

## The Oregonian

# Historically racist housing policies exacerbating climate change effects in low-income Portland neighborhoods

*By Kale Williams  
January 21, 2020*

As the climate warms, heat waves are predicted to increase in both frequency and intensity. But that heat, and the threats to public health that come with it, will not be distributed evenly.

In cities like Portland, some areas are referred to as “heat islands,” areas where development has exacerbated the effects of high temperatures. Now, a new study from Portland State University is showing, for the first time, that areas prone to excessive heat are disproportionately populated by low-income communities and people of color due to racist housing policies that stretch back more than a century.

Nearly every city included in the study saw higher temperatures in neighborhoods that were historically subject to discriminatory housing policies, with poorer areas seeing averages temperatures about five degrees higher than their wealthier counterparts. And, of the 108 urban areas analyzed, Portland came in with the worst temperature discrepancy between rich and poor, a difference of almost 13 degrees.

“The patterns of the lowest temperatures in specific neighborhoods of a city do not occur because of circumstance or coincidence,” said Vivek Shandas, urban studies and planning professor at PSU and co-author of the study. “They are a result of decades of intentional investment in parks, green spaces, trees, transportation and housing policies that provided ‘cooling services,’ which also coincide with being wealthier and whiter across the country.”

The study, one of the first to link historic housing policies to threats from climate change, shows what researchers have been saying for years: As extreme weather events like heat waves become more common, poor communities will face disproportionate risks.

### **Decades of racism in housing policy**

As far back as the early 20th century, housing policies in Portland were explicitly racist. Exclusionary covenants, legal clauses written into property deeds, prohibited people of certain races, specifically African Americans and people of Asian descent, from purchasing homes. In 1919, the Portland Realty Board adopted a rule declaring it unethical to sell a home in a white neighborhood to an African American or Chinese person. The rules stayed in place until 1956.

In 1924, Portland voters approved the city’s first zoning policies. More than a dozen upscale neighborhoods — including familiar names like Irvington, Eastmoreland and Laurelhurst — were zoned for single-family homes. The policy, pushed by homeowners under the guise of protecting their property values, kept apartment buildings and multi-family homes, housing options more attainable for low-income residents, in less-desirable areas.

After the passage of the National Housing Act in 1934, the federal government asked the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation to create “residential security maps” for cities across the country, including Portland. These maps were intended to rate neighborhoods, with “A” areas being the most desirable and “D” being least desirable, for investment security purposes, but their effects were much more pernicious. Areas rated “D” were surrounded with red lines on the maps, and residents who lived there, often low-income minorities, were frequently denied mortgage loans

and insurance. In the mid-20th century, Portland's African American communities — Albina, Alberta and other parts of Northeast and inner Southeast Portland — were all redlined.

On an individual level, the practice prevented residents from accessing home loans, denying them the opportunity to build intergenerational wealth by owning property. On a citywide level, redlining, along with zoning restrictions, maintained segregation and made redlined neighborhoods ripe for development of multi-unit buildings and industrial use.

By the 1950s, many of these neighborhoods were gutted by so-called “urban renewal,” as construction of Interstate 5, Emanuel Legacy Hospital and the Veterans Memorial Coliseum saw the forced displacement of entire communities in Northeast Portland.

Freeways sliced neighborhoods in half. Warehouses sprung up next to apartment buildings and parking lots. Residential lots were built to the edges, leaving little room for yards or trees. Redlined areas saw more concrete and asphalt but fewer green spaces and parks than their wealthier counterparts.

Then the climate began to change.

### **Urban heat islands**

Shandas began studying areas of excessive heat, known as urban heat islands, more than a decade ago. In 2018, he published his first analysis of Portland temperatures, collecting more than 300,000 data points across the city.

He found Portland was home to a number of heat islands, among them: the 82nd Avenue corridor between Interstate 84 and Southeast Foster Road, the inner Southeast industrial area, and the inner Northeast along the I-5 corridor.

Shandas' more recent analysis was simply a matter of taking two maps, of heat islands and of areas that were subject to discriminatory housing practices, and laying them on top of each other. The results were clear.

“We found that those urban neighborhoods that were denied municipal services and support for home ownership during the mid-20th century now contain the hottest areas in almost every one of the 108 cities we studied,” Shandas said. “Our concern is that this systemic pattern suggests a woefully negligent planning system that hyper-privileged richer and whiter communities. As climate change brings hotter, more frequent and longer heat waves, the same historically underserved neighborhoods — often where lower-income households and communities of color still live — will, as a result, face the greatest impact.”

A few extra degrees might not sound like much, but extreme heat-related illnesses kill more than 600 people every year across the country, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Researchers predict that, as the global climate warms, extreme heat events will increase in both frequency and intensity.

Jeremy Hoffman, chief scientist at the Science Museum of Virginia and co-author of the study, said the impacts on residents of these concentrated heat islands are wide-ranging.

“They are not only experiencing hotter heat waves with their associated health risks but also potentially suffering from higher energy bills, limited access to green spaces that alleviate stress and limited economic mobility at the same time,” Hoffman said. “Our study is just the first step in identifying a roadmap toward equitable climate resilience by addressing these systemic patterns in our cities.”

## **A green path forward**

If Portland is going to find its way to a cooler future, the path to get there will need to be lined with trees. Curtailing carbon emissions is an essential part of mitigating the impacts of climate change, but the amount of carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere will make some amount of warming inevitable, Shandas said, and adapting to those warmer temperatures will be important, too.

Increasing foliage and green space is the best way to combat the pernicious heat islands, at least in the short term, Shandas said. Trees absorb more heat from the sun and create shade. Plants pull moisture from the ground, which in turn evaporates into the air, providing a cooling effect.

Portland is looking to make changes to increase greenery in some of the neighborhoods that saw the worst of the discriminatory housing policies, officials said.

In December, city councilors voted to adopt changes to city code that would require new development to allocate areas for greenery and put limitations on the size of parking lots. The city council is currently debating a plan that would allow apartments and multiplexes in neighborhoods previously zoned only for single-family homes.

“Portland is really trying to connect the dots when it comes to institutional racism and some of the outcomes and address these issues moving forward,” said Bill Cunningham of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. “Urban heat islands are a legacy of those past planning decisions.”

Community groups have been active, too. Plans to widen I-5 in the Rose Quarter have been met with strident opposition from environmental and neighborhood groups. Some have criticized the freeway widening itself, others said plans to cap the freeway must be more extensive and allow for buildings atop them. The group Albina Vision Trust has called for a wholesale neighborhood revival and an expansion of green space in inner North and Northeast Portland.

Friends of Trees, a nonprofit that has operated in Oregon and Washington for the past 30 years, has used Shandas’ heat maps to target areas needing more trees. The group has planted more than 800,000 in three decades, said interim Executive Director Whitney Dorer, and Friends’ contract with the city requires 70 percent of those plantings go into Portland’s low-income communities.

For years, researchers have warned that as the climate warms, extreme weather events like heat waves will become more common and poor communities will face bigger threats from these events than their wealthier peers. Shandas’ findings are what those threats look like on the ground.

“By recognizing and centering the historical blunders of the planning profession over the past century, such as the exclusionary housing policies of ‘redlining,’ we stand a better chance for reducing the public health and infrastructure impacts from a warming planet,” Shandas said. “This is the first step. It’s going to take a lot more work on development to undo what we’ve done in the past.”

## Willamette Week

# City Elections Office Says Sam Adams Meets One-Year Residency Requirement for Council Race

*By Nigel Jaquiss  
January 18, 2020*

### **Adams moved back to Portland from Washington, D.C in August 2019.**

Keen-eyed WW readers noticed a possible problem for the challenge that former Mayor Sam Adams announced this week against incumbent Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. Had he been back in town long enough to run?

Adams, who served as mayor from 2009 to 2013, later moved to Washington, D.C. in 2015 to work for a non-profit called the World Resources Institute.

He lost that job in late 2017, shortly after his former City Hall scheduler, Cevero Gonzales, submitted a Nov. 3, 2017 letter to City Council accusing Adams of sexual harassment.

Last July, WW reported that Adams was back in Portland. He told the newspaper then he planned to move back "full time" in August 2019.

This week, Adams filed with the the city elections office. One of the requirements for qualifying for the May 19, 2020 primary ballot is that candidates "have maintained residency within the City's limits since May 19, 2019."

So, did Adams meet that test?

City elections officer Deborah Scroggin says yes.

Scroggin says the city uses the same principal criterion that state elections officials do: where a candidate is registered to vote.

(The state statute defining residency for electoral purposes puts it this way: "The person's residence shall be the place in which habitation is fixed and to which, when the person is absent, the person intends to return.")

Records show Adams retained his Oregon voter registration and voted in local elections while he was working in Washington, D.C. His ballot was mailed to a Washington address but on Aug. 23, 2019, records show, he notified Oregon elections officials he would no longer need his ballot to be forwarded there.

The issue of where a politician resides came up in the 2010 governor's election (Republican nominee Chris Dudley, the former Portland Trail Blazer, had lived in Clark County) and in the 2012 Portland mayor's race (Charlie Hales, who won that race, had also lived in Clark County). Although both of those cases involved taxes rather than whether the candidates were eligible to run, the same supporting indicators of residency applied.

Adams says that, in addition to voting in Oregon elections, he maintained and Oregon drivers license, continued to pay taxes here, retained City Club and gym memberships, visited regularly and "always said I would return."

Scroggin says nobody has challenged Adams' filing, which she feels confident meets city requirements.

"I have spoken with county elections officials and the city attorney's office," Scroggin adds. "They agreed with my determination."

## **The Daily Journal of Commerce**

### **Portland plan to boost contracting equity progressing**

*By Sam Tenney  
January 17, 2020*

The city of Portland is moving forward on a two-year-old plan to increase diversity and equity in contracting by using money collected from major construction projects to advance opportunities for minority contractors and workers.

Portland City Council is set to authorize \$2,234,786 set aside from three major city projects to administer phase one of the Community Opportunities and Enhancements Program (COEP). It has two main areas of focus – providing a path toward stable, high-paying construction jobs for women and people of color in the trades, and providing technical assistance to support disadvantaged, minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small business (DMWESB) and service-disabled veteran business enterprise (SDVBE) firms.

Following the City Council's approval of the COEP in November 2017, the Office of Management & Finance (OMF) and the Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR) in 2018 began developing the program and initiated a request for grant applications for money from the pilot projects. Mayor Ted Wheeler subsequently halted the process and ordered OMF and OEHR to partner with Prosper Portland in developing the program as a means to reduce administrative costs by leveraging the collective experience of multiple bureaus and thereby maximizing available dollars.

The three city bureaus have reached agreement on a memorandum of understanding that clarifies each of their roles in the program. They now will work together to administer the first phase of the plan with funds using 1 percent of total eligible costs from three pilot projects: the Portland Building reconstruction, Washington Park reservoir improvements, and the 10th & Yamhill parking garage renovation.

A Community Equity and Inclusion Committee will be established to provide oversight and advice on how to allocate COEP dollars. After administrative costs, the money will be allocated with 25 percent going toward grants to assist DMWESB/SDVBE firms and 75 percent to workforce assistance for minority workers; those funds will be issued by Prosper Portland, which may subcontract some or all of the workforce assistance efforts to Worksystems Inc.

City Council is expected to soon authorize an intergovernmental agreement between OMF, OEHR and Prosper Portland for administration of the COEP, as well as authorize OMF to utilize money set aside from a Community Benefits Plan from the Washington Park reservoir improvements that predates the COEP. Prosper Portland anticipates issuing requests for proposals in early March and completing the RFP process in April or May.

# Thumbs-up for Portland sky-bridge proposal

*By Chuck Slothower  
January 17, 2020*

A rare Portland sky-bridge proposal is on track for approval after a favorable recommendation from the Design Commission on Thursday.

City design guidelines generally discourage sky-bridges because they move pedestrian traffic away from activation points such as sidewalks and street corners, and take public space for private use. But city officials may make an exception for a proposed sky-bridge at Terwilliger Plaza, a senior living campus in Southwest Portland. The sky-bridge would stretch about 60 feet long and 26 feet, 10 inches, at its widest point across Southwest Sixth Avenue between Southwest Caruthers and Sheridan streets.

The sky-bridge would link an existing Terwilliger Plaza building with a proposed 10-story, 127-unit building to be known as Parkview at Terwilliger Plaza.

Commissioners voted 5-0 to recommend the sky-bridge be approved. In a little-used process, their recommendation goes to the city engineer, who will make a final recommendation to the City Council.

Terwilliger Plaza opened in 1962 as a senior community for retired teachers. The care facility has expanded over the years, and today has about 350 residents, said Bob Johnson, president and CEO of the nonprofit.

Commissioners said the proposed sky-bridge meets the city's rationale for such structures.

"This population would not do well at street level," Commissioner Don Vallaster said.

Commissioner Chandra Robinson added: "I agree that for the health and safety of residents, this make sense."

Sky-bridges should have to meet a strict standard to be approved, Commissioner Jessica Molinar said.

"From my perspective, encroachments are a big deal," she said. "It's public space taken over for private use."

The city most recently approved a sky-bridge in 2017 for Oregon Health & Science University's Center for Health & Healing. Before that, Pioneer Place got a sky-bridge in 1999, and the Wells Fargo Center added a sky-bridge in 1972 to link the tower to what is now a data center.

"We don't review a lot of sky-bridges," said Tim Heron, a Bureau of Development Services staffer. "We discourage them."

One sky-bridge was removed when the Apple store at Pioneer Place was constructed, Heron said.

Discussion on Thursday centered on making the design of the sky-bridge's underside pleasant for pedestrians who would see it from below. Some commissioners also expressed doubts about a plan to line the sky-bridge's interior with art walls.

"Movable walls might work better," said Robinson, who added that a cable system for hanging art is another possibility.

Commissioners attached three conditions to their recommendation: the project team explore the design of the bottom of the sky-bridge, explore art walls or a replacement, and consider adding six inches to the proposed 8-foot, six-inch interior height.

Commissioner Brian McCarter said the 1982 ordinance on major encroachments was a reaction to a proposed large sky-bridge that was never built. The Terwilliger Plaza proposal is much different, he said.

“I fully support the staff recommendation of this sky-bridge,” he said.

LRS Architects is designing the project. Johnson said the project team visited existing developments, including Horizon House in Seattle and another senior living facility in Chicago, to inform the design.

Terwilliger Plaza is outside the Central City and not in a design overlay zone. As such, the project is not subject to further review by the Design Commission.

**Also on Thursday:**

Mixed-use project advances

The Design Commission gave final approval to the Hyatt Place and Allison Residences – a 23-story tower planned for Northwest 12th Avenue and Flanders Street in the Pearl District. After several prior hearings, commissioners approved the design unanimously with no further discussion.