# The Sustainable Communities Initiative











### EQUITY IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ISSUE BRIEFS



# **Opportunity Mapping Issue Brief**

Place Matters:
Using Mapping to Plan for
Opportunity, Equity, and Sustainability

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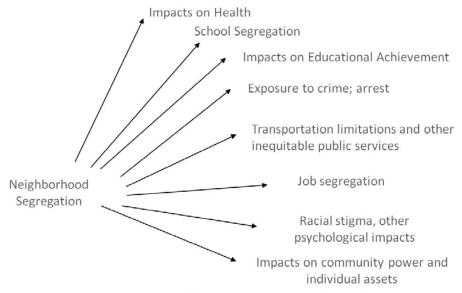
#### Introduction

"Biologists often talk about the "ecology" of an organism: the tallest oak in the forest is the tallest not just because it grew from the hardiest acorn; it is the tallest also because no other trees blocked its sunlight, the soil around it was deep and rich, no rabbit chewed through its bark as a sapling, and no lumberjack cut it down before it matured. We all know that successful people come from hardy seeds. But do we know enough about the sunlight that warmed them, the soil in which they put down roots, and the rabbits and lumberjacks they were lucky enough to avoid?" - Malcolm Gladwell, Outliers

For most of us, the neighborhood is our "ecosystem," a place that can either provide the opportunities we need to grow or stifle our potential. We generally know an opportunity-rich neighborhood when we see one: a place that provides access to quality schools, healthy food and recreational options, stable and supportive housing, sustainable employment, and strong social networks.

More than a half century of research has documented the roles neighborhoods play in supporting positive life outcomes. 1 This large body of research is continually growing as we learn more about how neighborhoodsour social, natural, and built environments—influence our physical and psychological health. For many marginalized communities, particularly low-income communities and segregated communities of color, neighborhood conditions limit access to opportunity and advancement. Residents concentrated in opportunity-deprived communities lack access to steady employment, essential services, and good schools, and often live in unsafe environments. In these neighborhoods, under-resourced schools struggle to meet the myriad needs of children in poverty; parents shop at grocery stores with overpriced and low-quality food; and people motivated to work lack connection to meaningful, sustainable employment. This geographic isolation from opportunity creates artificial barriers to improvement for these residents and significantly diminishes their quality of life.

#### Segregation impacts a number of life-opportunities



Adapted from figure by Barbara Reskin at: http://faculty.washington.edu/reskin/

The impact of this opportunity isolation is profound for both the individual and the entire community. Isolated and opportunity-poor neighborhoods restrict employment options for young people; contribute to poor health; expose children to extremely high rates of crime and violence; and house some of the least-performing schools. A vast research literature documents the ways in which opportunities, and the advantages they

confer, cluster and accumulate spatially. Neighborhoods powerfully shape residents' access to social, political, and economic opportunities and resources.

Communities that lack opportunity cannot bounce back when times are tough, cannot be resilient in the face of economic challenges and the effects of climate change, and cannot sustain themselves in the long run. Sustainable communities are resilient communities, and with the need for increased resiliency must come a renewed focus on access to opportunity. Such access has become ever more urgent as America seeks to remain competitive on the world economic stage at a time of rapid demographic change.

#### Embracing diversity and preparing for the future

"Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy...Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By 2042, the majority of our nation's population will be people of color. In the past decade, almost all of the net U.S. population growth—92 percent—has come from people of color. Latinos largely drove that increase. While immigration continues to play a role, the majority of growth in the Latino population now comes from new births by Latino residents. Many places would have lost population were it not for their growing diverse populations. Among the largest 100 metropolitan regions, the white population declined in two of every five of them, but the Latino population increased in all of them, and the Asian population increased in all but a handful of them.<sup>3</sup>

While increasing diversity and immigration can be a national asset, promising energy, innovation, and growth, not everyone has access to the prosperity and opportunity that our nation and regions have to offer. Income inequality between African Americans and whites is the highest it's been in 25 years, 4 communities of color are still reeling from vacancy and abandoned housing in the wake of the housing crisis, and severe educational and skills disparities persist. A recent study projects that 45 percent of jobs in 2018 will require at least an associate's degree, yet only 27 percent of African American and 26 percent of Latino workers have such a degree, compared to 43 percent of white workers. 5 Too many children today are struggling. Almost 40 percent of black children lived in poverty in 2011, compared to 38 percent of American Indian, 34 percent of Hispanic, 14 percent of Asian, and 13.5 percent of white children.

Building sustainable and economically resilient communities involves addressing issues such as regional economic diversity, renewable energy, climate change, collaboration, and healthy competition. But it also means that individuals and families can have what they need to succeed and contribute to society. It means strong local economies, as well as energizing global partnerships. It means smart planning that reduces long commutes. It means preventative health care, and civic vibrancy. Sustainable regional planning means ensuring that all communities—especially our most vulnerable ones—are equipped to handle hardship and bounce back. It means creating a vibrant national economy by attracting local investment and stimulating regional economic growth, and ensuring that all residents are educated to compete in the global economy.

Through sustainable and resilient communities, equity is achieved—just and fair inclusion into a society where all can participate and prosper. In the end, the planning process is about the people: making sure that the systems, from health care, to education, to transit, to housing, serve their needs, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity. This means residents must be given a chance to have a voice in the conversations that shape the future of their community.

Many regions are now completing regional equity and opportunity assessments to help guide future decision making in areas such as health care, education, transportation, and housing. This is where opportunity

mapping can be incorporated, the focus of this paper. Opportunity mapping uses data to guide how investments are made so that every community can be a place of opportunity.

### **Opportunity Mapping: What, Why, and How**

Sustainability, economic resilience, and equitable planning can be supported through an opportunity-oriented approach to planning—one that considers the multiplicity of factors such as housing, education, jobs, transportation, health, and engagement that stands at the center of one's life and community. This community development approach is based on the premise that everyone should have fair access to the critical opportunity structures and the necessary social infrastructure to succeed in life; and that affirmatively connecting people to opportunity creates positive, transformative change in communities.

#### What is opportunity mapping?

Pioneered by the Kirwan Institute, <sup>6</sup> opportunity mapping allows stakeholders and organizations to facilitate community engagement, planning, and analysis to address equity challenges; to promote community development; and to affirmatively connect marginalized communities to critical pathways to opportunity, such as successful schools, safe neighborhoods, and sustainable employment. Opportunity mapping creates composite maps based on numerous neighborhood indicators of community opportunity and vitality. The maps allow for an examination of the relationship between marginalized populations and opportunity, placing the equity challenges facing marginalized communities in a geographical perspective, and giving insights into the range of meaningful choices available to an individual or a community. Maps can stimulate dialogue and consensus-building among stakeholders that can help inform the design of equity advocacy efforts, strategic planning, and program evaluation and design. Opportunity mapping engagements create a common space for group learning and a collective narrative about "place."

#### Why mapping?

Regional, racial, and social inequities often manifest as spatial inequity; opportunity maps reveal where opportunity is located geographically and demonstrate how different groups of people are concentrated in areas of low or high opportunity. Opportunity mapping has been included in the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment precisely because HUD recognizes that opportunity and equity have a geographic dimension, and to truly understand the state of equity in a region, grantees must be able to identify where it exists, and where it does not, in order to effectively design strategies to increase opportunity for all groups.

#### **Engagement and Participation**

As a strategy, opportunity mapping can occur at many places along a project spectrum. It can be used to provide information on trends—how opportunity has changed over time—to facilitate understanding of the region. It can also be incorporated as a specific strategy in comprehensive neighborhood investment. As a tool, opportunity mapping can serve many purposes. Whichever use it is designed for or whatever stage in the process it falls, engagement will be a central consideration.

An ideal opportunity mapping process begins with a series of engagements where partners learn about opportunity mapping and its place in a strategy to effect community change. Partners are encouraged to convene an advisory group of community stakeholders. Together, the advisory group can create an iterative space where indicators are vetted, draft maps are created and refined, and strategies for the rollout and use of the maps are crafted.

Advisory group members may also act as liaisons to other community groups and grassroots organizations, local data providers, or funders. It is important to "ground-truth" the maps, gain community-based

perspectives on issues of particular concern for a "deeper dive" into the data, and collect qualitative data in the form of personal narratives shared in community engagements. The result of the process is a set of opportunity maps based on a core set of indicators of opportunity drawn from the literature, ' refined and informed by local perspectives, and locally derived. Participatory mapping exercises are promising ways to increase community ownership, participation, and collaborative planning and development initiatives. Participatory mapping projects create problem-solving and information-gathering opportunities with community members, which also can add value to deliberation. There are examples of participatory research in environmental management, urban planning, and several other advocacy fields. As more and more citizens participate in the process, issues and concerns can be clearly identified, leading to more targeted and accurate solutions. Well-designed community-based participatory research can provide the best opportunity for building community ownership of projects and initiatives. These initiatives allow for the collection of new and unique types of data. Handheld remote mapping or GPS devices will spur the growth of these initiatives.

Process is critical in assuring a productive participatory mapping exercise. Mechanisms for incorporating the results of the mapping process must be agreed upon and clearly communicated to participants. The process should be community-led and facilitated with technical assistance and support from the public sector agency. Participatory mapping projects can also be helpful in clarifying the perspectives of the community from the local population, often presenting a unique and different view of the community than what is popularly believed in the wider region. In particular, care and thoughtfulness must be taken when engaging with groups that may have limited English proficiency (LEP), or low literacy. In these instances, language is critical. Interpreters should be used from the beginning with LEP populations to assist in translating materials and the way the information is presented that will make sense to that particular population.

An opportunity mapping and engagement project, recently facilitated by the Kirwan Institute in Merced, California, is illustrative. One of the project partners was a Hispanic woman who had a background in translation and she was able to point out that the word "asset" that was being used to describe opportunities did not have a clear translation in Spanish. With her help, opportunity and assets were instead described as "things that help you succeed in life." It is also important to unpack more complex concepts, and pay attention to language in that area as well. In presenting information to large groups, one of Kirwan's guiding rules of thumb is whether it is able to reach a young person as well as a senior with the same degree of understanding. Such a rule will be useful when engaging lower literacy populations.

Communities that may have an overwhelmingly negative external reputation may have critical assets and resources that can be identified through participatory activities with local residents. Technology-based engagement must work to integrate best practices in community-building with best practices in community technology, through a process which seeks to first identify community needs and then pairs technology to address those needs.

#### **Developing the Opportunity Index**

The opportunity mapping methodology first pulls together an array of indicators that have been demonstrated to impact an individual or family's chance to succeed in life—indicators of community health and of individual and family financial, educational, health, and vocational well-being. The development of core opportunity index data recently provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development enables communities to access some core opportunity metrics in a much more time and cost- effective way. Opportunity indicators should draw from the data from HUD, but also be developed in tandem with input from local stakeholders and through participatory processes, reflecting the fact that the HUD data may not encompass data that reflects community priorities. These data, usually collected at the census tract or block group level for the entire community, are then evaluated in groups with similar indicators, with each census

This methodology is unique to the Kirwan Institute.

geography receiving a normalized score (or a z score) that reflects how the tract or block group compares to others on each group of indicators.

The scores for the indicator groups are combined statistically into a final, composite opportunity index that, when mapped by census geography, shows the distribution of opportunity across the community. This firstcut opportunity map should then be evaluated through an iterative series of drafts and comments by the advisory group and community residents and stakeholders, and refined and augmented through the use of local data to arrive at the final opportunity map.

The composite opportunity index map describes the opportunity "terrain" of the community. Additional data on the people who live in the community, along with factors such as race, age, and income, can be laid over the opportunity map to demonstrate who in the community has access to greater or lesser opportunity. Overlays can also be used to show where a community's assets are located, which can be leveraged to improve opportunity, and policy analysis can help identify how existing or proposed policies are impacting the opportunity landscape within the region.

#### Strategies for a Successful Process

For the opportunity maps to be useful, several considerations must be taken to assure maps are being used to facilitate productive engagements.

- Expect an Iterative Process: Opportunity mapping should be considered an iterative process with lots of discussion, revision, and reformulation of the maps. This process is essential to ensuring buy-in from local stakeholders in the mapping process. Once indicators are selected, the process of mapping and index calculation can proceed in relatively short order. However, opportunity maps should be viewed not as standalone products in themselves, but rather as one point in an engagement process where stakeholders and communities strive to understand what these maps communicate about the region and its communities (i.e., the connections among place, opportunity, and equity), and what actions and policies would help distribute opportunity more evenly across the region. While the mapping itself can be done in a matter of weeks, the engagement process can last for several months.
- Understand the Limitations of Data: Part of the value of building an opportunity index through engagement with a local committee of stakeholders is the ability to identify the most accurate sources of data available. This can be a tedious process, but building an opportunity index with the most accurate information at the most detailed geographic level will ensure confidence in the mapping products. However, another important part of this process is recognizing the limitations of the available datasets and moving forward. Perfect data almost never exists at a neighborhood level for every county of a region, and the time and cost of developing additional datasets is often not worth the marginal increases in accuracy. Though care should be given to understanding margins of error, confidence intervals, and collection methodologies, recognizing and accepting data shortcomings is part of the process of comprehensively defining opportunity across the region.

It is also important to incorporate qualitative data—in particular data that can better speak to the hidden opportunities that are not easily captured through quantitative means. For example, asset mapping will be especially important to include when looking into low-opportunity areas. Assets that may be important in communities, such as strong churches, or organizations that donate space for community meetings or events, block watches, free fitness classes, and other workshops or community events are all important to capture.

Some of these data points may not be "mappable" in the geospatial sense, but there are ways to present this information in conjunction with opportunity maps and utilize this information in decision-making. A more formal approach to asset mapping entails looking at the capabilities of

individuals, civic associations, and local institutions and creating an inventory of these capabilities. Assets may include tangibles and intangibles (such as community spirit and values); they may include people, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, business, and informal organizations. These events and experiences must be captured as they contribute to opportunity that is perceived at the community level, by the community.

- Ensuring Clear and Readable Maps: To be an effective communications tool, maps must be clear and easy to comprehend. Maps allow us to display nearly unlimited amounts of data at one time. Often we fall victim to this possibility, producing maps which are too "busy" and dense to communicate clearly and effectively. As a rule, maps should be designed with specific communications or analysis goals in mind. We must ask, what is the issue or message we are trying to deliver with this map? How can we deliver this message by presenting a clean and clear image which our audience can understand quickly? As mapping becomes more commonly used, we must discipline ourselves to assure that maps are easy to understand and can be understood quickly with the right graphic symbols and legends.
- "Ground-truthing" the Maps: Once the maps reveal areas of high and low opportunity, we caution against a shallow read on the data and what the maps show when thinking through policy, investment, or program implications. For example, areas that show up as high opportunity should not be regarded as needing no investment, nor should they be regarded as the only places where affordable housing should be developed. Relying solely on the quantitative-based data used in the maps is not enough to make investment decisions, but should also be complemented by a second level of qualitative information to better answer the difficult questions around investment decisions. Many different stories can be told through the data so it will be essential to "ground-truth" the maps not only with stakeholders who have expertise in a given topic (i.e., education, public health), but with the people who actually experience what the maps are portraying. More targeted qualitative approaches such as small focus groups or one-to-one interviews on community opportunities and challenges can add nuance to the data collected. These conversations provide the context that give meaning to the maps.
- Working in Rural Regions: Rural census geographies are generally larger than those in urban and suburban areas, reflecting the lower population density of rural areas and requiring the use of smaller census geographies (block groups or even blocks). Less populous census geographies also introduce statistical challenges due to the greater margins of error associated with estimates derived from smaller sample sizes. Likewise, community assets tend to be more sparsely distributed. For all these reasons, opportunity mapping in rural areas requires greater attention to indicator calculation but also allows the possibility to do creative participatory work around local data collection.
- Maps as Tools for Communication: Maps are powerful communication tools. Opportunity maps, using accurate and reliable data, can identify critical information and can reach a large audience through good visualization and representation of community issues. Once an iterative index development process is complete, the maps can then become a tool for expanding community dialogue about opportunity throughout the region.

"We have program outcome data on every program we fund, but we have never had a way to show impact upon a population or neighborhood. Opportunity mapping is a powerful tool that demonstrates the value of our work in a graphic and easy to understand way ... Our city budget continues to shrink but as we go forward we'll be working on ways to refocus some of our investments."-Linda Lanier, Executive Director/CEO, Jacksonville Children's Commission

#### **Applications for Opportunity Mapping**

The applications for opportunity mapping are extensive, and have been used in:

- policy design & advocacy
- community planning
- community development
- civil rights litigation
- applied research
- community organizing
- coalition building
- service delivery
- targeting investments

In supporting sustainable regional development, opportunity mapping can be tremendously useful in various activities, including those activities undertaken as part of the Sustainable Communities initiatives.

Supporting Fair Housing and Equity: Opportunity maps can be used to guide fair housing policy in a region. For example, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program uses an opportunity-based geographic targeting to help families with vouchers access higher-opportunity communities. 8 The program has been successful in offering voucher holders the ability to choose housing outside of highly racially and economically segregated neighborhoods of low opportunity, overcoming serious barriers to accessing housing found in suburban or more opportunity-rich urban neighborhoods. In another example, the Board of Commissioners at the King County Housing Authority in Washington state recently adopted a policy to "give strong consideration to Opportunity Neighborhood indicators, such as education, employment, access to food, parks and transportation, when acquiring new properties, placing project-based Section 8 subsidies and developing mobility counseling and other programs and to integrate these criteria into decision making on these programs to the maximum extent possible."

Grantees of the Sustainable Communities Initiative are required to conduct a Fair Housing and Equity Assessment or Regional Analysis of Impediments. As part of these analyses, grantees must complete opportunity mapping for the region. The benefit of a regional opportunity map(s) is that it bridges jurisdictional, political, and sectoral boundaries. The process provides space to bring new players together to collectively think about fair housing and equity issues that traditionally have not worked collaboratively in this context. Through analysis, coupled with engagement, opportunity mapping can help grantees understand how people and place-based disparities are connected to systematic barriers to opportunity. The mapping not only provides grantees an understanding of the where, why, and how certain communities and groups have limited access to opportunity, but provides regional stakeholders with a shared understanding of current conditions that can serve as a framework for future accountability.

Facilitating Community Engagement: The process of developing an opportunity map requires considerable information sharing among community members and stakeholders, providing natural avenues for groups to engage each other about specific challenges that may affect them individually and as a community. The maps are designed to be interactive and intuitive, allowing people to instantly recognize how access to opportunity impacts their communities and region. They can also serve as a common ground on which to begin meaningful dialogue about community challenges and to create strategies to address those challenges. Finally, the intuitive nature of opportunity maps can also make them useful for helping people relate a community narrative to a variety of audiences in a way that is both powerful and easy to absorb.

<sup>\*</sup>This policy was based on opportunity mapping conducted by the Kirwan Institute, and funded by the Poverty and Race Research Action Council.

PolicyLink and the Kirwan Institute have co-produced a community engagement guide to assist grantees in reaching underserved populations. The guide encourages grantees to undertake meaningful engagement at the local and regional levels through innovative partnerships that are inclusive of a broad and deep range of stakeholders, in particular those that have not had a voice in the decision-making process. Opportunity mapping provides one outlet for this type of engagement to occur.

"The story of how our maps were created resembles the children's story Stone Soup, in which a hungry community started out with nothing but a pot of water with stones and ended up with a rich soup that fed everyone because each person contributed something. Creating these maps was a community-building experience that promises to have benefits that go beyond the maps themselves."-Andree Tremoulet, Housing Services Specialist, Department of Community Development, Washington County, Oregon

Bridging Diverse Stakeholders: To talk about opportunity is to talk about the assets and challenges that people experience within a community. This comprehensive view reflects the understanding that one variable alone does not fully explain differences in opportunity. Rather it is a multitude of variables, interconnected, that make the problem a complex one. It makes sense then that a broad and diverse array of stakeholders should be engaged in these discussions; collaboration is key. For example, a project may identify the nexus between health disadvantage and poverty or education in a particular community, providing a point of collaboration that brings together health-care providers, educators, and anti-poverty advocates. Region-wide mapping can also identify challenges impacting multiple communities, providing evidence to support coalition-based advocacy or actions between communities. For example, the use of opportunity mapping assisted in opening up conversations around fair housing to include the smart growth community and other stakeholders in Connecticut, as described by Erin Boggs of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center.

"From an institutional perspective, involvement with this (opportunity mapping) project has required us as an organization to reach out to potential partners we have not interacted with before. We have developed relationships with organizations working on issues such as smart growth, health disparities, and education which have helped to inform and direct our fair housing work." -Erin Boggs, Deputy Director, Connecticut Fair Housing Center

- Framing Constructive Dialogues on Issues of Equity: Careful framing can assist in producing more constructive engagement around issues of sustainability, regional planning, and equity. Regionalism, smart growth, sustainability, race, and equity are complex and sensitive issues, and having productive public conversations around these issues can be challenging. Although these topics may be difficult to broach, they are essential to having an honest, inclusive, and meaningful engagement. The opportunity frame is a positive frame which appeals to the core American belief that everyone should have a chance to achieve their full potential. The opportunity maps themselves allow groups to focus on the different systems that are operating and how these systems distribute opportunity (or not), not on specific individuals, which can help keep the conversations productive. Opportunity mapping can also clearly identify barriers to opportunity facing marginalized communities, allowing for a starting point for discussing policy interventions which support equity.
- Assessing Critical Planning Corridors: Opportunity mapping has recently been utilized in the Puget Sound region to provide a holistic view of community conditions along the region's light rail planning corridor. As the region prepares to make a once-in-a-lifetime investment in its transit infrastructure, opportunity maps have become a tool to ensure that light rail lines and stations are planned and located in a way that expands opportunity for all communities. While the Growing Transit Communities program of the Puget Sound Regional Council was the jumping off point for a regional dialogue about opportunity, there has since been a groundswell of planning initiatives throughout the

region, leading to an opportunity-oriented approach to roadway planning, investments in the bike network, and in housing authority policy. 10

Supporting Targeted and Holistic Community Development: Opportunity maps have been utilized to understand where to target a variety of resources into high-need communities. As communities struggle to identify how to use limited resources to promote community health and prosperity, mapping will continue to play a prominent role in guiding these critical investments. In addition to direct investment, the mapping can assist in directing targeted programming into distressed neighborhoods, as described by Fran Fajana, formerly of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.

"Within legal services, the mapping data is the foundation for a new place-based advocacy that seeks to bring intensive and comprehensive legal resources and social services to change outcomes in several low-opportunity zip codes or neighborhoods." Fran Fajana, Former Director of the Race Equity Project, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

# **Experiences from the Field: Using Opportunity Maps to Support Equity and Sustainability**

Below are two examples of how opportunity mapping has been used to identify and address issues of equity. Both of these projects took a little over a year to complete, and utilized extensive engagement with stakeholders, even beyond those in the SCI consortium. Both utilized many of the strategies presented in the previous section.

"Do the opportunity maps and use them as a guide throughout the project. Have a lengthy, inclusive process. Don't try to project what you think the map can be used for; don't limit the uses to just fair housing; this is a key to why we're seeing transportation applications. This led to people really engaging and thinking about how to use it. Commit to the process and hold the index with a bit of an open hand so that you can really gain from the dialogue." - Tim Parham, Senior Planner, Puget Sound Regional Council

#### Puget Sound Regional Council: Utilizing opportunity mapping to highlight housing and transportation issues

Guided by VISION 2040, the region's plan for a more sustainable future, the Puget Sound Regional Council working through its Growing Transit Communities program built a coalition among representatives from the member counties, cities, and housing authority. The goal was to bring new voices to the table in order to create vibrant, diverse, and inclusive communities for all people. The opportunity maps in the report 11 helped to inform regional housing and transportation policy, and will serve to inform the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA). The opportunity framework acted as a catalyst for community discussion and created a common understanding of the region's strengths and challenges, and what it will take to make opportunity accessible to all.

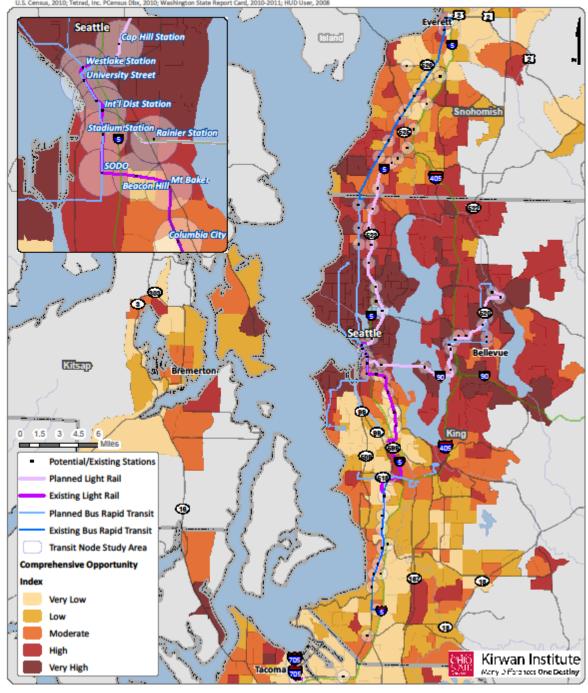
Given the consortium's interest in transit, the opportunity map also included an examination of the three light rail corridors and their relation to the opportunity landscape across the region, which could provide valuable insights for future planning efforts.

#### **Central Puget Sound Region: Transit Routes and Station Areas**

This map illustrates existing and proposed bus and light rail routes. Major stations and areas within the surrounding 1/2-mile of each station are displayed to illustrate the relationship between neighborhood opportunity and transit.



Sources: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2011; Environmental Protection Agency, 2010; Washington Dept. of Ecology, 2011; ESRI Bu U.S. Census, 2010; Tetrad, Inc. PCensus Dbx, 2010; Washington State Report Card, 2010-2011; HUD User, 2008



#### Austin: Analyzing opportunity and neighborhood change

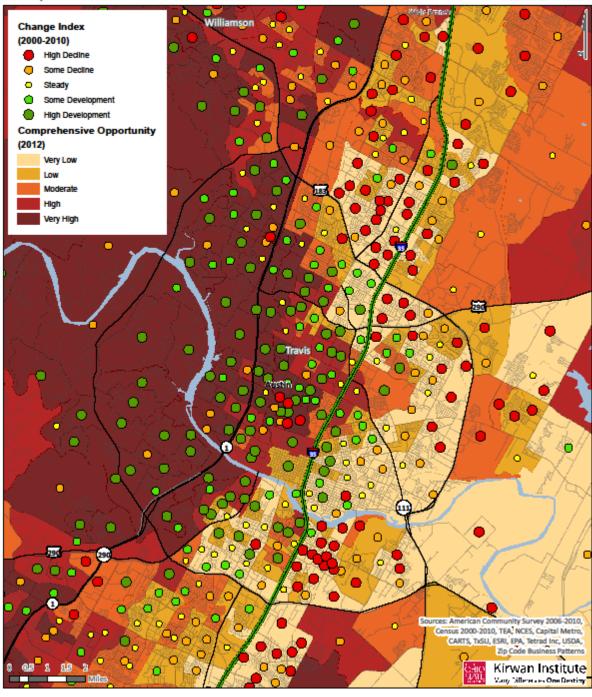
The Austin opportunity mapping report <sup>12</sup> and the online mapping tool associated with this work are the product of a collaborative effort between Green Doors and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. This work was also driven by a committee of other partners, including the SCI grantee Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), the City of Austin, Travis County, and the Housing Authorities of the City of Austin and Travis County. The primary purpose of this project has been to bring together a multitude of stakeholders to develop a better understanding of equity and neighborhood trends in the region, and to develop steps to expand opportunity for all communities, particularly for the region's most vulnerable populations.

In 2007, the Kirwan Institute partnered with the City of Austin to produce the first opportunity mapping analysis. This current project expands on this work to also examine the dynamics of opportunity in the region by comparing how certain aspects of it have changed over the past several years. By comparing the current state of opportunity in the region with housing and demographic trends, the City of Austin and its partners are able to have a fuller picture of where the city is and where it is likely headed, allowing leaders to proactively engage issues of gentrification and affordable housing, and to anticipate the needs of the community and help expand access to opportunity for all people in the Austin metropolitan region.

### **Austin Neighborhood Opportunity and Trends**

Description: This map provides a snapshot of existing community opportunity, as well as an overlay of neighborhood trends from 2000 to 2010. The opportunity dataset is based on indicators of Education, Economics & Mobility, and Housing & Environment. The change index compares features such as housing vacancy and median home value across the decade.





#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See Robert J. Sampson, Patrick Sharkey, and Stephen W. Raudenbush, "Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability among African-American Children." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 105(3): 845-852 (October 28, 2007) showing that living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood is equivalent to missing an entire year of school. SeeW.T Trent, "Outcomes of School Desegregation: Findings from Longitudinal Research," 66 J. Negro Ed. 255 (1997) showing that concentrated poverty in schools depresses educational outcomes for all students, regardless of individual promise. SeeStephen J. Schellenberg, "Concentration of Poverty and the Ongoing Need for Title I Reform" in Hard Work for Good Schools; Facts Not Fads in Title I Reform (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University 1998) showing that the poverty of a school, far more than the poverty of an individual, determines students' educational outcomes and impoverished students do better if they live in middle-class neighborhoods and/or attend more affluent schools. See Clive Cookson, "Poverty Mars Formation of Infant Brains." Financial Times.com 2/16/2008. (The biggest negative effects were found on language and memory) showing that children growing up in very poor families with low social status can also experience unhealthy levels of stress hormones, which impair neural development. See Janet Currie, "Health Disparities and Gaps in School Readiness." The Future of Children. 15(1, Spring 2005): 117-38 showing that the impact of health status on school achievement is so important that an estimated 25% of the achievement gap in education is attributable to differences in child and maternal health.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter, "Growing Diversity Among America's Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions," Population and Development Review 36(1) (2010); 151-76,

http://www.northeastern.edu/policyschool/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/PDR.pdf; Pew Hispanic Center, "The Mexican-American Boom: Births Take Over Immigration," http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/144.pdf.

<sup>3</sup> William Frey, Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs: Racial and Ethnic Change in Metro America in the 2000s, 2010 Census (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2011),

http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Topics/Community%20Change/Neighborhood%20Development/MeltingPotCi tiesandSuburbsRacialandEthnicChange/brookMeltingPotCities.pdf.

 $^4$ RakeshKochhar, Richard Fry and Paul Taylor. "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics." Pew Research Center, 2011.

<sup>5</sup>Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. "Help Wanted: Projections of Job Requirements and Skills through 2018," Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2010. Available at http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/.

 $^{5}$ Kirwan's opportunity mapping approach has been in development for the past decade and opportunity mapping has been utilized in more than twenty states across the nation during this time. For examples, please visit http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/?page id=1578.

For some examples of research-based indicators, please see "Opportunity Metrics: A Resource of Data and Research." The Kirwan Institute, January 2013. Available at http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/FINAL 2013%20Opp%20Metrics.pdf.

<sup>8</sup>Lora Engdal, "New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program." October 2009. http://www.prrac.org/pdf/BaltimoreMobilityReport.pdf.

<sup>9</sup>Danielle Bergstrom etal. "The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities," a report by PolicyLink and the Kirwan Institute. November 2012, available at

http://sclearningnetwork.org/sites/default/files/communityengagementguide ly final.pdf.

<sup>10</sup>Poverty and Race Research Action Council. Update August 23,2012. Available at http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs012/1102767400671/archive/1110801608645.html.

<sup>11</sup>The report "Geography of Opportunity in the Central Puget Sound Region" can be found at http://www.gis.kirwaninstitute.org/pugetsound/.

12 The report "The Geography of Opportunity in Austin and How it is Changing," can be found at http://www.gis.kirwaninstitute.org/austin/http://www.gis.kirwaninstitute.org/austin/.