

EQUITY





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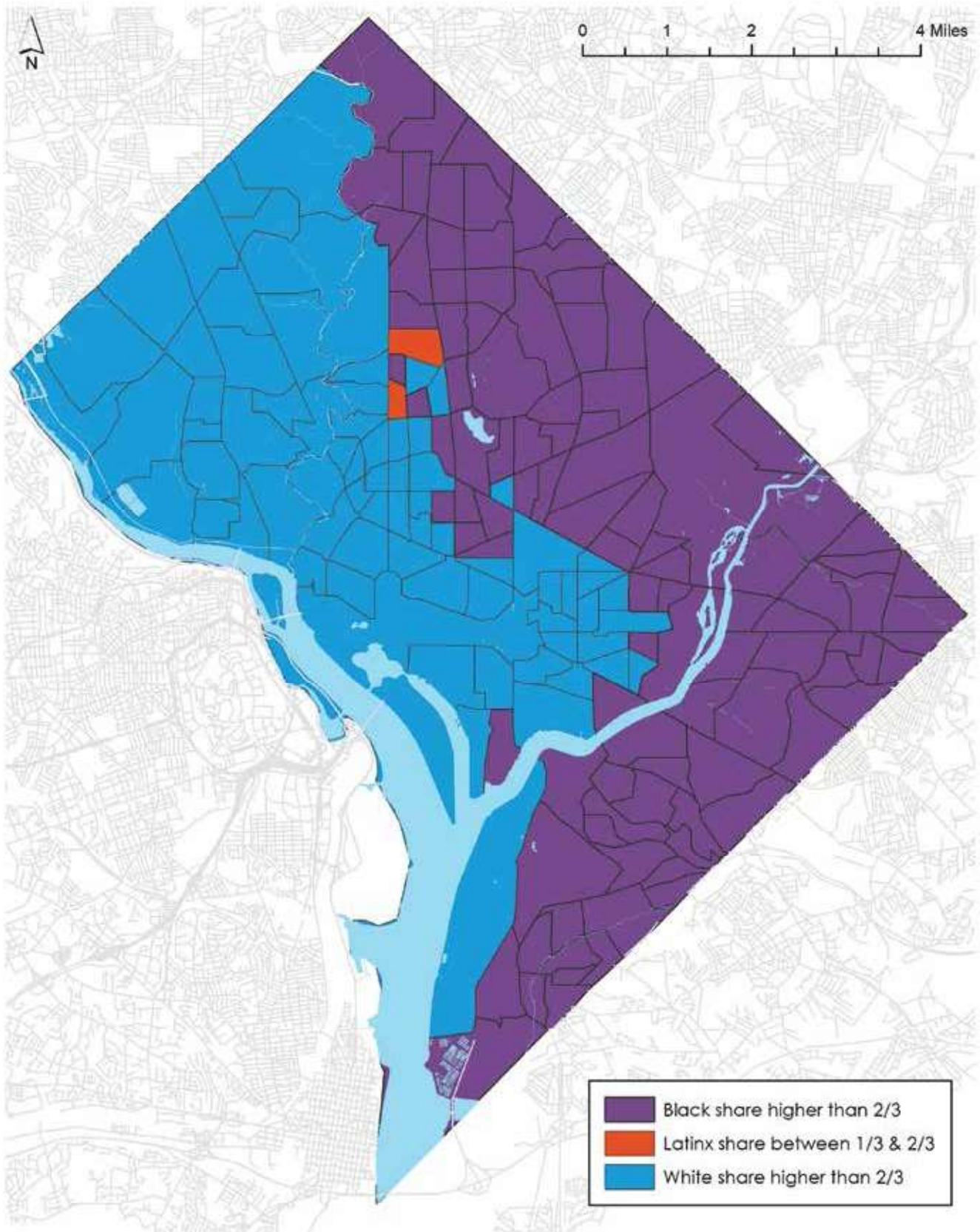
Racial equity is an integral element of a truly sustainable city. Communities of color are more prone to experience deep and persistent gaps in income, health, employment, and education.¹² While the District’s prosperity is growing, the benefits have not been widely shared.¹³ Studies suggest that the black median household income in DC—now around \$42,000—is less than a third of the white median household income of \$134,000 and has remained stagnant since 2007.¹⁴ The gaps in household income can be attributed to other disparities in geographic areas inhabited by people of color. In many places, the gaps are obvious. In wealthy areas, there is better access to well-maintained green space, high quality schools, and walkable commercial areas. Less affluent areas often experience more crime, higher mortality rates, lower income, and fewer amenities. In an equitable society, race wouldn’t be a factor in one’s quality of housing, employment opportunities, or earning potential. While this is not yet our reality, equity is a critical component of being a sustainable city. As we strive to create a sustainable District, we are also faced with an immediate challenge: ensuring residents living in less affluent communities equally enjoy the benefits of a healthier, greener, more livable city. For many residents, sustainability means struggling to afford housing in a rapidly changing city. To make sustainability relevant to all residents, we must take into account the struggle for racial equity in our city. As a short term goal, the Equity section in the Sustainable DC 2.0 plan calls for the creation of an Equity Impact Assessment Tool. District Government agencies will use this tool in the development of their plans and policies, to address the problems faced by underserved residents through a sustainability lens, using holistic solutions. The vision is for agencies to equitably distribute their resources to residents through the adoption of policies that do not perpetuate inequities. While equity includes gender, age, ethnicity, social class, language, sexual preference, and mental and physical ability, it must start with race. As the U.S. population shifts and racial minorities become majorities, the projections look different for American cities.

In the District, it is projected that the black population will continue to decrease as white residents become the majority. Sustainable DC can—and should—play an active role in reducing the disparities that help cause these shifts. The first step in the process is to create opportunities for historically marginalized residents to have an active voice in the decision-making process.

Sustainable DC 2.0 includes a new section intended to serve as an equity filter for the entire plan. This section is intentionally organized differently than the other sections in Sustainable DC 2.0.



2018 RACIAL SEGREGATION



Data Source: American Community Survey & DC GIS



Black:
\$3,500

White:
\$284,000

The net worth of white households in DC is 81 times higher than black households.ⁱⁱ



Between **2007** and **2014**, the median household income in DC increased by **\$10,000** but remained flat for black households.ⁱⁱⁱ

There are
43,000
D.C. residents who qualify as "extremely low-income."
91% of
"extremely low-income" families are African-American.^{iv}



108,732
DC residents lived below the poverty line in **2012**.

115,119
residents lived below the poverty line in **2017**.^v



DC has the highest food assistance program use percentage in the U.S.^{vi}



DC has a **\$22,803** median student loan balance, the highest among any U.S. metropolitan area.^{vii}

EQ1.1

Create an Equity Impact Committee to guide equity in the development and implementation of the Sustainable DC 2.0 plan.

The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) will seek funding to launch the committee and provide for external consultation. The Committee will have a diverse, multi-generational membership, representative of community members and the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. It will monitor the implementation of the Sustainable DC 2.0 plan, including the development and tracking of metrics that focus on racial equity, to make significant progress toward equitable outcomes. This committee will serve as a catalyst to achieve a citywide commitment on racial equity that will reduce disparities and address the increasing wealth and class gaps.

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

DOEE

PARTNERS

DC Health, DPR,
EOM, OHR

EQ1.2

Develop an Equity Impact Assessment Tool to help the District immediately address racial inequities related to sustainability.

A pilot Equity Impact Assessment Tool will help the District Government immediately address racial inequities. The tool will define cross-cutting, guiding principles to be used in the ongoing implementation and future updates of the Sustainable DC 2.0 plan. District Government agencies will use the tool in the development of their plans and policies and the Sustainable DC 2.0 plan will be filtered through the tool. The tool, applied when planning processes are initiated, will hold the user accountable to ensuring that no community bears a larger share of negative impacts. As the use of the tool grows, content and procedures surrounding it will be assessed, it will be refined, and management tools will be created to assist District agencies

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

DOEE



EQ1.3

Provide equity-focused training for all District Government employees.

DOEE will develop a pilot equity-focused training for all District Government agencies working on Sustainable DC 2.0, including how they will apply the tool and equity principles to their work. Ongoing trainings will require a partnership with the Department of Human Resources and the Office of Human Rights to focus on cultural humility, equity, equality, biases, and unpacking racism. Equity trainings will serve as a starting point as all District Government employees learn the history of the city, so they more fully understand the fabric of the neighborhoods and communities they are serving. It will also help District Government employees identify and address their own biases to better serve all residents.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DOEE, DCHR

PARTNER

OHR

EQ1.4

Focus community engagement on communities that have been historically under-represented.

The District Government will focus community engagement efforts on communities that have been historically under-represented in planning processes. This will require new approaches to connect and build relationships. Government agencies and their staff should bring residents in at the beginning of planning processes to listen and learn about community priorities. This will allow projects and initiatives to support communal needs more meaningfully. This level of engagement will result in the co-creation of culturally relevant programming and initiatives that will help promote equity and sustainability in the daily lives of District residents.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DOEE

PARTNER

EOM

