

**Great Communities Collaborative  
Equitable and Sustainable Communities Principles**

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Initial Here

*Great Communities Collaborative (GCC) envisions a socially equitable and environmentally sustainable Bay Area where low-income people and communities of color are engaged in shaping their own future and able to stay and thrive in place. Great Communities Collaborative (GCC) is a multi-sector network of organizations and agencies who work together to address the challenges of regional land use, transportation, housing and climate change to build a region that is made up of healthy, thriving neighborhoods that are affordable to all and well connected to regional opportunities.*

**Purpose:**

These Principles are a values statement designed to ground the GCC network in a way that centers low-income communities and communities of color. We believe that equitable and sustainable communities are defined by the inclusion of: affordable housing, transit, community driven land uses and the centering of low income communities and communities of color such that they stay in place and thrive in the face of economic and climate pressures.

We acknowledge that the built environments that make up the neighborhoods, cities and counties of the Bay Area region are a product of a complex history that was created by local and regional actors and can therefore be undone. In order to create fair and equitable solutions, we must understand our past and intentionally create a different future. If we continue to plan and develop cities without correcting for previously constructed inequity, without accounting for racial biases and without holding a regional vision of equity and inclusion, then we will be guilty of further exacerbating segregation and economic and social inequity in the Bay Area.

**Great Communities Collaborative Equitable and Sustainable Communities Principles**

GCC is committed to supporting the following strategies to advance the creation of equitable and sustainable communities, while simultaneously investing in preventing the displacement of current low-income communities and communities of color.

- Shaping local and regional policy by advocating for equitable & sustainable development policies and plans in the Bay Area
- Engaging, advising, & supporting public and private sector allies to advance equitable & sustainable development
- Cultivating partnerships and funding and financing resources for low-income communities of color related to equitable & sustainable development
- Advancing research and internal learning related to: development policies, practices, fields
- Facilitating strategic communications that advance equitable and sustainable solutions.

The outcomes we are seeking to reach by using these strategies include:

- Public and private land use and transportation investments benefit the Bay Area's low-income people and communities of color and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Low-income people and communities of color have more and stronger leadership in local and regional planning decisions
- Regional actors embrace a proactive role in building an equitable and sustainable region

## **GCC Equitable and Sustainable Communities Context - *Historic and Regional Context for our work***

### **Historic Context**

2. **Redlining** (including restrictive covenants and deed restrictions) was a government sanctioned discriminatory practice used to exclude blacks and other communities of color from homeownership and from living in certain Bay Area cities<sup>i</sup>. The impact of these policies paved the way for increased home costs and predatory lending within communities of color, and greatly contributed to the extreme racial wealth disparities that we see today. Current patterns of displacement, gentrification and exclusion resemble the basic outlines of 1930's redlining<sup>ii</sup>.
3. Access to **government assistance**, such as mortgage loans via the Federal Housing Administration were designed to provide white families - middle and lower-class – with homeownership aid and benefits, while explicitly excluding people of color. White families were supported by the government in building generational wealth, while communities of color were not, which is part of the reason that for every \$100 in white family wealth, black families hold just \$5.04<sup>iii</sup>.
4. The creation of predominantly white, middle class suburbs occurred when the federal government created the **federal highway system**, subsidizing suburban living while simultaneously decimating many active residential and business districts occupied mostly by African-Americans and other people of color.<sup>iv</sup> Nationally, local and regional transportation investments also disproportionately reflect the wants and needs of a middle and upper class, primarily white, customer base<sup>v</sup> creating greater inequities for low income and communities of color<sup>vi</sup>.
5. **Urban renewal**<sup>vii</sup> and decades of **disinvestment** in urban centers, often the same places that were the only home options for people of color, have left primarily low income and communities of color vulnerable to being priced out and pushed out by today's public and private investment in development, transportation and climate infrastructure.
6. Continuing down the current path of **exclusion and segregation** will ensure that inequality levels in the Bay Area continue to outpace the majority of the nation<sup>viii</sup>, which is particularly egregious since the Bay Area is home to 5 of the nation's top 20 wealthiest cities.<sup>ix</sup>

### **Regional Accountability**

7. Decisions made at the site, neighborhood, city and county level have **cumulative regional impacts** on the lives of people in surrounding neighborhoods, cities and counties. Living in a vibrant region like the Bay Area means that all residents should have access to all of the benefits of the region and that all residents should be engaged in advancing regional solutions.
8. Individuals, governments, communities and corporations that act only according to their own self-interest, or who resolve to take no action, often behave contrary to the **common good of all**, with direct impacts on the health of the Bay Area region. Our region cannot afford to allow exclusionary practices of neighborhoods and cities to block efforts to solve our shared regional problems. Prioritizing regional community mindedness over entitled individualism will ensure a more thriving and robust region.
9. As a region, we must provide **housing commensurate to the actual jobs** that are created within our regional boundaries. Similar to housing, decisions about job distribution, wage inequality and occupational segregation are products of historically exclusionary decisions and practices. Because of the historic and current impacts of economic segregation across the Bay Area, we as communities within the region must each provide our fair share of affordable, transit-connected housing solutions for people at all income levels<sup>x</sup>, but especially for lower income households who are not served by the private market.

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Richard Rothstein, [The Color of Law](#), (2017) Chapter 1. If San Francisco, Then Everywhere. *If you inquire into the history of the metropolitan area in which you live, you will probably find ample evidence of how the federal, state, and local governments unconstitutionally used housing policy to create or reinforce segregation in ways that still survive.*

<sup>ii</sup> Urban Displacement Project. [Displacement and Gentrification Maps](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Whites Have Huge Wealth Edge Over Blacks \(but Don't Know It\)](#) (New York Time, 2017)

<sup>iv</sup> Federal Highway Administration. [The Greatest Decade 1956-1966: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Eisenhower Interstate System](#). Part 2: The Battle of Its Life. Section: "Separate," Not "Equal" Transportation. (FHWA.dot, 2017) *"The expressway building of the 1950s and 1960s, then, ultimately helped produce the much larger, more spatially isolated, and more intensely segregated second ghettos characteristic of the late twentieth century." In part, Federal and State highway officials were driven by the urgency of finishing the Interstate System by the early 1970s and by visions of the benefits the Nation, particularly its cities, would enjoy when it was completed. They did not see the inextricable link between civil rights and transportation planning or the impact of this link on social and economic opportunity for America's "humblest citizens." In short, highway officials and urban political leaders did not foresee that in their pursuit of "radical revision," they were exposing America's racial divides and contributing to the problems their successors would confront in coming decades.*

<sup>v</sup> Aaron Golub, et al., [Race, Space, and Struggles for Mobility: Transportation Impacts on African Americans in Oakland and the East Bay](#). (Urban Geography, 2013) *While the benefits of a metropolitan decentralization of jobs, housing, and public investment fell to Whites, discrimination in employment and housing trapped African Americans in urban neighborhoods burdened by infrastructure encroachment and divestment. By circa 1970, overt discrimination succumbed to new, racially neutral, legal, and administrative forms, including regional planning processes, which continued to reproduce the existing racialized geography by means of new inequalities in representation and transportation service provision.*

<sup>vi</sup> Chuck Devore, [Of The Four Majority-Minority States in America, Minorities Do Best in Texas](#). (Forbes, 2015) *California has the nation's highest Supplemental Poverty rate, higher even than [Washington](#), D.C. Proportionately, California has 47 percent more people in poverty than does Texas or the U.S. When considering the cost of housing, CA's poverty rate rises to 23.4%.*

<sup>vii</sup> Race - The Power of An Illusion. [Uncle Sam Lends A Hand](#) (KQED, 2003). *The housing market available to most nonwhites was rental and later, public housing in segregated urban centers. Government-sponsored urban redevelopment programs destroyed more housing than they built. Ninety percent of all housing destroyed by urban renewal was not replaced; two-thirds of those displaced were Black or Latino. As urban renewal projects destroyed taxable properties, the burden for maintaining social services was shifted onto fewer and fewer residents - encouraging white flight and making the poor poorer.*

<sup>viii</sup> [National Equity Atlas](#). (Policylink, 2017) Slide 35. *Today, the nine-county Bay Area ranks 23rd out of the largest 150 regions in terms of inequality, leaving it between Jackson, Mississippi (22nd) and Birmingham-Hoover, Alabama (24th). Income inequality has grown in the Bay Area over the past 30 years and surpassed the level of inequality in the nation overall back in 1999.*

<sup>ix</sup> [This is Where America's Wealthy Live](#). (Bloomberg, 2017.) #1 Atherton #4. Hillsborough #7. Los Altos Hills #15. Piedmont #18 Kentfield. 9 other Bay Area cities are included in the top 100: #37 Los Altos, #46 Orinda, #52 Alamo, #53 Tiburon, #57 Mill Valley, #66 Saratoga, #74 Blackhawk, #96 Menlo Park #97 Palo Alto. *The addition of unincorporated townships, such as Portola Valley and Woodside, expands the number of wealthy neighborhoods in the Bay Area region.*

<sup>x</sup> [Jobs Housing Fit Map](#). (UC Davis, 2017)

Chris Benner, [Low-Wage jobs-housing fit: Identifying Locations of Affordable Housing Shortages](#). (UC Santa Cruz. 2016.) *In contrast to jobs-housing balance, the low-wage fit analysis clearly highlights those jurisdictions and neighborhoods where there is a substantial shortage of affordable housing in relation to the number of low-wage jobs.*