

## **Sustain Saint Paul: Race and class equity statement**

***Final: October 7, 2021***

Sustain Saint Paul's commitment to race and class equity stems from its mission: to "champion abundant housing, low-carbon transportation, and sustainable land use in the City of Saint Paul through education, advocacy and political action, *to ensure a more just and equitable city for all current and future residents.*"

We strongly believe that our organization's policy goals -- removing barriers to the production of more housing options in St. Paul, and improving the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking, biking, and transit -- are essential steps towards building a just and equitable city for all current and future residents.

For Saint Paul to achieve race and class equity, it must identify and reform policies and structures that result in different outcomes for its citizens based on their race or economic circumstances. Land use policy has important consequences on two of the most fundamental elements to Saint Paulites' ability to thrive: their housing stability, and their transportation options. Saint Paul's current land use policies and transportation systems contribute to the wide disparities between Saint Paulites' health and economic opportunities, along lines of race and class. A few examples:

- Saint Paul's zoning code forbids the construction of all types of housing except for single-family homes on ~80% of its residential land. By blocking the construction of more homes, this policy contributes to the high cost of housing in Saint Paul. The final result is that low-income people (and, disproportionately, people of color) are priced out of our city.
- Saint Paul's zoning code reinforces the legacies of redlining and racial covenants, which relegated BIPOC and low-income people to live in certain areas and prevented them from living in others. Notice the similarities between the old FHA maps (which identified white neighborhoods as "less risky" and BIPOC-populated neighborhoods as "risky") and our current zoning map (which allows multi-family housing in some places and only single-family houses in other neighborhoods).
- Many of Saint Paul's streets prioritize the speed and convenience of cars over the safety and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. This status quo has a regressive impact on low-income Saint Paulites, in the form of inadequate or unsafe options for walking, biking, or transit, and/or the burdensome costs of car travel.

We also acknowledge that the vast majority of our organization's leaders and members are white, and the dimensions of privilege that come with it. Many of us also enjoy the privilege of homeownership, and live in relatively wealthy and white neighborhoods of the city. We recognize that these demographic realities threaten to limit our sensitivity to the lived experiences and priorities of St. Paulites of color, low-income St. Paulites, and renters.

We are therefore committed to the ongoing tasks of:

- Inviting and recruiting members and leaders to Sustain Saint Paul with various racial identities, economic backgrounds, and neighborhoods;
- Seeking out and learning from the lived experiences and perspectives of St. Paulites who do not intend to become members of Sustain Saint Paul, especially St. Paulites of color, low-income St. Paulites, and renters;
- Shifting our work, strategy, and narratives to honor the priorities and perspectives of non-white and low-income St. Paulites, while staying true to our core policy goals of abundant housing, low-carbon transportation, and sustainable land use;
- Evaluating our organizational policies and practices from a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and making changes accordingly.

We pledge to try to make every decision/outcome/action using these guiding principles, and will speak up when we see others speaking against these practices.