

Exhibit E: Commitment to Change Statement

<https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-city-planning-commission/about/planning-and-equity-a-commitment-to-change/commitment-to-change-statement/>

Commitment to Change statement

The undersigned planning directors of United States cities acknowledge the role that city planners have played in contributing to systemic racism and segregation. We commit to working together toward an equitable future for our communities and invite all U.S. planning directors to sign the statement and join us in this critical endeavor.

Statement on the role of planners in contributing to racial inequity, and a commitment for change

As directors of agencies that plan for the future of cities, towns, and regions, we stand in solidarity with those whose goal is to transform communities into places of opportunity for everyone. We commit to changing our practices, policies, regulations, and actions to create inclusive and diverse neighborhoods and cities that equitably meet the needs of all residents, especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

- Whereas, many past practices, directly or indirectly involving planning agencies and planning professionals, contributed to racial inequities in U.S. cities.
- Whereas, urban redevelopment and urban renewal policies, which often designated BIPOC neighborhoods as “blighted” with the intent of revitalizing these communities through new construction, often led to wholesale clearance of these neighborhoods by eminent domain and to displaced residents with few housing choices.
- Whereas, physical, economic, and cultural displacement of residents, businesses, and institutions has occurred through actions such as zoning changes and development approvals that did not analyze the broad array of community needs and therefore did not address the direct and indirect impacts of these decisions.
- Whereas, construction of new public infrastructure, especially highways, disproportionately harmed BIPOC communities, often resulting in the destruction of entire neighborhoods and commercial districts.
- Whereas, cities intentionally disinvested in and neglected BIPOC communities while disproportionately creating public amenities for white residents, which deepened inequities and concentrated poverty in underserved communities.
- Whereas, “redlining,” the practice of geographically barring low-income BIPOC households from access to mortgages and lending, eliminated a critical source of multigenerational wealth for these communities.
- Whereas, racial covenants and deed restrictions in many communities blatantly prevented the sale of property to BIPOC.
- Whereas, exclusionary zoning practices, including the creation of single-family or other low-density districts, disallowed more affordable multi-family buildings and usually eliminated access to these neighborhoods for lower-income residents.

- Whereas, environmental injustices, including the siting of toxic activities in neighborhoods primarily occupied by BIPOC, exposed residents to more environmental stressors, including air and soil pollution, illegal dumping, and transportation impacts.
- Whereas, poor-quality public housing, combined with a lack of funding for ongoing maintenance and improvements and few on-site services, resulted in the warehousing of very poor households in segregated environments that were physically deteriorated, isolated from adjacent communities, and often unsafe.

We further recognize and acknowledge that due to the actions noted above, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other natural disasters have disproportionately affected BIPOC communities, which have experienced ongoing health, economic, and environmental stresses.

Planning and equity: A commitment to change

The planning directors hereby commit to become agents of change for our cities; to recognize that many of the following measures must be tailored uniquely to each city; to advocate for and to foster justice and equal access to opportunity; to use not only zoning and other existing planning tools but also new tools proposed by impacted and BIPOC communities to correct past harms; to achieve systemic change by rethinking public and private systems and evaluating benefits and burdens, all with the goal of creating inclusive, equitable communities, by:

- **Creating communities that are culturally diverse, livable, and accessible** through investments in housing, open spaces, transportation, quality amenities, and public services; by reducing exposure to environmental pollution and risks associated with climate change; and by ensuring that such investments do not lead to displacement or exacerbate inequities;
- **Preserving, strengthening, and celebrating the culture, assets, institutions, and businesses of BIPOC communities**, to honor their significance and prevent their erasure;
- **Developing land use strategies that promote the health, economic, social, and cultural resilience of BIPOC communities**; establishing affordable and inclusionary housing goals that support wealth-building through asset ownership; and working to create specific policies and funding mechanisms to help realize these goals;
- **Explicitly acknowledging that quality, safe housing for all, in every neighborhood, is a foundational goal of our work** and using the voices and practices enabled by our leadership roles to communicate this belief to elected officials and communities and to act on it accordingly;
- **Promoting development while addressing possible displacement**, employing specific policies and regulations that discourage economic displacement, and specifically disallowing physical displacement without comparable, high-quality replacement housing;
- **Championing housing choice and economically diverse neighborhoods**, including by dismantling exclusionary zoning policies and regulations, allowing diverse housing types and sizes in all neighborhoods, accommodating the needs of different family types, and providing transit and other public services for all neighborhoods;
- **Addressing a history of environmental injustice** to BIPOC communities by cleaning up areas polluted by noxious activities, relocating such activities where possible, and creating amenities to counteract the impacts on surrounding neighborhoods;

- **Promoting public dialogue** about the damaging effects of structural inequity on our communities, seeking input from all residents but especially BIPOC, and advancing ideas and solutions that explicitly reflects and respects such input, using a broad array of new and existing outreach tools to include these populations in our work;
- **Recognizing that change in our communities occurs at the speed of trust;** that is, rebuilding trust must precede other work toward change for that work to succeed; we will rebuild trust by publicly valuing and embracing the lived experiences of our communities;
- **Providing education on planning practice and policies,** to under-represented populations, and collaborating with these communities on how best to conduct these educational processes;
- **Exposing students to the planning profession, collaborating with educational institutions at all levels,** working toward a more diverse pool of practitioners in the coming years;
- **Addressing biases in the organizational culture of our agencies and creating diverse staffs** that reflect the makeup of our communities; providing opportunities in our organizations for BIPOC to obtain employment and rise to leadership positions; setting goals for these positions within specified time frames; and adopting clear policies and guidance for staff retention and career advancement;
- **Using tools such as racial equity impact assessments** to interrogate how existing and potential land use, design, and zoning policies and practices impact BIPOC communities;
- **Using data to disaggregate information by race and to better analyze qualitative measures of our communities' lived experiences** to inform policymaking and to create indicators and performance measures for tracking progress in the future.

The planning directors acknowledge that we cannot do this work alone. In addition to collaborating with affected communities, we will work with public, private, and nonprofit entities. We commit to using our voices, our practice, and our unique set of tools to achieve these partnerships, work toward these goals, and create systemic change.

Commitment to Change signatories

“Planning and Equity: A Commitment to Change” is a statement in which planning directors pledge to correct past harms and create an inclusive future. By signing on, the planning directors commit to:

- Creating communities that are culturally diverse, livable, and accessible.
- Preserving, strengthening, and celebrating the culture, assets, institutions, and businesses of BIPOC communities.
- Promoting the health, economic, social, and cultural resilience of BIPOC communities.
- Championing housing choice and economic diversity.
- Addressing environmental injustice.
- Removing biases from their organizations.

Signatories:

<https://www.phila.gov/media/20220316171852/Signatories-for-Commitment-to-Change-3-17-2022.pdf>

