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Pushing Back on Displacement: Community-Based Redevelopment through Historically Black Churches

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Abstract: Gentrification and subsequent displacement are common problems in cities, and result in the removal of poor communities and communities of color from urban areas as they move to cheaper locations in the metropolitan region. Here we describe a community-based approach to redevelopment by historic Black churches that seeks to counter such displacement and cultural removal. We explain the history of a historically Black neighborhood in Seattle and the founding and rationale for a church-led project called the Nehemiah Initiative. Our perspective is that of participants in the work of the Nehemiah Initiative and as faculty and students from a local university partner supporting it. We conclude with policy strategies that can be used to support such redevelopment in Seattle, with understanding that some may be broadly applicable to other cities.

Keywords: black churches; community based; displacement; equitable development; faith based; gentrification; housing affordability; redevelopment; university–community partnership

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1. Introduction

Seattle's Nehemiah Initiative (the Initiative) is a faith-based community redevelopment organization that takes advantage of the fact that many historic Black churches are longtime landowners in a rapidly transforming city. The Initiative is the collaborative effort of a number of pastors and their churches. Seattle faces a lack of affordable housing, and as new, more expensive buildings and homes rise in the place of old, a conflict over affordability and provision of housing continues to unfold.

The Initiative was organized in 2018 in response to gentrification and displacement in the city's Central District, a longstanding African American community, where the majority of the churches are located. By harnessing their collective real estate in the service of faith-based community-focused redevelopment, the Initiative is uniquely positioned to provide housing and preserve Black culture, fighting against direct (economic) and indirect (cultural) displacement. Our perspective is that of participants in the work of the Nehemiah Initiative and as faculty and students from a local university partner supporting it.

Gentrification is a common condition in growing cities, and while some urban improvements might be welcome, gentrification often also leads to displacement of neighborhood residents. While there are several approaches to reducing the negative effects of gentrification, none is sufficient by itself. The successful approach will require multiple elements. In this paper, we describe one way not only to combat displacement of people but also of culture.

Herein we review the historic and current context for gentrification and related displacement in the Central District. We describe the Nehemiah Initiative, both how it came to be and what it is attempting to do. The Initiative is a potential model for other communities struggling with similar issues of growth, gentrification, affordability, and displacement. The model intends to demonstrate an innovative solution to the challenges based on the combination of church land ownership, community participation, professional skills and

vision in a rapidly growing region, and the support of local government and university collaboration in the goal of providing and preserving housing opportunity for all residents of the city. The Initiative's work represents a new direction for faith-based organizations in community development by dealing with anti-gentrification/displacement, pivoting from the community stabilization and social service agenda of previous decades. Community leaders, through the church-led model and using inclusive processes founded in Beloved Community, transform the idea of development to one that serves the whole community and the people engaged in building it. The processes of Beloved Community are a set of specific practices used in working with a variety of communities to achieve measurable growth and sustainment of individual, organizational, and environmental well-being and are developed in Section 4.4.

In addition to a nascent relationship with city planners, the Initiative has been engaged in a partnership with the University of Washington's College of Built Environments, which has mounted community-engaged studio courses to conduct market research, analyze real estate development potential, provide design concepts, and review the planning and policy environment. These cross-sector collaborations reflect opportunities to prioritize community interests and needs, share expertise, and create greater efficiency and legitimacy in community redevelopment.

2. Faith-Based Development and Black Churches in Seattle

Black churches have been neighborhood institutions in cities across the United States for well over a century, and Seattle shares a long history of Black church-led organizing and activism. The issues that have required attention in cities, especially those addressed by Black churches, are founded in a history of racism and racist policy but have changed over the decades [1]. While community stabilization and economic development were historic concerns combined with the depopulation of major US cities, particularly by white residents, today Seattle is feeling the effects of a nearly opposite dynamic: a booming economy threatening to push out the historic Black community. Accordingly, faith-based institutions such as Seattle's Black churches have begun to reconsider how they might respond especially given their command of real estate resources in rapidly gentrifying markets.

2.1. The Black Church in Seattle and the Central District

The Central District is an urban neighborhood located near Seattle's downtown core. While it has been an important location for many groups over the last 150 years, the Central District has long been known as a hub of the Black community in the city. The history of how it became the center of Black culture in Seattle and how it has since transformed into a space the Black community no longer feels welcomed is a path formed by racist public policy and social exclusion. The history of the Central District is also one of Black innovation and the building of a culturally rich neighborhood known for its churches, music, food, festivals, and thriving Black-owned businesses.

Black churches are a nexus of African American communities. From an early time in US history, they helped people cope with the impacts of slavery and racial segregation and discrimination. The churches are also centers of worship and joy. As such, they serve as conveners and centers of empowerment, self-expression, advancement, and activism. Black churches have traditionally provided space for political organizing, social gathering, and outreach services. As with other western cities that became the home of African American residents during the Jim Crow era and the Great Migration, Seattle has many Black churches. Two of the most venerable, First AME Church and Mt. Zion Baptist Church, were founded in 1891 and 1894, respectively.

From the 1880s to the 1920s, the Central District was settled by a number of historically marginalized communities including the Jewish community, the Japanese community extending from the International District, and the Black community [2]. By the 1920s, racially restrictive covenants explicitly prohibited non-white racial groups from occupying the properties in neighborhoods across the city and effectively restricted non-white residents

of Seattle to the Central District and International District neighborhoods [3]. In 1934, the National Housing Act formed the Federal Housing Administration which led to the creation of the infamous redlining maps created for metropolitan areas across the country [1]. Seattle's map (Figure 1) clearly demarcated the Central and International Districts as "hazardous" neighborhoods unfit for investment [4].

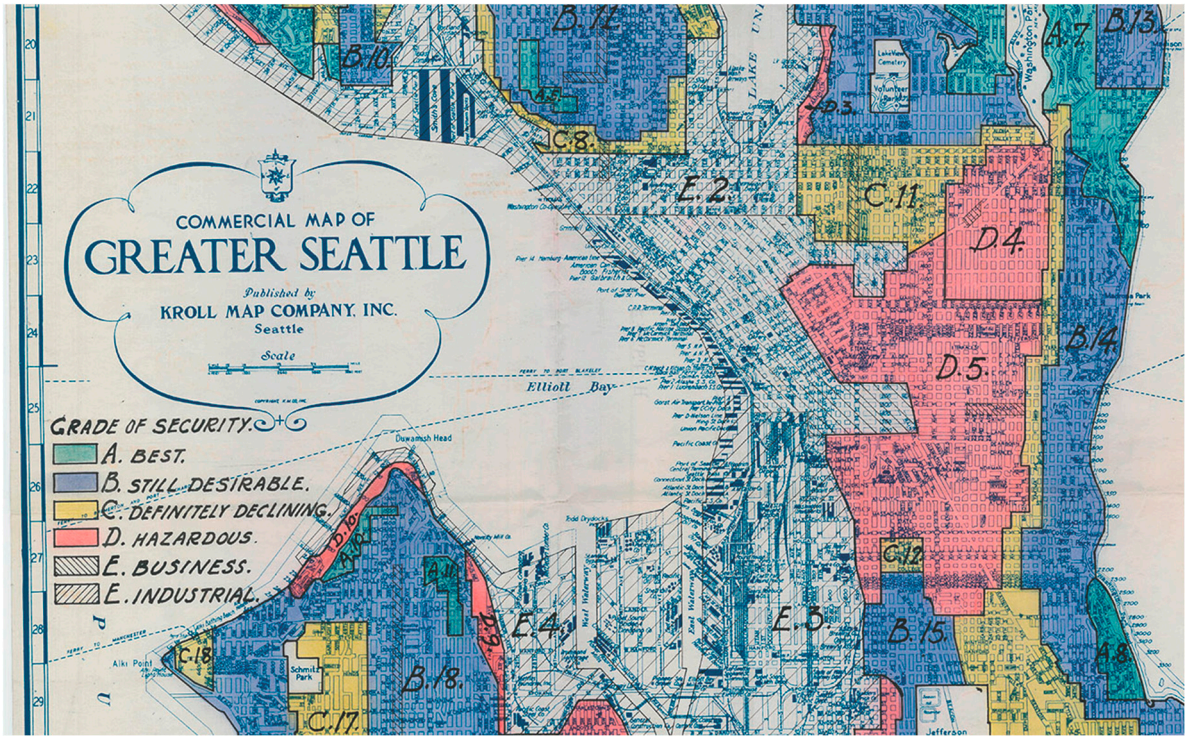

Figure 1. Redlining map of Central Seattle. The Central District includes D4 and D5. Source: Mapping Inequality. (https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=11/47.594/-122.493&city=seattle-wa).

Black churches, in both the US north and south, joined in the fight for equal rights with support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality, and other civil rights groups. In Seattle, by the early 20th century, the four largest local Black churches, First AME, Mt. Zion, Ebenezer AME Zion, and Grace Presbyterian, were centers for public forums and political rallies.

By the mid-20th century, Black churches had become the epicenter of the civil rights movement, with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as the national leader. The work of the SCLC was championed by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., himself a Baptist minister. He utilized Black churches nationally, including a visit to Mt. Zion Baptist in 1961, as launching pads for rallies, marches, and protests organized in the struggle to overcome racial injustice. Seattle's churches mirrored the SCLC effort locally, under the leadership of the Reverend Samuel McKinney of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

The pattern of racially motivated exclusion and disinvestment continued to shape the Central District into the civil rights era of the 1960s (see Figure 2). By the 1960s, the neighborhood was flourishing under the guidance of Black-led churches and organizations and institutions such as the Central Area Motivation Program, the Congress of Racial Equity, the Black Panthers, and the Carolyn Downs Family Medical Center—all examples of how the Black community created its own support system. The Central District became the center of the Black community in the Pacific Northwest, where people could gather to celebrate Black culture at events such as the Umoja Fest African Heritage Festival & Parade, which has run since the 1940s [5], or gather in support of political movements.

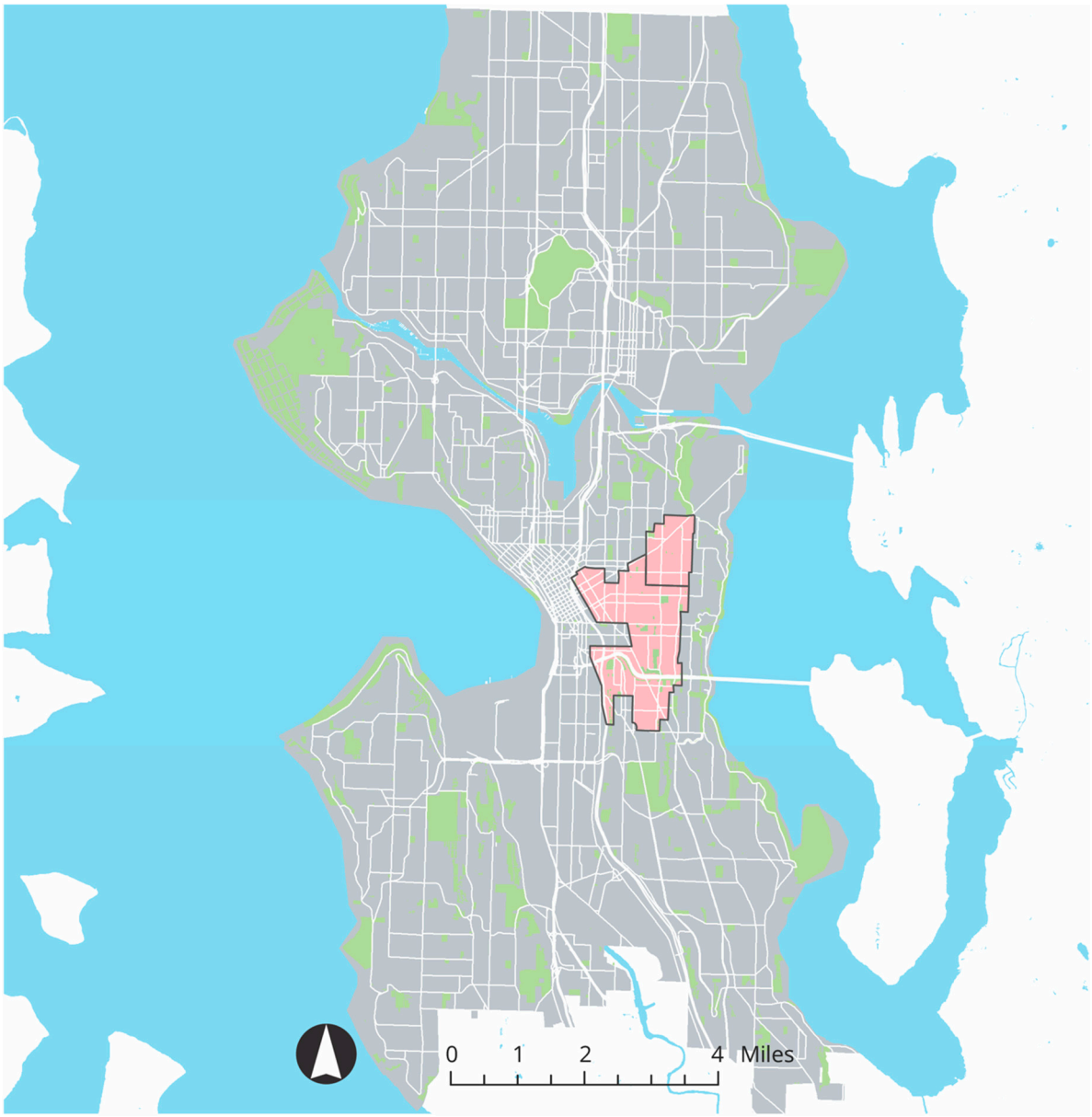

Figure 2. The location of the Central District and its redlined area in Seattle. Source: Mt. Baker Team, 2019. (Building Beloved Community, p. 18).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Seattle's Black churches attended to the struggle for racial equality, even in the face of violence against activist churches, which included burnings, bombings, and assassinations. In the 1980s, Central District churches engaged in protests of South African Apartheid, police brutality, and economic disparity. The Black church in Seattle was the venue for political aspirants to reach large groups of Black voters and was influential in organizing local, state, and national political campaigns.

The number of churches with predominantly African American congregants in the city's Central District grew to 25. However, in the 2000s and 2010s, 12 of those churches closed or sold and moved as congregants left or were displaced, as pastors have retired, and as the economics of staying in an increasingly expensive city did not work out.

The loss of residents means the loss of churches. Seattle's Black churches are now being confronted with the combined effects of shrinking congregations and tithing, and changes in demographics. And, as land values have increased substantially in the Central District, the churches have been caught between decreasing income and increasing expenses. Despite this challenge, many churches persist. The desire to not only stay in place but continue to

thrive is the primary motivation for the formation of our case study focus, the Nehemiah Initiative, described herein. The ability to thrive in place is crucial for Black churches and their congregants and has been a major part of their shared history.

Now, Central District churches face their ultimate challenge: survival. Will they remain the nexus for urban community building and activism even as their services and physical existence are in jeopardy? Will they find a way, as they have done many times before, to persevere, this time in the face of gentrification and the displacement of their congregants? An affirmative answer may necessitate other actors getting involved, and in Seattle, there is a movement in the city to leverage as many tools as possible for affordable housing development, partially to prevent displacement by gentrification. The faith-based Nehemiah Initiative provides an example of an organization taking a holistic community development approach and may represent a crucial renewed opportunity—faith-based community development—for Seattle's Black community.

2.2. Faith-Based Development and Activism

While churches have long stood as political and economic resources to their communities, existing research has not explicitly covered the relationship between faith-based organizations (FBOs) and anti-gentrification efforts though such strategies are being recognized for their potential to create housing and public benefits [6]. Research from the 1990s and early 2000s focused on how FBOs could support failing neighborhoods, not on how they could support a community fighting gentrification. In some cases, FBOs have even used a model of faith-based gentrification to stabilize neighborhoods in decline [7], so the response to both neighborhoods under duress and under threat of gentrification is complicated. Many programs have fought against gentrification and displacement, such as the Dudley Street Initiative in Boston, the Hill District Neighborhood in Pittsburgh, and the Tenderloin District in San Francisco but such programs are community-based efforts without direct ties to the faith-based community.

A review of the literature on FBOs as part of the social services network reveals a dated set of research studies from the late 1990s and early 2000s that largely focused on how FBOs could offer localized support to communities struggling with a declining economy and disinvestment. Cisneros argued that FBOs are "uniquely positioned" to provide direct services to their communities. However, he also noted that they cannot be expected to take on all issues facing a community alone. Instead, FBOs should serve more of a bridging role and act as "an agent that creates and stimulates leadership in other organizations" [8] (p. 79). At the time, several authors noted that the effectiveness of FBOs in administering economic development services was not broadly studied [9,10] and Reese argued that FBOs providing economic development services lack the capacity and are not prevalent enough to replace robust federal programming [11]. Others echoed this concern, noting that FBOs were pushed into a larger social services role in the 1990s and 2000s, as the federal government was pulling back their funding of the same services [12].

The US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in particular relied heavily on FBOs to help administer their services in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the year 2000, HUD funneled $1 billion of their assistance through FBOs that helped families find housing in HOPE VI developments and learn to use Section 8 vouchers [13]. One study from 2008 estimated that FBOs were providing up to $50 billion in funds and volunteer hours toward social services per year [14].

The role of faith-based organizations in providing social services is a long-standing tradition [8,12,15]. The role of FBOs in social services was formalized after the G.W. Bush administration formed the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001 and removed barriers to participation in federally funded programs such as HUD grants for FBOs [8,9,11,16]. African American churches, in particular, were noted for being more likely to provide economic development services such as housing, credit unions, and job training to the community than their white counterparts [10,11,15,17]. Although the role of FBOs in supporting government-led social services was a popular topic in the

late 1990s and early 2000s, the academic community seems to have largely abandoned the discussion by 2010. A discussion of the struggle churches face with gentrification and the work of FBOs to bolster their communities facing displacement can be found in local news and in certain online circles but the academic community has yet to wade into the conversation.

The efforts of the Nehemiah Initiative are similar in certain ways but distinct from other faith-based initiatives in community development. Some prior efforts seek neighborhood stabilization and reinvestment through faith and values-based redevelopment or gentrification [7]. Others focus specifically on local needs such as affordable housing [8]. In this case, the Initiative is focused narrowly on Seattle's Black community, but broadly in terms of community preservation. The Initiative wants to help Black churches preserve Black spaces and thereby rebuild a sense of connection for the Black community and help build Black wealth in the city. They hope to do so by encouraging and supporting Black churches to resist the pressure to sell and instead develop their property to provide affordable housing, inclusive community spaces, and locally desired community services. The Initiative founders see an opportunity to work with the local community to break the cycle of displacement (combined with an increasingly unaffordable housing market), and historical patterns of poverty, precarious financing, and lack of choice, and instead build profitable, welcoming Black spaces that honor the area's history and rebuild places where the Black community is embraced.

Previous narratives surrounding the work of FBOs have portrayed them as organizations working to rebuild failing inner-city neighborhoods through localized social and economic services [9,10,17]. The Initiative does not fit within this narrative because the situation they face with the Black community in Seattle's Central District is different, for example, from the situation found in declining post-industrial cities such as Detroit, examined by Reese and Shields in 1999 [9]. The Initiative leaders are focused on preserving and rebuilding a community that has been, and continues to be, pushed out of the neighborhood and specifically on cultivating Black spaces and Black land ownership. The Initiative's efforts speak to a shift in the emphasis on the role of the Black church in neighborhoods. They want to move beyond being providers of direct services to their community into a role where they hold enough power to help set local development policy with the city and possibly even state leadership. They are working to rebuild and preserve a hub for Black culture in Seattle, and that will require self-generated community development supported by city policy.

3. Seattle's Struggles with Gentrification and Displacement

3.1. Gentrification in Seattle

Urban sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term "gentrification" in 1964, in reference to the middle class's invasion into London's working-class neighborhoods. Gentrification is the process in which a community with a gap in current versus potential value is leveraged for housing and business investment through an influx of new residents with typically higher income and educational attainment than existing residents. These new residents generally are whiter as well. While initially examined as an economic phenomenon made up of individual actors, gentrification is now understood as a multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses economic, cultural, political, social, and institutional forces [18]. The study of gentrification has evolved to analyzing multiple actors and understanding the phenomenon as a shifting, but ongoing, vision for middle- and upper-class growth and dominance in cities. Gentrification is now pursued via urban policy to drive renaissance and regeneration [19], supported by the state, corporate interests, and real-estate investment funds locally and globally [20] (pp. 466–468).

Growth and development in the Seattle area have followed many of the gentrification patterns described by scholars [21]. First, rapid job growth beginning in the 1990s increased housing demand. Second, housing markets tightened due to a combination of constrained supply, lucrative investment potential, and a large gap in existing versus potential value.

Increased housing prices led many residents to move into lower-cost neighborhoods. Third, many new residents prefer the characteristics of urban living, such as access to amenities, walkability, short commutes, cultural diversity, and vibrant street life. Fourth, the city continues to experience increases in congestion and commute time, which contribute to the demand for urban neighborhood living and robust transit options.

3.2. The Need to Mitigate Displacement

Scholars recognize gentrification's ill effects on existing residents. One of the most common effects is the displacement of existing residents from their homes. Displacement happens "when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect that dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent; occur despite the household's having met all previously-imposed conditions of occupancy; and make continued occupancy by the household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable" [22]. Displacement gravely affects the lives and well-being of residents who live in neighborhoods pre-gentrification. They are disproportionately part of low-income and/or communities of color, which have also borne the brunt of exclusion from planning processes and the benefits of redevelopment.

Multiple types of displacement can occur simultaneously. Direct displacement occurs when people and/or businesses move due to physical displacement, such as eviction, or economic displacement, when rising costs prevent continued residence or business operation in an area. Indirect displacement reflects the loss of cultural and social resources and relationships, and impacts community members whether or not they leave the area. Cultural displacement occurs when people move due to the loss of culturally related activities and/or businesses. Social displacement occurs when people move due to the loss of kinship and other social networks. Exclusionary displacement occurs when other potential residents are outbid by incoming higher-income households [23] p. 206.

In response to gentrification's seemingly inexorable effects, there is a growing body of scholars and practitioners calling for "socially-just" and "socially-acceptable" gentrification [18,24,25]—a response that ameliorates the economic forces of gentrification with a political will to address the negative side effects of gentrification, partly by communities playing a larger role in determining what happens to them. Challenges to employing this approach include a demonstrated lack of political will on the part of the state [26], and decreased resistance to gentrification from displaced populations [20] p. 468.

3.3. Displacement-Mitigation Approaches

Justice discourses in planning have increased since the mid-20th century and include a current focus on "critical-spatial" justice, the spatial expression of a more equal distribution of collective resources and services among city residents [27] (pp. 1, 6). Interwoven with that call for equitable redistribution of resources and services across the city fabric is the need to recognize a "politics of difference" for social groups that have borne the brunt of injustice and oppression [28] and provide redistributive justice according to their needs. The Initiative creates opportunities for Seattle's Black community to catalyze redistributive justice in the form of partnerships with the City of Seattle, University of Washington, and others to make social and spatial investments within the community itself. One way to do this is through mitigating displacement.

Planners and communities need a variety of approaches to address social justice and combat displacement. No one approach is capable of mitigating displacement on its own; a suite of approaches is desirable and necessary [29]. Creating and protecting affordable housing is the most important gentrification-mitigating action, followed by community control of land, and keeping increased value in the community [29].

Displacement-mitigating approaches emerge from private, public, non-profit, educational, and cross-sector responses; there is a special need and role for cross-sector mitigation efforts and vision [30]. Planning ideally engages and empowers people to make decisions about their places and how they want to live. Through the collaboration between the

Initiative and the College of Built Environments (the College), faculty and students are empowered to use their expertise to help drive anti-displacement planning and design efforts in service to the community. Initiative and other community members are empowered to conduct community development, increasing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the development projects. And through collaboration amongst the Initiative, CBE, and city, new approaches to increasing density for faith-based organizations are under exploration.

Moving the planning and design professions towards more just and equitable outcomes means applying them in the built environment. The Initiative is directly addressing anti-displacement efforts by maintaining property ownership while redeveloping for long-term financial sustainability, closely collaborating to support multiple projects and churches, developing affordable commercial and residential uses, and keeping the accrued value of redevelopment in the Black community.

3.4. Case: Development and Population Trends in Seattle and the Central Districts

In the 1970s, the Central District's population was just over 70% Black [31] (see Figure 3). US Census data show that by the 1990s, the Black population began to leave the Central District for neighborhoods in the south end of Seattle, eventually dispersing south of the city entirely. With anti-housing discrimination policies gaining a foothold, Black households were no longer confined to one neighborhood and many left to pursue other opportunities. The population of the redlined area went from 73% Black in 1970 to 47% Black in 1990 [32]. As the neighborhood became more integrated, however, property values began to rise and services directed toward the Black community began to shift south with the population. In 1994, the Central District was one of the first neighborhoods designated as an urban village in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. These designations responded to targets set by the Washington State Growth Management Act; they also signaled where the city was prepared to invest to support additional density and development in housing units, jobs, and transit access, paving the way towards possible gentrification.

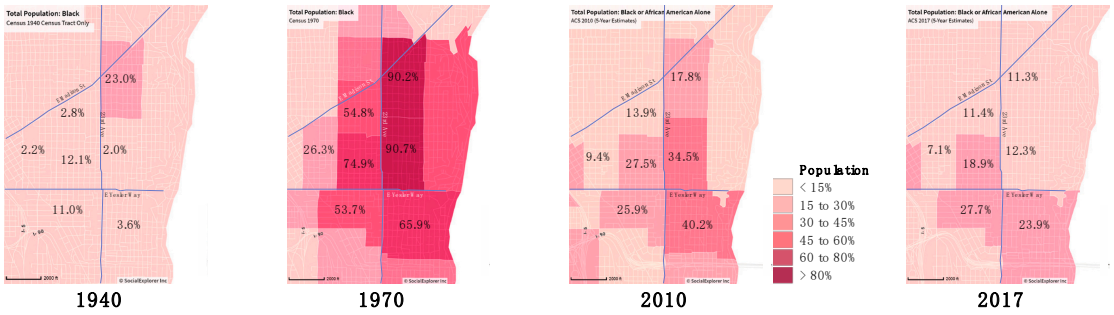

Figure 3. Central District population identifying as Black or African American. Source: Cheryl Klotz, data from Social Explorer.

From 47% in the 1990s to 16% in 2018, the concentration of Black residents in the Central District continued to decline [32,33]. During this time, the CD saw the in-migration of a white population predominantly in the 22–39 year age range, while remaining Black residents became a community of the young and old—under 22 or over 60 years of age. Many middle-income, middle-aged, and educated Black residents left that CD during this time [34].

By 2014, all of the census tracts in the Central District that had been judged gentrifiable in 2000 were gentrifying [35]. As the number of high-paying jobs in the tech and other industries have continued to increase in Seattle, housing prices have risen dramatically across the city including in the Central District, where the price of housing has gone from approximately $200 per square foot in 2010 to over $400 per square foot in 2018 [36,37]. Over a decade of population growth and development pressure have made it difficult for Black households to retain their hold on aging single-family homes in the neighborhood when it often makes more sense to sell their properties to developers who can rebuild townhomes or multi-family buildings on the lots. Many members of the Black community

who left for other opportunities cannot afford to return to live near their relatives who remain in the area.

3.5. Founding of the Seattle Nehemiah Initiative

The idea for the Nehemiah Initiative began in 2018 as a conversation between a group of church members, community members, and long-standing community organizers led by Goodwill Missionary Church Bishop Garry L. Tyson. They recognized the importance of Black-owned spaces and the potential collective power of the landholdings of the Black-owned churches in the neighborhood. In the case of the Initiative, the community it seeks to represent is both the now-minority population of Black residents in the Central District, as well as, more specifically, the African American population that the churches serve (d). Due to a regional diaspora caused by residential displacement, the community is also more broadly defined to include African Americans with historic and contemporary ties to the Central District, many of whom no longer live in or near the neighborhood. The Initiative aims to provide services (e.g., housing) and amenities (e.g., cultural spaces, small business locations) to this wider population. Of course, the Black community is not monolithic, and the churches themselves do not always agree—particularly on something as important as land.

The fact that historic Black churches, in Seattle and elsewhere, may own their properties is a significant opportunity in the struggle for community preservation. The land holdings of some of the largest churches in the area—what the Initiative leaders refer to as the "big eight"—include over 500,000 square feet in the Central District. That amount, under current zoning and thus not considering any upzoning or density bonuses for faith-based housing development, could be developed to provide over 700 new units of housing [38].

4. Mutual Learning: Building Beloved Community through the Nehemiah Initiative–University of Washington College of Built Environments Collaboration

Members of the Nehemiah Initiative began working with faculty members from the College of Built Environments during the summer of 2019. A key player, Donald King, is a founding member of the Initiative and an Affiliate Professor of Architecture. King began working with Branden Born and Rachel Berney in the Department of Urban Design and Planning (UDP). The discussion centered on how the College could work in service to the Initiative to support the Initiative's goals. These included determining its governance and legal structure, designing pilot development projects on church properties, and advancing its mission, while training students in the process. Dean Renée Cheng's strong interest and support made these efforts stronger.

To date, the Nehemiah Initiative and the UW have collaborated on five classes over four academic quarters in academic years 2018–2019 and 2019–2020. The College has hosted studio-style courses focusing on various aspects of the church-based development proposed by the Nehemiah Initiative. Plans are in place for such studios/collaborations to continue. Students in Architecture, Construction Management, Landscape Architecture, Real Estate, and Urban Design & Planning have engaged with members of the Initiative through studios and studio-prep on several different topics. In these classes, students proposed site-specific design and financing concepts for churches, provided historical research and analysis of the Central District and its historically Black churches, developed policy recommendations (and a policy memo that was sent to city staff) to foster desirable church-based development, conducted a land capacity analysis assessing the build-out potential for parcels owned by those churches, and investigated construction techniques and materials. This paper focuses on the courses that involved the Department of Urban Design and Planning.

4.1. University–Community Partnerships

While university–community partnerships can be valuable to both parties, they are not a panacea. In the current context, we are defining such partnerships at a smaller

scale—through the relationship of colleges, departments, and classes of students as proxies for the university. While there are certainly differences between this approach and university-wide programs, in implementation there are some shared possible challenges. As Jackson notes, relying on such arrangements, especially in the context of historically marginalized neighborhoods, may reflect their continued marginalization [39]. Students are not yet professionals, they may not be as effective in analysis or process, and the city's bureaucratic functions remain out of sight and not directly responsive to neighborhood concerns. Additional issues arise as students might not represent the communities in which the projects happen and they may not fully grasp the challenge of working with diverse communities. Similarly, community members may not be aware of common challenges of working with students, including academic schedules, differing disciplinary expertise (for example, working with an Architecture class versus an Urban Design and Planning class), and the likelihood of very short duration relationships with any individual student or class group.

4.2. The McKinley Futures Nehemiah Studio and Seminar

This studio began as a joint effort between the Departments of Urban Design and Planning (UDP) and Real Estate (RE). Each department has a required studio; one in UDP for students specializing in urban design and one for RE students specializing in development. The studios are typically taught separately. Faculty interest in working with the Initiative provided the catalytic energy needed to bring the studios together and expand access to create a College-wide studio. The Dean's Office provided support through the McKinley Endowment, which exists to support cross-disciplinary future-oriented practice.

The studio enrolled graduate students from the College's Departments of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Real Estate, and Urban Design and Planning. In three multidisciplinary teams, they conducted context and market research and created preliminary and final development proposals on behalf of four clients across three sites.

In addition, the faculty teaching team developed two seminars to support the studio. Dean Renée Cheng created and taught an intercultural-communication seminar for all studio students, to address the challenge of students working effectively in teams and in communities that may differ significantly from themselves. The studio also hosted a drop-in seminar that allowed students who could not participate in the studio to engage with the work. The drop-in studio attracted graduate architecture students and undergraduate planning students.

One site, Ebenezer AME Zion Church led by Pastor Ezra Maize, is located adjacent to the Meredith Mathews East Madison YMCA, where Greg Lewis serves as Executive Director. Because the clients were interested in working together, the student team proceeded to develop joint solutions that would maximize the potential of the Church and the Y to continue to fulfill their missions (see Figures 4 and 5).

The other two sites were Goodwill Missionary Baptist Church, led by Bishop Garry L. Tyson, and Greater Mt. Baker Baptist Church, led by Pastor Kenneth J. Ransfer, Sr. All of the sites are located in Seattle's Central District, and within the historically-redlined area of the city. See Figure 6.

As a part of the studio, students conducted site visits and initial and follow-up interviews with the clients. Within the studio, the students engaged with guests on Beloved Community development and Black-affirming public space. The teams worked with faculty, studio mentors, City of Seattle staff, and local designers, planners, and for- and non-profit developers in the course of the quarter. The students' training and experience were also supported by Dean Cheng's participation in studio and weekly engagement through seminar training and discussion on intercultural communication. The team's work was reviewed in formal presentations three times by clients, Initiative members, and local professionals.

Figure 4. Existing Ebenezer AME Zion Church and the Meredith Mathews East Madison Y seen from 23rd Ave S. Source: Aubree Nichols (Building Beloved Community, p. 60).

Figure 5. Rendering of a shared Ebenezer AME Zion Church-Meredith Mathews East Madison Y building. Source: Ebenezer-YMCA Team (Building Beloved Community, p. 64).

Each proposal provided a site capacity analysis based on current zoning and made recommendations for select upzones. Teams provided architectural plans/sections/elevations, a complete site design with connections to the surrounding neighborhood that considered green space, mobility, and the public realm. The teams worked through multiple funding sources and phasing to develop a financing strategy for each client.

The original methodology of the studio included coming up with a "highest and best use" development scenario along with one focused on church needs and desires to provide a comparison for the clients. However, the process quickly revealed that everyone was headed to what we named "highest and best Beloved Community use." And that became the overarching goal and philosophy of the studio.

The teams' proposals are summarized in the resulting studio book, *Building Beloved Community: Envisioning Thriving Futures for Black Churches in Seattle's Central District* [40]. Essays about the Nehemiah Initiative, the Black church in Seattle, and the studio accompany the proposals. The book (Figure 7) is available for download through the website created by the Spring 2020 Nehemiah Urban Planning Studio at nehemiahinitiativeseattle.org, hosted by the College of Built Environments.

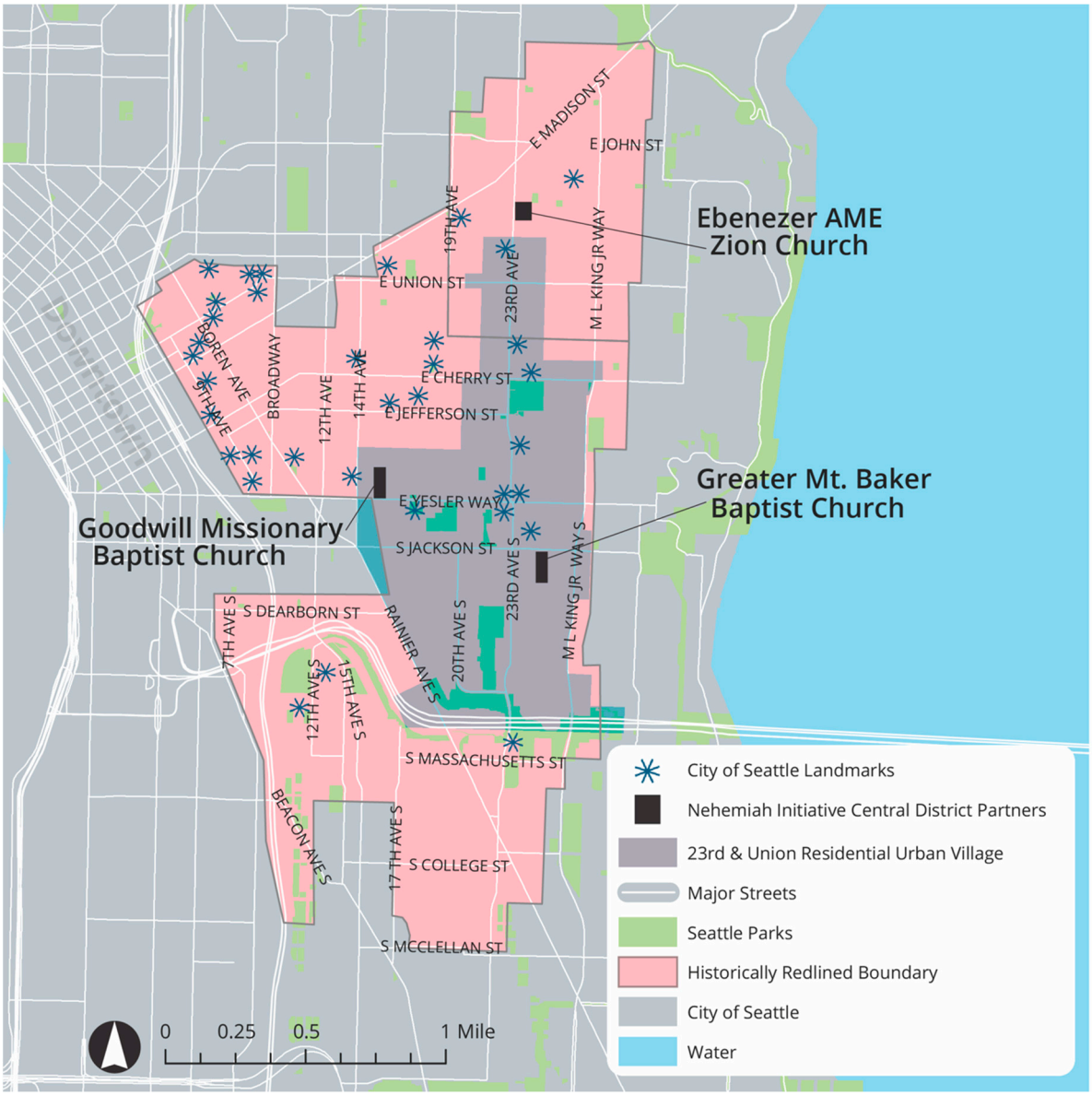

Figure 6. McKinley Futures Nehemiah Studio sites. Source: Mt. Baker Team (Building Beloved Community, p. 18).

4.3. Urban Planning Studio

The Planning Studio is a required part of the Masters of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington. It has for several years been offered as two classes over sequential quarters. The first is designed as a traditional class that builds professional skills and provides time during which students become familiar with the studio location and partner/client. The second quarter is when most of the studio work is performed, under a facilitated experiential learning model.

As part of the classes, the latter of which was conducted online using Zoom meetings due to COVID-19, students met regularly with Nehemiah Initiative leadership, church leaders, and had several meetings with City of Seattle staff and other professionals in real estate and housing. The class created maps detailing church parcels using publicly accessible data and ArcGIS, and embedded them in a website for NI and public use. Because the Central District neighborhood has changed so much in recent decades, NI leadership wanted the class to provide a historical overview of the neighborhood and the significance of its Black churches. Seattle is in the midst of a long-standing crisis of affordable housing, and both elected officials and city staff have been interested in

developing and understanding alternative or innovative ways that such housing can be created. Accordingly, the class met with staff from the Office of Planning and Community Development over the term, and provided them with a memo of suggested practices and policies that the city could pursue.

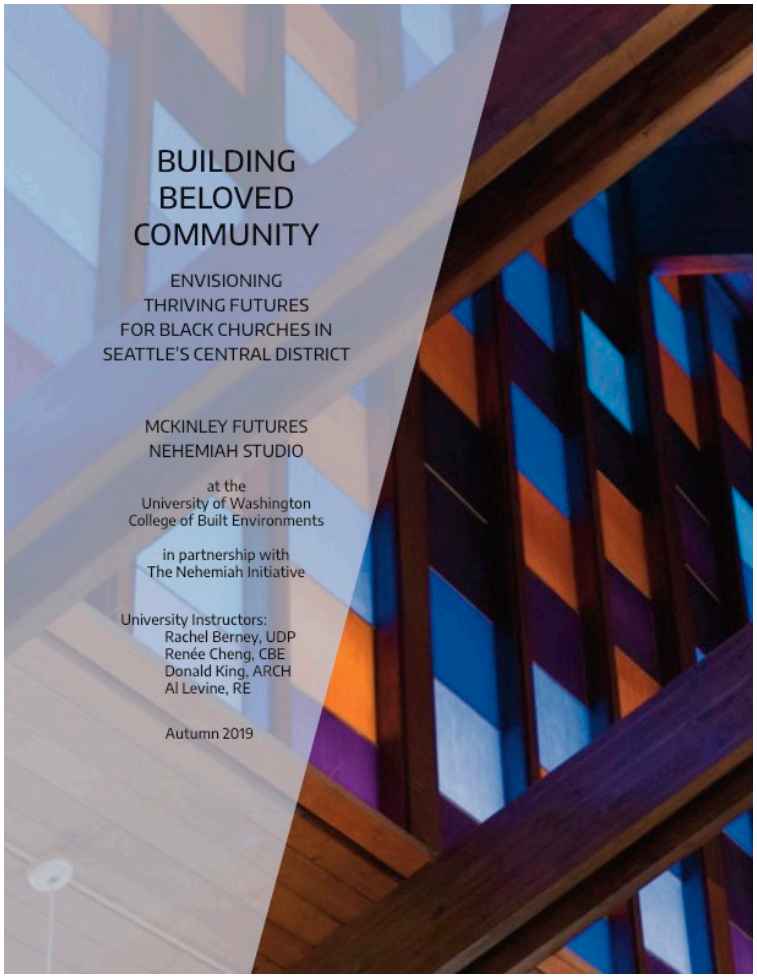

Figure 7. The Autumn 2019 McKinley Futures Nehemiah Studio book.

Class suggestions and policy ideas summarized in the studio documentation were generated through policy review, land capacity analyses based on current zoning allowances, and surveys and discussions with community members. Two members of the Nehemiah Initiative leadership, the aforementioned Donald King, and Dr. Mark Jones, who leads community engagement for the Initiative, were also co-instructors of the studio course with the regular faculty member.

The UDP Studio focused on engaging and learning from community members involved in the Nehemiah Initiative, and on the possible implications of Washington State House Bill 1377 (SHB1377) for local policy development. SHB1377 was passed into law by the Washington State Legislature in 2019, and allows for municipalities in Washington to provide additional density bonuses to faith-based organizations that redevelop property for affordable housing.

The law acknowledges the expanded role faith-based organizations can play in providing community services. However, as written, the law is limited in what it allows for and is inconsistent with the needs and desires of the local Central District community. Engagement efforts by students in the Spring 2020 studio reinforced what other studios and church leaders had already indicated: community members expressed a preference for mixed-use developments in addition to a range of housing types, including affordable housing.

The materials generated in the studio included two surveys for future community use, a review of existing precedents, background policy research for both the class and the community to better understand the development context, a policy memo for City of Seattle staff, and an initial website for the Nehemiah Initiative to share and store materials on the project (see Figure 8).

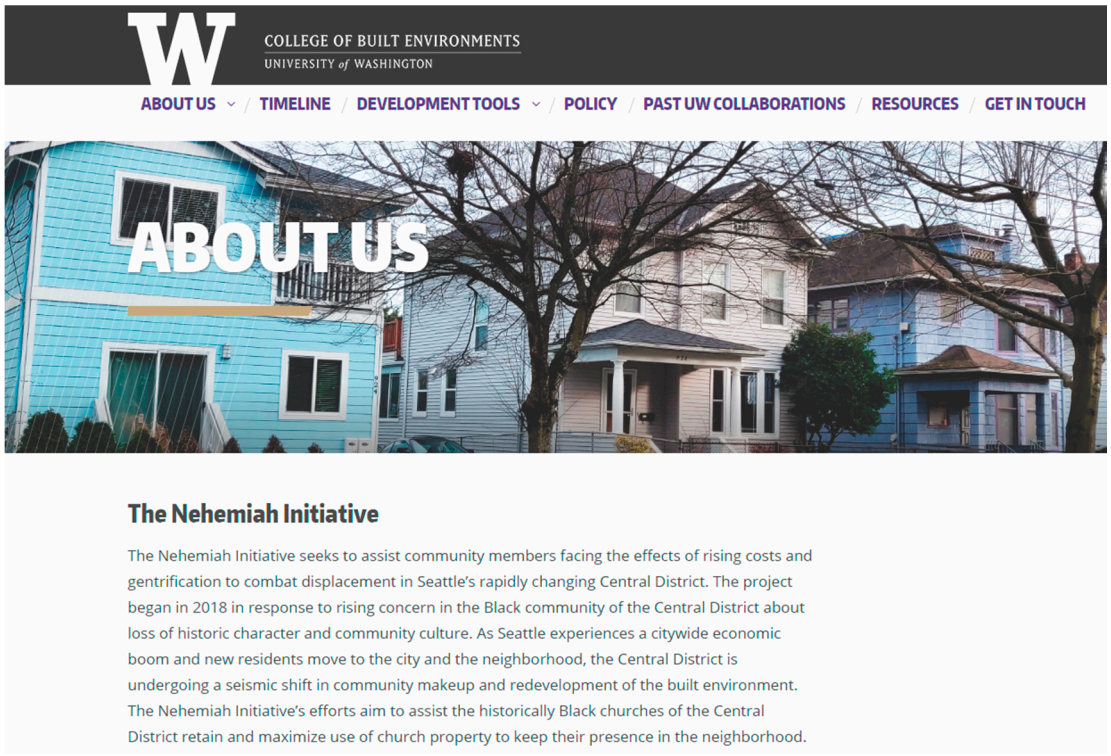

Figure 8. Screenshot of the Nehemiah Initiative website. Source: Spring 2020 Nehemiah Urban Planning Studio.

4.4. Building Beloved Community

The idea of Beloved Community has a long history. Josiah Royce (1855–1916) was an "absolutism idealist" philosopher who asserted that reality is unified through a single all-encompassing consciousness, which others interpreted as "God" [41]. Royce coined the term Beloved Community as a social construct based on unconditional love, so as to prevent interpreting Christ's work with a narrowness that resulted in selfish understandings and behaviors [42,43]. While Royce associated Beloved Community with the Apostle John, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" [44], the evolution of the term Beloved Community became associated with the Apostle Mark, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself, there is no other commandment greater than these" [45]. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s exegesis of the Bible, and analysis of Royce's work and post-Royce interpretation, led him to a modern definition. King defined Beloved Community as a conscious recognition of the interconnectedness of all people that can come into being when people from any combination of identity and social system (what today we would call intersectionality)—such as race, gender, spiritual beliefs, social class, ethnic heritage, and income level—pass through a gauntlet of socio-economic oppression and exploitation, and terrorization [46–49].

The Nehemiah Initiative uses specific practices of the Beloved Community to achieve the intended results of measurable growth and sustainment of individual, organizational, and environmental well-being. One such practice is a practice of compassion called "Heard-Seen-Loved" that increases social cohesion and provides a process that can be used to design and build physically, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually safe relationships as the result of an increased sense of belonging, authenticity, and the conscious experience

of joy [50]. The Nehemiah Initiative also has a practice of using the following litany as a means of activating the meme of "Beloved Community", as articulated by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "The aftermath of violence is bitterness. The aftermath of non-violence is the creation of Beloved Community, so that when the battle is over, a new relationship comes into being. The end is reconciliation. The end is redemption. This is the love that may well be the salvation of our civilization [51]." These two practices were core practices in both the academic work of the Nehemiah Initiative courses and projects within the University of Washington, and the community engagement activities associated with those courses and projects.

5. Discussion: Opportunities and Preliminary Recommendations

Cities can play an important role in slowing gentrification and displacement by implementing policies that prioritize community interests and needs. University–community partnerships can support the sharing of expertise and training of students, especially students from local communities on the one hand. On the other hand, community participation in these types of partnerships can offer greater efficiency and legitimacy to community redevelopment, especially efforts that seek to right past wrongs and create more equitable and just development.

The Autumn 2019 UW studio provided proposals for the redevelopment of the sum total of properties for the Goodwill Missionary Baptist Church, Greater Mt. Baker Baptist Church, and Ebenezer AME Zion Church in partnership with the Meredith Mathews East Madison Y. Teams examined site capacity and made recommendations for upzones where they made sense. They also provided comprehensive architectural, urban design, planning, and financial proposals for each client. The combined creative and problem-solving efforts of the studio and clients led to three distinct expressions of highest and best "Beloved Community" use.

The Spring 2020 UW studio provided recommendations to the City of Seattle for the development or modification of policies that can foster equitable and community-driven development in the Central District. These included policies that focus on the historically Black churches that serve as anchors in the neighborhood. While the land capacity analysis suggested the potential for over 700 new housing units could be built on church-owned properties in the Central District, this development potential would require the support of the city and community to be realized. It would also need deep engagement with the community to ensure that community desires are incorporated into developments.

From surveys, discussions, and interviews with the community, it is clear that many community interests are not currently met in the Central District. Not only are contemporary projects narrowly designed and defined to maximize market potential, but recent statewide legislation suggests concentrating affordable housing using density bonus allowances in faith-based redevelopment projects. However, we found that in addition to the allowed affordable housing, community members had a commonly held desire for mixed-use developments that would include a variety of amenities and resources. They specifically mentioned child care, educational facilities, music programming, fitness centers, cafe space, small grocery space, independent retail, community gardens, green spaces, and community gathering spaces.

The new law created after the passage of Substitute House Bill 1377 complements Seattle's Mandatory Housing Affordability requirements that were recently incorporated into the city's zoning ordinances. The bill incentivizes affordable housing through density bonuses on property owned by religious organizations, but also only allows for such benefits if the entire development is classified as affordable housing. This limits the ability of development to provide some of the desirable uses articulated by the community. However, in Seattle as would likely be the case in other cities, some of the church properties of interest are not currently zoned to allow for mixed-use development. This issue could be alleviated through a floating zone (pre-defined but not spatially located) used in conjunction with density bonuses to allow for higher-density, mixed-use development on church-owned

properties. Additionally, flexible application through performance-based codes, for example, of floor-to-area ratios, lot coverage, open space, setback reduction, and/or building height standards to allow faith-based developments to attain a more financially feasible density could increase the efficacy of density bonuses.

Housing policies in Seattle are currently focused on providing incentives for affordable housing development, as measured by unit counts versus projected occupancy. Washington state's Multifamily Property Tax Exemption program provides incentives for affordable housing, but recent reporting from Washington State's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee indicates that nearly 75% of affordable homes built through the program were either studio or one-bedroom units. While the City has made strides to increase affordable housing stock, encouraging the development of larger affordable units would help to retain families and promote generational communities. Local affordable housing monitoring should be performed by considering both unit counts and occupancy.

There is also a lack of affordable housing options, such as cooperative ownership, condominiums, and small lot cottages. Seattle has historically protected its extensive single-family zoning, the City has not produced sufficient new housing units in previous decades, and Washington State has had a condominium warranty law that severely limits condominium production. For all of these reasons, local innovation should be encouraged. An affordable housing approach that only builds affordable rental units does not take into consideration a broader range of community members, such as senior homeowners who may find that they are unable to afford increased property taxes and maintenance costs and would like to transition to alternative housing in their community. Affordable rental apartments may not be the solution they would like to see, and the current lack of housing diversity provides them with limited options.

As new developments typically set displacement in motion, there is an opportunity to provide incentives to developments that seek to mitigate some of these consequences. A "Social Impact Assessment" checklist or narrative worksheet for developers, similar to existing environmental impact checklists, would help demonstrate how new development could lessen negative community impacts. City staff could then evaluate the assessment and award additional density incentives in exchange for positive performance on social impact measures. In this way, the city could be responsive to the need for projects to produce financial returns for investors while also working to protect communities.

In building Beloved Communities that include developers, the community partnership could collaboratively identify and implement acceptable mitigation strategies for negative impacts identified in the process. One mitigation strategy already being employed by the City is to fund programs that aid small businesses. The complex constellation of funding; personnel; marketing towards equitable, community-led developments; and coordination between City programs is essential to fostering the growth of women- and minority-owned businesses. Church-based redevelopments seek to provide start-up and affordable commercial and retail space for these types of businesses, and thus are natural partners.

Here again it will be necessary to consider zoning, as many of the parcels owned by faith-based organizations in the Central District fall within or on the border of residential zones that do not allow for the inclusion of a bodega or cafe or other locally desired land uses. The ability to make space for these uses within the faith-based developments would better align with community goals to incubate and support small businesses while accommodating modern church needs, including a range of housing ownership models. Specific zoning language that allows for many or all of the desired elements in such developments would need to be developed, and again, a combination of a pre-defined floating zone with performance standards is a possible strategy.

Regarding more equitable marketing towards individuals and businesses, other cities across the U.S. experiencing similar gentrification have deployed policies giving preference to tenants who were directly impacted by gentrification when new developments are completed. The City of Seattle has an affirmative marketing and community preference policy in place as of 2019. Requiring the use of this policy by faith-based developers

under the supervision of the City's Office of Housing in the Central District could help to revitalize the historically Black community that has been displaced from the neighborhood.

There is clearly work to be performed by cities and organizations in civil society to facilitate community-driven faith-based development. In this process they should take note of best practices for entities such as the Nehemiah Initiative to encourage efficient and effective use of resources. Partnerships, such as that between the University of Washington and the Nehemiah Initiative, and building Beloved Communities (in essence, high-performing community-based projects and teams) represent a wise strategy that leverages a wide range of resources and abilities. In our case, continued substantive engagement with community members has built relationships, trust, and rapport with students and faculty at UW, and has opened doors for more direct connections between the Nehemiah Initiative and the city. Student-facilitated development proposals and community engagement efforts also helped clarify community needs and interests. Community member conversations influenced the church development proposals, contents of the Nehemiah Initiative webpage, a memo to the City of Seattle containing policy recommendations described above, and the broader land capacity analysis. Moreover, those items were agreed-upon deliverables for the Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020 studios based on input from the community and Initiative leadership.

Beyond city policy, non-profit and/or faith-based organizations need to consider appropriate institutional and legal structures. The Nehemiah Initiative itself is wrestling with the challenges of bringing the collaborative efforts of a large community of churches together under a unified vision. Formally establishing the Initiative as a non-profit, community land trust, social purpose corporation, or another more formally-defined entity is difficult given the coordination and agreement required between the eight main churches that might be directly involved. Even so, it is likely that after more in-depth investigation, one of those organizational structures and some combination of functions may be necessary to achieve the Initiative's mission to build wealth and collective power for the Black community. Accordingly, the Initiative has incorporated in the State of Washington as a 501.c3 organization as of December 31, 2020.

Finally, while just one UW studio to date has been focused on the topic of funding such community-oriented development, it is clear from that experience and our case studies and discussions with local architects, developers, and housing providers that a sustainable and diverse funding pool is necessary to support and sustain the work performed by groups such as the Nehemiah Initiative. The Seattle City Council is currently discussing legislation that would provide $180 million for affordable housing in the Central District over ten years, as well as considering allocations from a newly-passed JumpStart Seattle tax package that would provide $135 million per year for housing and services in the city starting in 2022, so the understanding of financial needs is widely shared.

6. Conclusions: Implications for Faith-Based Organizations and City Planning Practice

There is little question that the loss of the Black community in Seattle's Central District is profound, and mirrors similar cultural community loss due to gentrification and displacement elsewhere. The forces and market logics that dictate this process are difficult to work against. The cost is the loss of important historical communities, institutions, and residents in serving the interests of wealthier (and generally whiter) communities. Because local historic churches often control their land, as well as adjacent or nearby parcels, they are uniquely positioned to respond to this problem by orienting themselves to a community-based development model. This may represent a pivot in the way that churches view themselves vis-à-vis the communities in which they sit. As Bishop Garry L. Tyson, a founder of the Nehemiah Initiative, says of his Goodwill Missionary Baptist Church, "we have gone from being a church in a community to being a community church." The long history of building social and political power that Black churches hold in many US cities makes this reorientation to facilitating community-oriented development a reasonable role for them to play.

This move toward community-responsive redevelopment may require actions from both the state and civil society. Considerations of zoning, provision of business support, funding affordable and mixed-income housing, and formally tracking and considering the social impacts of proposed developments are all state-oriented strategies. On the church side, while organizations such as the Nehemiah Initiative are not developers, they can support individual churches in understanding their own development potential and financing. They can advocate for the development of church properties, and be a resource to churches considering whether to move, close, or redevelop. Such organizations could, if structured appropriately, be a land-holding entity to bridge development timelines; they could also become or work with community land trusts to provide the housing and other associated development in an affordable manner in perpetuity. While the forces of gentrification are strong, there are community-based assets that can be leveraged to offset them. It is incumbent upon local governments, and such institutions as Black churches when they desire, to work towards doing just that.

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