Louisville, Kentucky

NLC
NATIONAL
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REAL RACE, EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP

Louisville City Profile on Racial Equity

Strong mayoral leadership and a robust foundation of data helped Louisville Metro, the metropolitan government for the combined Louisville/Jefferson County area, begin a procecss to address the modern impacts of segregation policies. To do this, the city acknowledged past mistakes and facilitated community dialogue to build a vision of a more equitable Louisville.

Erasing the Historical Lines of Division Drawn by Law & Practice

What began as a project by local urban planner and community organizer Joshua Poe quickly be came a critical tool for understanding the interplay between the city's history and its current outcomes.

An interactive storymap created by Poe demonstrated how redlining and other real estate policies impacted the ability of communities of color to access jobs and build wealth. The map layered federal redline maps with the current distribution of vacant properties, building permits, home ownership, poverty, and the city's racial and class populations from 1937 to 2010. The overlay vividly illustrated how redlining determined which modern-day neighborhoods showed signs of investment— and which did not, drawing attention to the divisions between majority white communities and communities of color.

Some of these current disparate impacts include:

- Denying access to mortgages and business loans independent of credit rating

- Disparities in rates of home ownership and investment

- Digital redlining, which is differential access to technological services like broadband
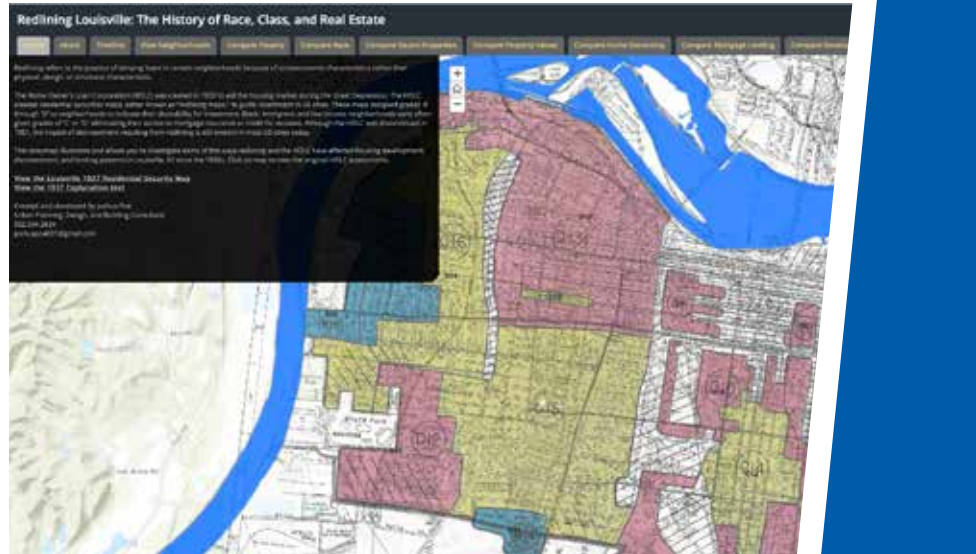
Interactive StoryMap of Redlining and its Impacts in Louisville developed by urban planner and community organizer Joshua Poe.

- Reverse redlining, a practice in which banks and other mortgage lenders charge people of color higher interest rates than white people

- Refusal to provide delivery services for goods to residences of color

- Dropping property insurance policies for Black and immigrant residents

Since Poe's storymap was such a powerful device, Louisville Metro Mayor Greg Fischer worked with city staff to share what the city learned from it. FIrst, the city developed a yearlong community dialogue called "Redlining Louisville: The History of Race, Class, and Real Estate" in partnership with community organizations. The series of dialogues helped the city formulate recommendations for how to address the ongoing impacts of redlining on communities of color.

"There are still institutional barriers to people of color and that should be a concern for everybody in our country... And until we get into and understand more of history, injustice, grievances, and work through these issues, we're not going to be as strong as a country," said Mayor Fischer.

Second, in a series of podcasts, the Mayor created a space for the residents and organizations of Louisville to delve into the city's fraught history with race as well as current issues like the future of controversial public art in the city.

Gathering Data on Racial Disparities Leads the City to Action

Prior to the redlining series, Louisville Metro undertook several other efforts to both understand racial inequities and build a path towards racial healing.

In 2006, the Louisville Department of Public Health and Wellness began investigating the racial health disparities in Louisville. The department founded the first municipal Center for Health Equity (CHE) in the country to address the social and economic conditions that cause health inequities. Since then, CHE has worked with partners throughout Louisville to understand the systemic factors influencing health outcomes and to identify evidence-based practices to move communities forward in addressing racial disparities. Through regular dissemination of its Health Equity Report, CHE has played a pivotal role in helping the city better understand disparities.

This data led to the Healing Possible Quorum 100 (HPQ100) racial healing effort, supported through a five-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. In 2014, community members across sectors developed a series of recommendations to Louisville Metro to promote racial healing and address structural racism. These actionable recommendations led to:

- Adoption of a racial impact assessment tool

- Development of a public-private-nonprofit partnership to build community consensus and build the business case for equity, which would be staffed by a racial equity commission
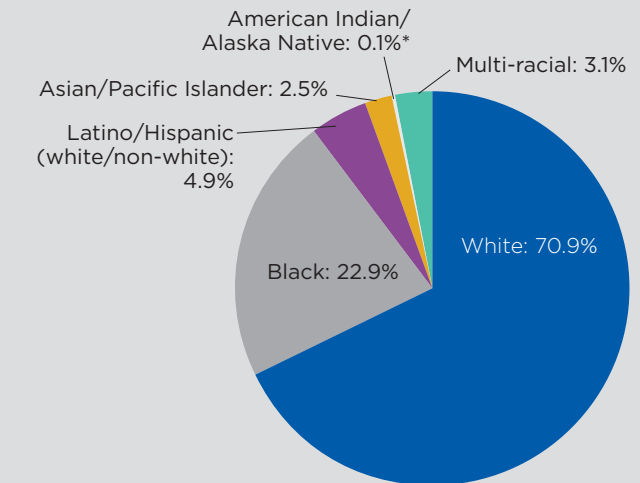
- Adoption of formal policies across institutions to demonstrate their commitment to embedding racial equity as a priority

- Education, training and ongoing community dialogue to support implementation of the assessment tool

Equipping Staff to Act in their Departments and Across Metro Government

As a result of the HPQ100 recommendations, Louisville Metro has moved forward in a number of areas. As part of the city's participation in the two-year Racial Equity Here national cohort, CHE and the Metro Department of Human Resources led the city's efforts to train all Metro employees on racial equity. These 3-hour trainings covered the history of race, implicit and explicit bias, structural and institutional racism, and equipped staff to take action. More than two thousand staff throughout all 26 Metro departments have been trained to date.

Mayor Fischer then created a formal structure for staff to own and participate in the work. In 2017, the mayor hired a Chief Equity Officer to oversee a city-wide cross-functional team that leads the city in racial equity work. The team is comprised of leaders from 12 different city departments and a community advisory board. Mayor Fischer also embedded racial equity in his strategic plan and committed to developing a racial equity action plan across the Metro city departments. The plan will institutionalize a framework for using an equity lens to remove

Summary: Louisville

1 **Acknowledging History of Redlining:** A public reckoning with the current local impacts of racially discriminatory policies and practices like redlining and urban renewal is a practice that cities across the nation can learn from.

2 **Creating Innovative Platforms:** Building on a University-developed story map, the city used innovative platforms like community dialogues, social media and podcasts to bring the community into a deeper understanding of how history impacts what the city looks like today.

3 **Using Public Opportunities to be Explicit:** These opportunities include the ongoing engagement of Mayor Fischer in leading with an explicit naming of structural racism and building knowledge and skills amongst city staff and the community to publicly engage with racial equity and move towards healing.

barriers to access, focusing on procurement, hiring, workforce equity and youth development. City departments will also create their own racial equity plans, and the goals and intended outcomes will be embedded in the citywide LouieStat, the city's local performance measurement system.

Key to developing the training and the cross functional team were partnerships CHE developed with the Department of Human Resources and the Office of Performance Improvement, which built out a set of racial equity liaisons to promote this work to each Metro department and navigate the unique cultures in each department.

The city is also addressing lingering redline policies via the racial wealth gap. Louisville Metro is exploring strategies on growing wealth for families, increasing home ownership, and providing opportunities in West Louisville, where disinvestment has been highest, and the negative impacts have been most acute. Through NLC's Equitable Economic Development Fellowship, the municipality is looking at how to build a culture of entrepreneurship in these neighborhoods to expand access to goods, services and high-quality job opportunities that lead to economic stability and community vibrancy.

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1 Like in many other US cities, the practice of redlining in Louisville began in 1933 through the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC)'s maps, which codified racially discriminatory bank practices in order to direct investments to bolster home ownership in Louisville. Redlining, practiced by banks acting on behalf of the Federal Housing Administration, was used to determine the value of properties based on the race and country of origin of the residents.