is part of the national history but many of its sources are controlled by local actors in the public and private sectors. The UC Berkeley Othering and Belonging Institute's report "Roots, Race and Place: A History of Racially Exclusionary Housing in the San Francisco Bay Area" details the historical record of the Bay Area's racial exclusion and serial displacement of Black and Brown communities. It defines and provides examples of exclusionary tactics such as "exclusionary zoning, racially restrictive covenants and homeowner association bylaws, racialized public housing policies, urban renewal, racial steering and blockbusting, and municipal fragmentation and white flight." Again, local governments were responsible for many of these tactics and thus bear responsibility to address their harms.

Though many of the explicit forms of racial discrimination have been outlawed, the results of these systems have left a lasting imprint on the region. Racially explicit practices (e.g., racial covenants) have been replaced with race-neutral land use policies that continue to exclude people of color from predominantly white neighborhoods.[7] Furthermore, increasing housing costs have deepened racial and economic segregation, displacing disproportionately low-income people of color to the peripheries of the region or out of the Bay Area all together.[8] The effects of segregation impact all Bay Area residents. As noted in Momentum for Lasting Solutions, "the Bay Area's inability to adequately house all its residents, especially close to job centers, has led to a host of other challenges such as congested traffic, attendant greenhouse gas emissions, and labor shortages."[9]

This history clarifies the need for housing solutions to recognize past racial injustices to address both racial and economic injustices entrenched by generations of segregation and dispossession. It raises questions of who controls land as well as who has power to make policy and funding decisions

5   powell, john a., "Race, Place, and Opportunity." The American Prospect, 2008
6   Rothstein, Richard "The Color of Law", 2018
7   Ibid.
8   Rising Housing Costs and Re-Segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area, UC Berkeley's Urban Displacement Project and the California Housing Partnership, 2019
9   Momentum for Lasting Solutions, Association of Bay Area Governments, 2021

to move beyond merely putting a tenuous roof over every Bay Area resident's head. It requires transforming housing through systemic change so empowered communities across the region can create thriving neighborhoods for all.

Governments' Mandate for Housing Justice

Fortunately, a foundation exists from which to build a more just housing system. Black Americans and their allies worked hard to win the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act (FHA) of 1968, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. These pioneering laws have been interpreted by the courts and in regulatory guidance to prohibit not only disparate treatment (i.e., discriminatory intent) but also disparate impact (i.e., discriminatory effect regardless of intent), as well as the perpetuation of past discrimination.

Notably, the FHA imposes a duty on the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and its grantees to take proactive steps to further fair housing and end segregation, known as the duty to "affirmatively further fair housing" (AFFH). In 2015, HUD adopted a rule about the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing, though this rule was later repealed by the Trump Administration[10]. Given the shifting landscape at the federal level, the State of California adopted Assembly Bill 686 (2018, Santiago) to codify the 2015 federal AFFH rule as a matter of state law. AB 686 imposes the duty to affirmatively further fair housing on all local jurisdictions in the state, not just those that receive HUD funding. As part of this mandate, every local government in the Bay Area must "explicitly address, combat, and relieve disparities resulting from past and current patterns of segregation to foster more inclusive communities.[11]"

Local governments across the state are now busy aligning their community development and housing programs to promote fair housing, incorporating fair housing policies and actions into their Housing Element, creating land-use and funding opportunities to increase affordable housing in high resource neighborhoods, and bringing additioal resources to traditionally under-resourced neighborhoods.

Community-led housing justice initiatives are growing across the Bay Area to advocate for housing solutions as part of the broader movement for

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10 In 2021, HUD issued an Interim Final Rule that restored portions of the 2015 AFFH rule. See HUD's Press Release. On February 9, 2023, HUD published a new Proposed Rule to retain much of the 2015 Rule's core planning process while enhancing certain features and improving administrability. See the federal register here.

11 "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, Guidance for All Public Entities and for Housing Elements, California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2021"

economic and racial justice sweeping the nation. In some local jurisdictions that have grown their capacity to engage with communities experiencing systemic racism, the community/government relationship has evolved from being oppositional into an accountable and solution-oriented relationship. This new dynamic, where it exists, demonstrates the possibility of and the opportunity for the type of systems change needed to fulfill the current housing justice mandate.

Across the country,
governmental jurisdictions are:

Making a
commitment
to achieving
racial equity

Focusing on
the power
and influence
of their own
institutions

Working in
partnership
with others

**When this occurs, significant leverage
and expansion opportunities emerge,
setting the stage for the achievement of
racial equity in our communities.**