

Recognition Justice

A brief reflection of the policies and growth that shaped the Puget Sound region and reinforced racial inequalities.

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December 7, 2023

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a83400cc7ecf486b88a9a65d61502709>

Puget Sound Energy and its predecessor companies have been serving Seattle and the Puget Sound since the late 1800's, and since that time, the region has grown tremendously.

The first white Americans to settle in Seattle arrived in the 1850's.

By 1873, Seattle Gas Light Company was lighting up parts of the city with gas lamps.

In 1886, the Seattle Electric Light Company, a PSE predecessor, began serving the region from a central power plant.

The power provided to the growing new city served electric street cars and individual homes. As the city grew, power and light services expanded too.

However, opportunities in the promising Puget Sound region were not available for all...



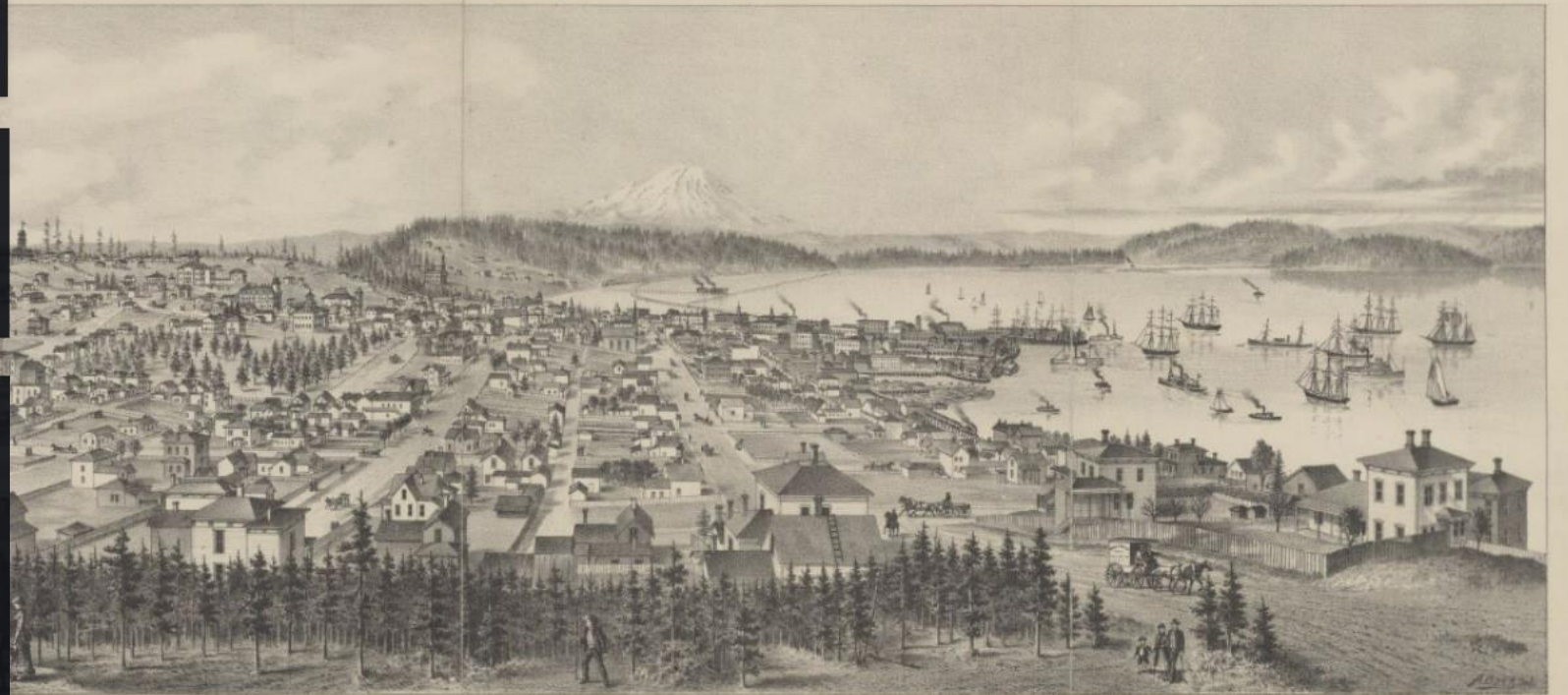


News and advertisements attracted newcomers to the region, promising vibrant economic potential.

Hand drawn maps were used to sell the promise of a new beginning and to create a sense of pride and place. [2]

As pioneers and other Americans migrated to opportunities offered by the Puget Sound, Indigenous American villages and tribes were displaced from their ancestral land.

Through a series of treaties, tribal nations retained only a fraction of their ancestral lands, ceding most rights to the state and U.S. governments and received limited fishing and hunting protections.



SEATTLE, W.T. 1884.

PUBLISHED BY THE WEST SHORE, PORTLAND, OR

The Puget Sound region was built alongside discriminatory policies and practices that established and reinforced Structural Racism, just like the rest of America.

Alien Land Laws prohibited non-citizens from purchasing land, and were used alongside "whites only" naturalization laws as a tactic to consolidate land ownership in white hands.^[3] The region rapidly developed at the same time as historic redlining and racially restrictive covenant policies were unfortunately commonplace. These policies reinforced Structural Racism by impacting the flow of wealth and homeownership on the basis of race.

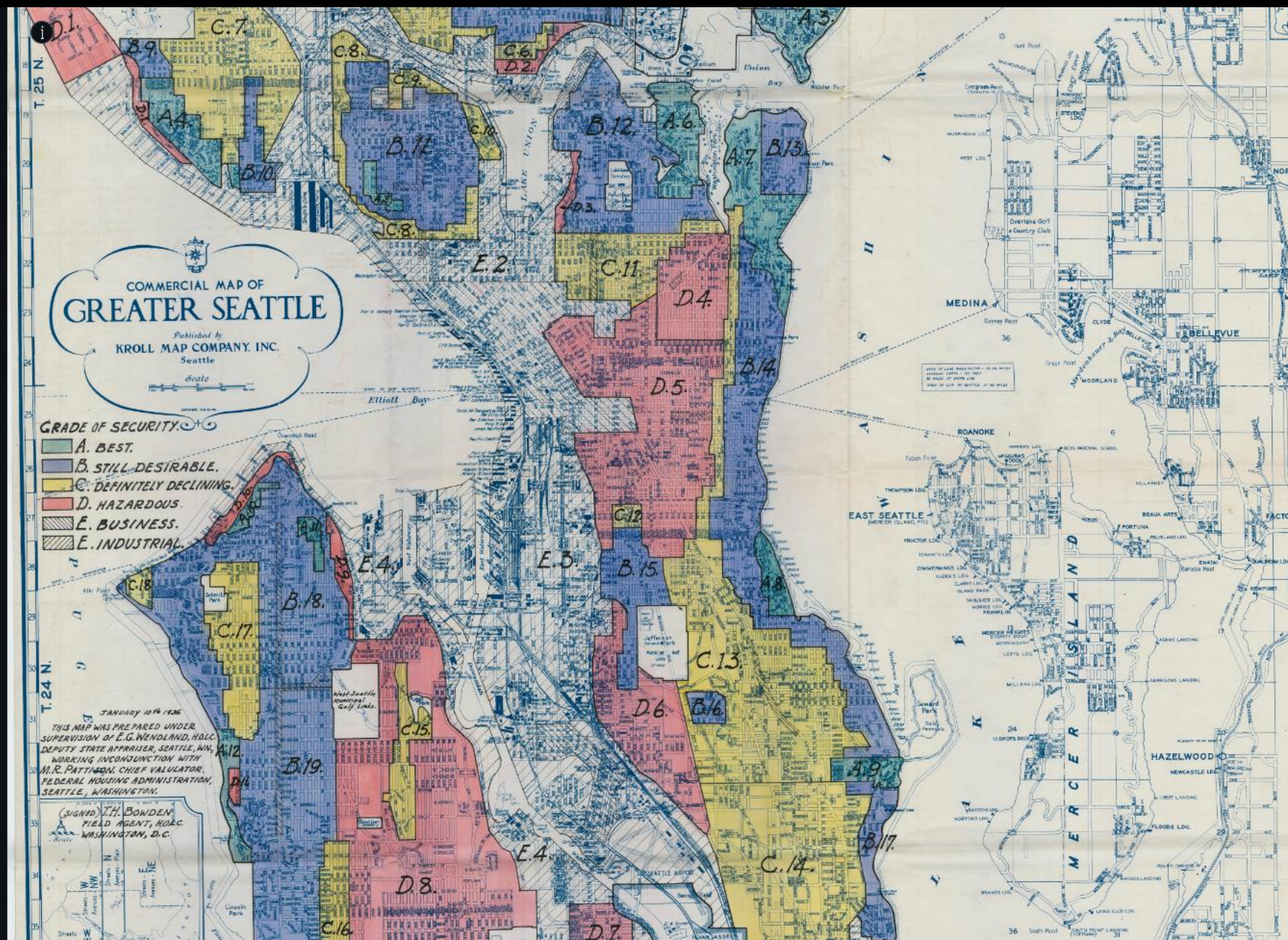
Early Chinese and Japanese immigrants to Seattle were confined to the areas around the current International District. During World War II, Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes, businesses, and belongings as they were relocated to internment camps. Years later, many returned home to find their possessions vandalized or burglarized.^[4]

The Cities of Seattle and Tacoma were both evaluated and redlined by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in the 1930s, with different neighborhoods of each city being graded based on more than just housing quality.

"Overt barriers to residence, such as racial covenants and redlining, were used for many years to bar minorities from certain neighborhoods. The pattern of racial segregation enforced by such practices in the past is still evident in many neighborhoods in the region."

Fair Housing Equity Assessment, Puget Sound Regional Council

In these redlining maps, the Central District received a score of Hazardous, with the grader calling out mixed nationalities in the neighborhood as justification for the score.

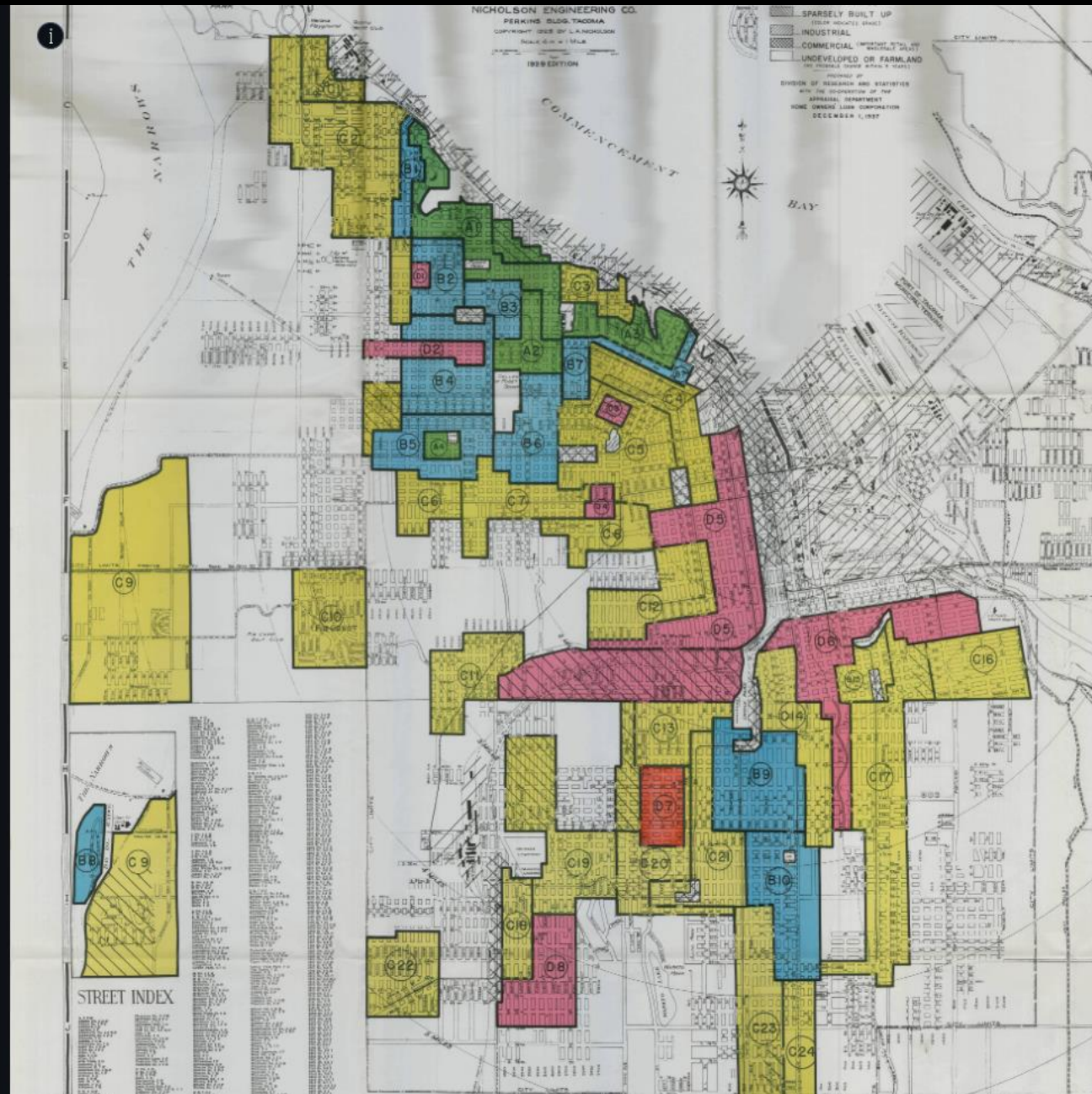


The City of Tacoma's redlining maps conveyed even stronger racist sentiment.

For example, the clarifying remarks for the D3 neighborhood read, *"There are several Negro families (three known) who own property and live in this area. This constitutes a sufficient hazard to justify a 4th grade rating."*^[5]

The practical effects of redlining affected appreciation of home values in the lower grade neighborhoods, impacted long term investment, and set structural inequalities into place.

The geographies and demographics that shaped the region's history persist today.



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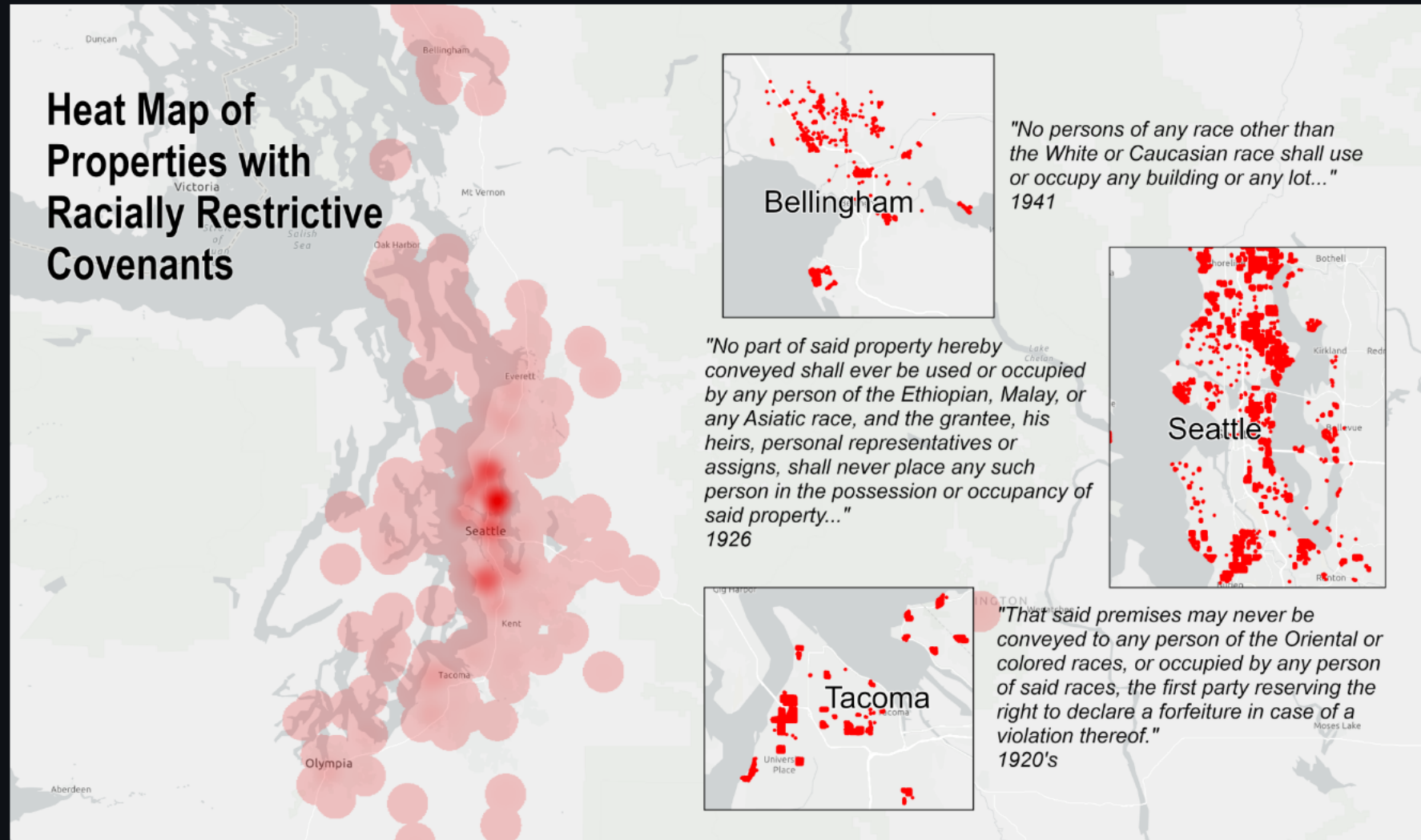
Simultaneously, racial restrictions were written into many property deeds for plats developed primarily between the 1920s and 1950s. These excluded and limited areas where BIPOC families could rent or own.

The University of Washington has been researching and uncovering the extent of racially restrictive covenants in property records, and their work is ongoing. They have cataloged over 50,000 records so far.

The language of restriction varied, but barred individuals based on race, ethnicity, and religion, targeting Blacks, Asians, Jews, and others from purchasing houses or property.

These racially restrictive covenants played a major part in dictating the demographics of the Puget Sound region. More covert tactics were also used to shape and segregate the region.

In 1968, the federal government passed the Fair Housing Act, finally making these covenants illegal and unenforceable.



- 🔗 **Today, though many parts of the Puget Sound region are thriving, the same opportunities are not felt by all. Income inequality, lack of available housing due to slow-to-change zoning laws, and the legacies of racism from both redlining and the internment of Japanese Americans mean PSE customers' lived experiences vary tremendously.**

Below, you can explore the neighborhood demographics across income, race, opportunity, and social vulnerabilities to see what patterns persist from these racist practices.

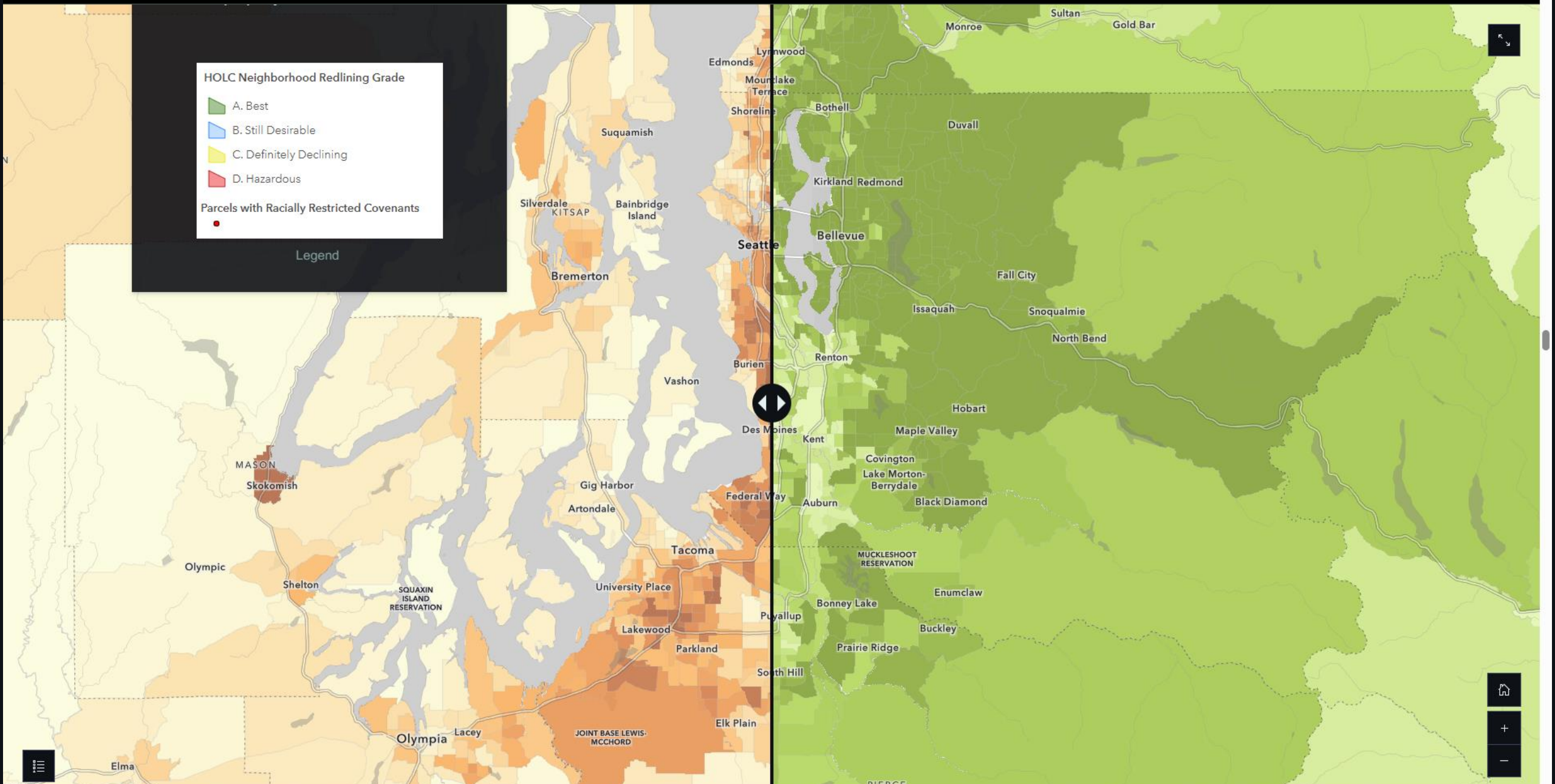
HOLC Neighborhood Redlining Grade

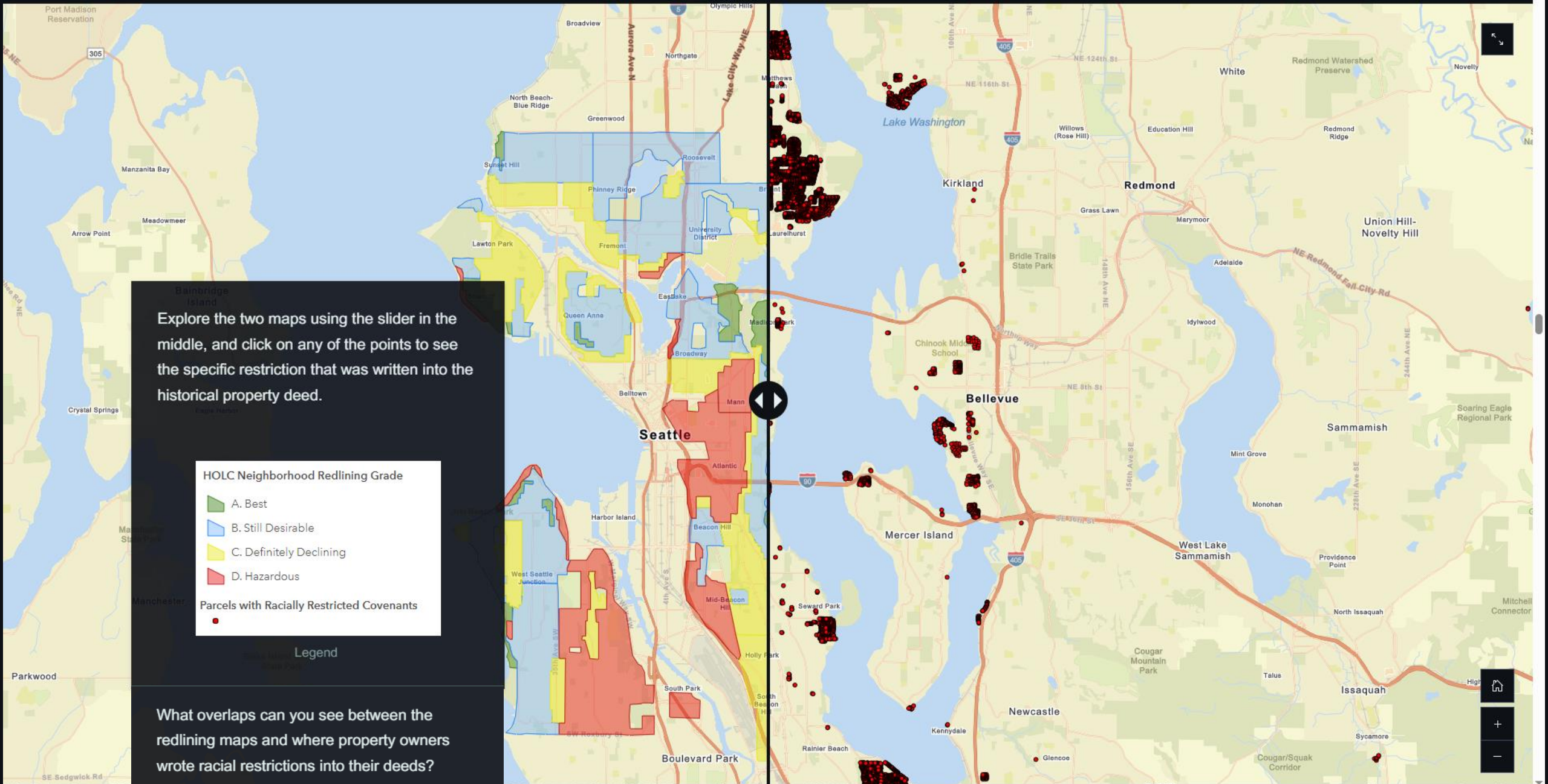
- A. Best
- B. Still Desirable
- C. Definitely Declining
- D. Hazardous

Parcels with Racially Restricted Covenants

-

Legend





Explore the two maps using the slider in the middle, and click on any of the points to see the specific restriction that was written into the historical property deed.

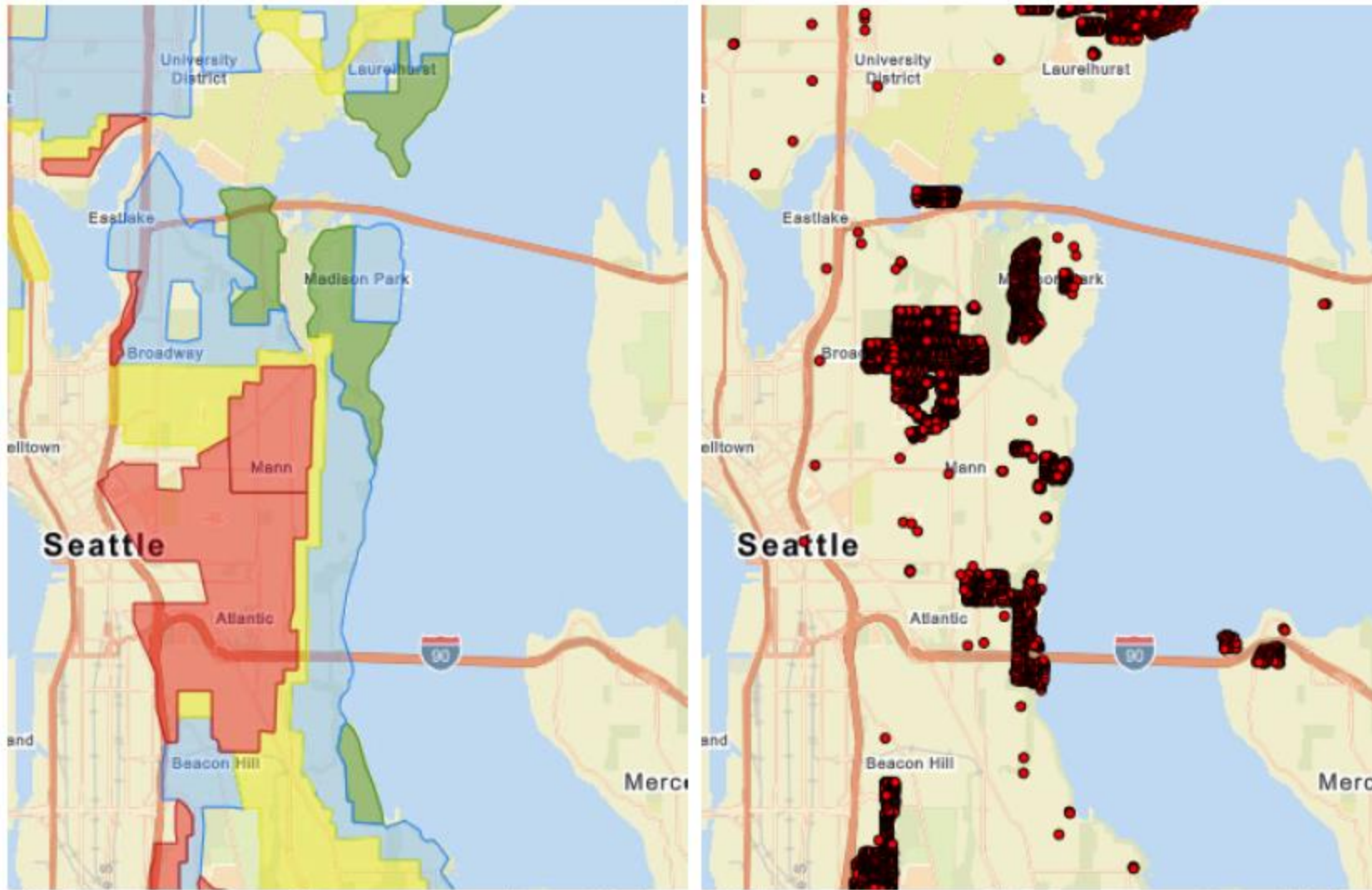
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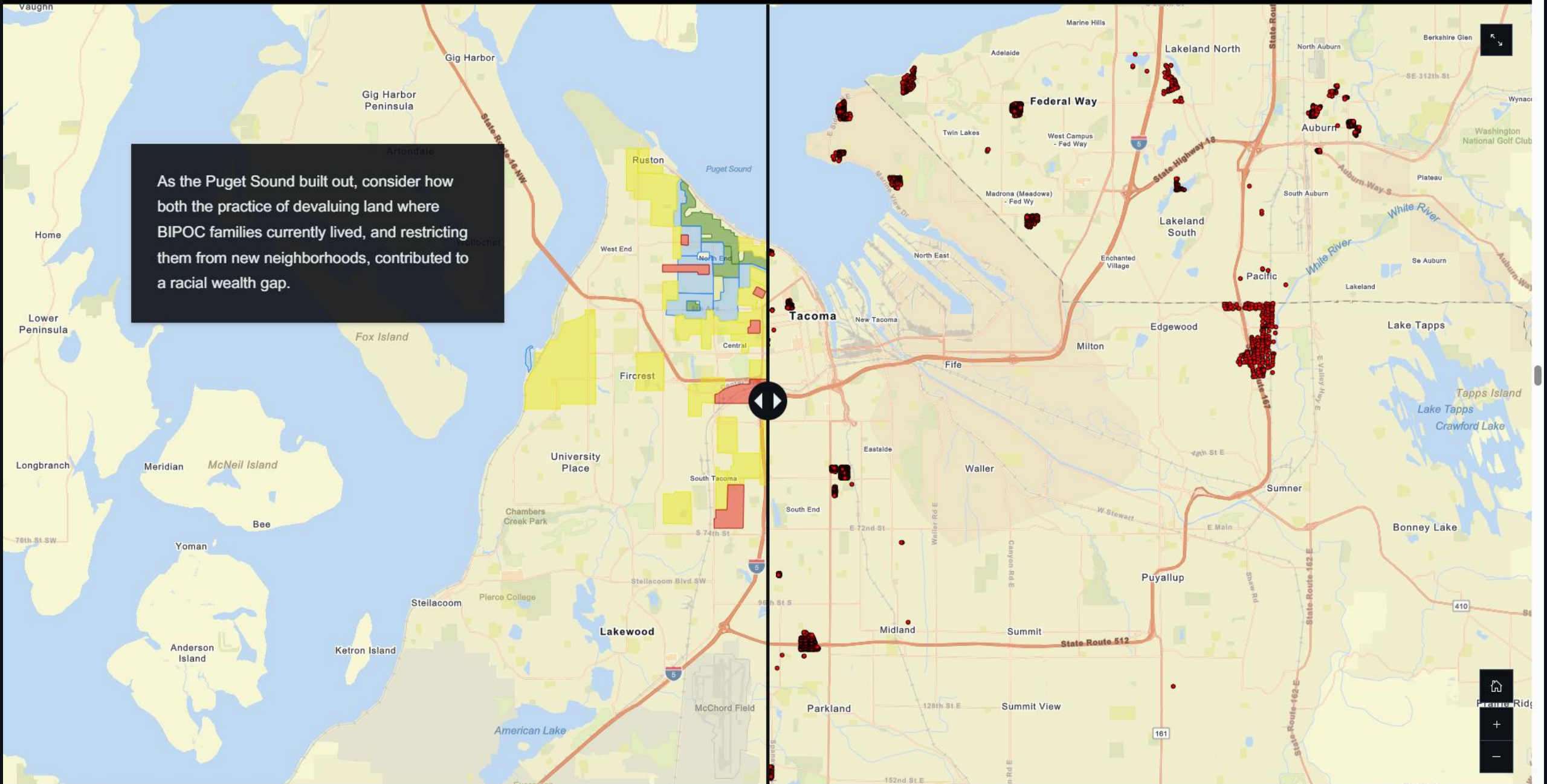
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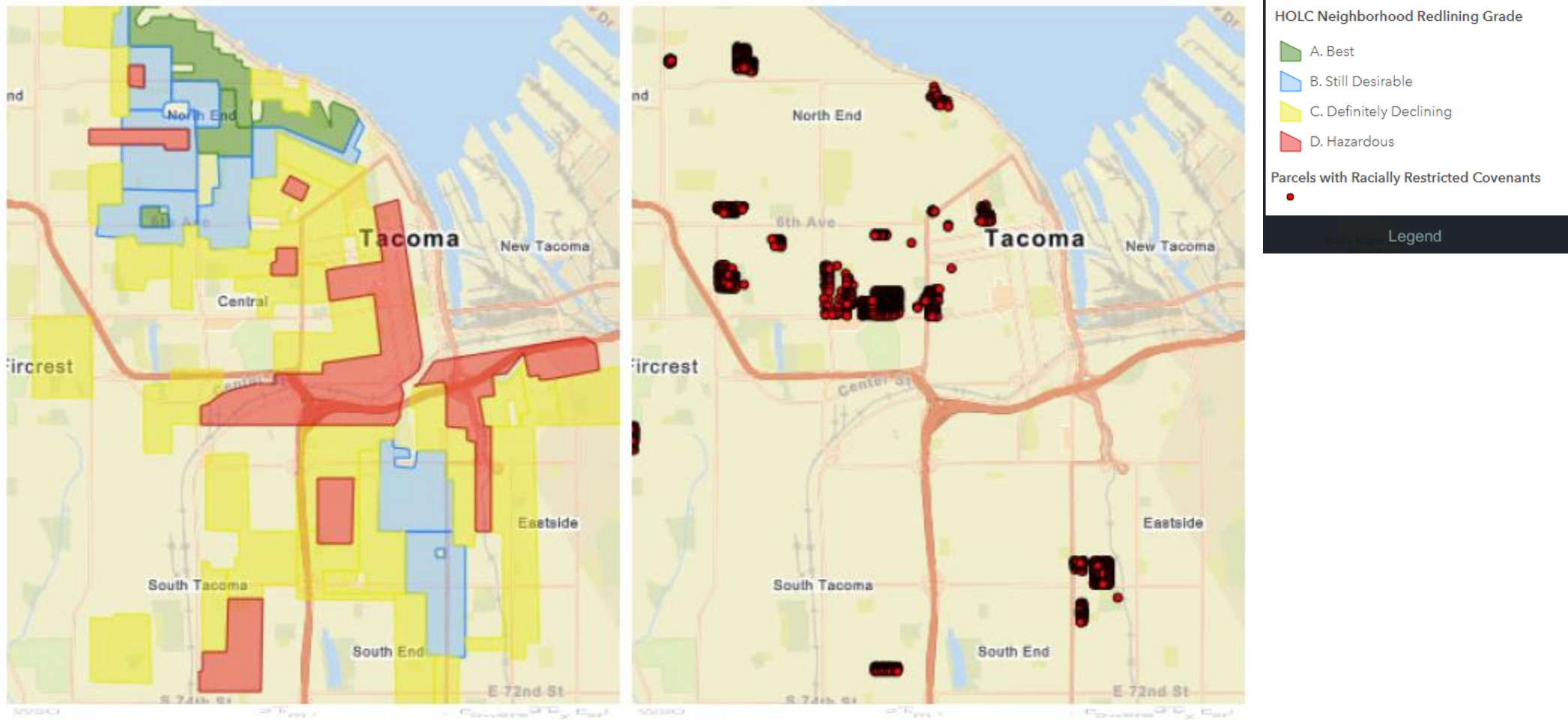
What overlaps can you see between the redlining maps and where property owners wrote racial restrictions into their deeds?



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As the Puget Sound built out, consider how both the practice of devaluing land where BIPOC families currently lived, and restricting them from new neighborhoods, contributed to a racial wealth gap.





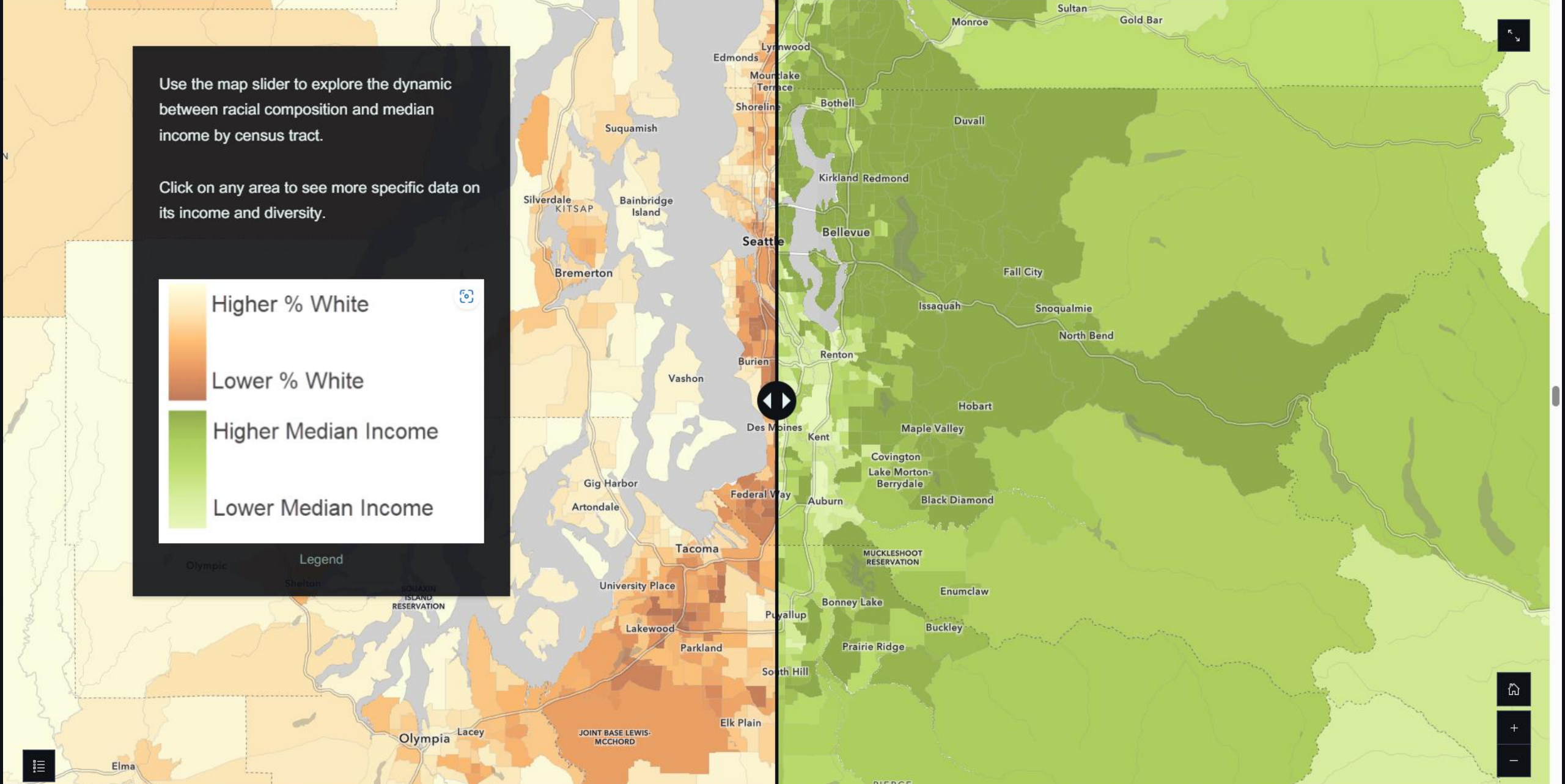
As the Puget Sound built out, consider how both the practice of devaluing land where BIPOC families currently lived, and restricting them from new neighborhoods, contributed to a racial wealth gap.

Use the map slider to explore the dynamic between racial composition and median income by census tract.

Click on any area to see more specific data on its income and diversity.

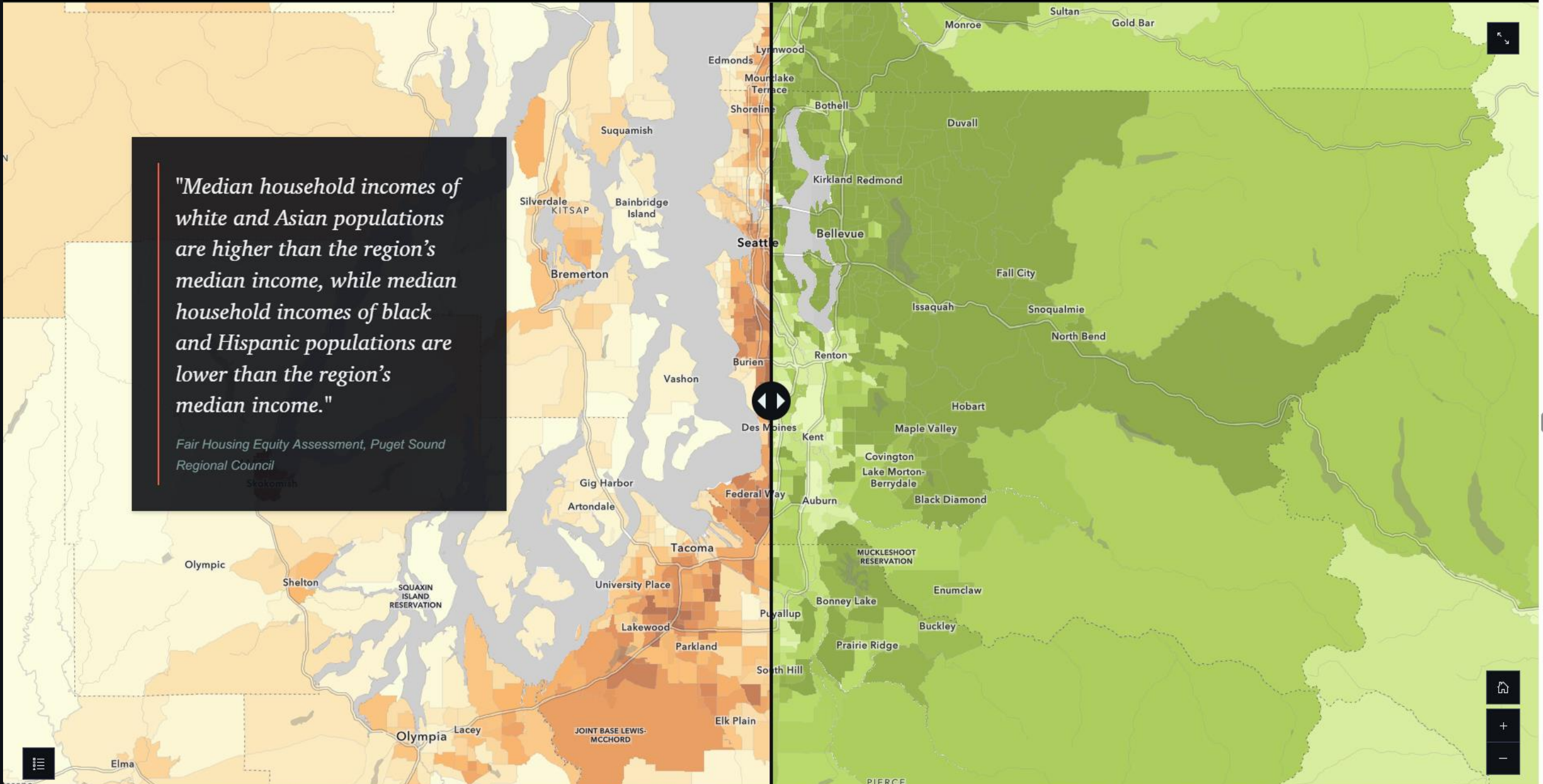
- Higher % White
- Lower % White
- Higher Median Income
- Lower Median Income

Legend



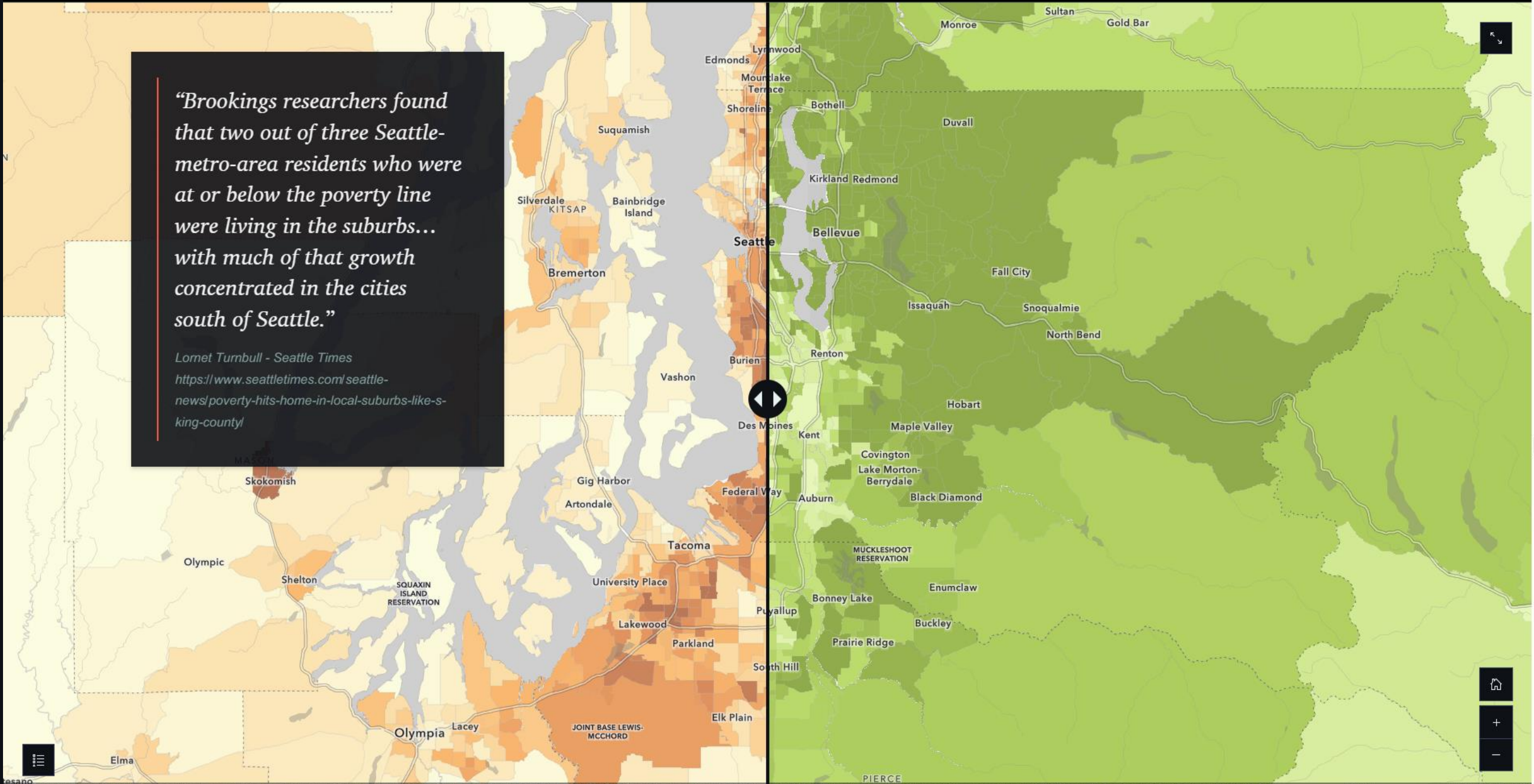
"Median household incomes of white and Asian populations are higher than the region's median income, while median household incomes of black and Hispanic populations are lower than the region's median income."

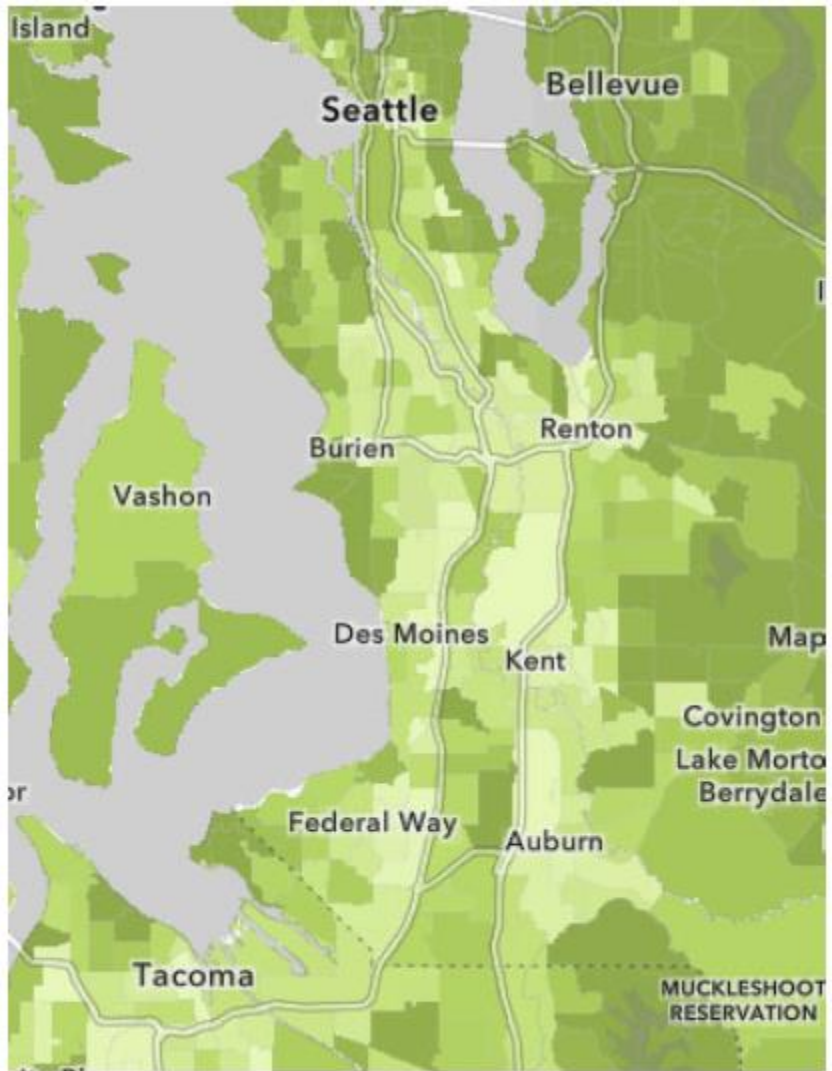
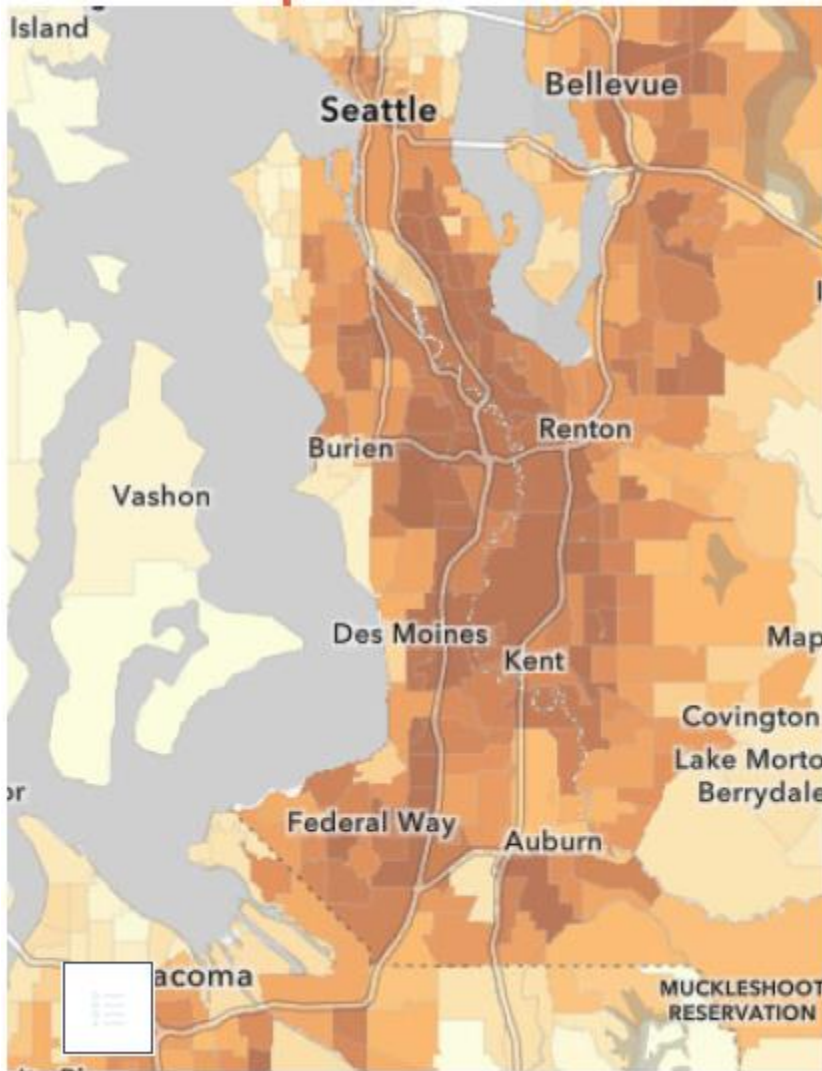
Fair Housing Equity Assessment, Puget Sound Regional Council



“Brookings researchers found that two out of three Seattle-metro-area residents who were at or below the poverty line were living in the suburbs... with much of that growth concentrated in the cities south of Seattle.”

*Lornet Turnbull - Seattle Times
<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/poverty-hits-home-in-local-suburbs-like-sking-county/>*





There is an intrinsic link between race, place (geography), and access to services and opportunities to thrive.

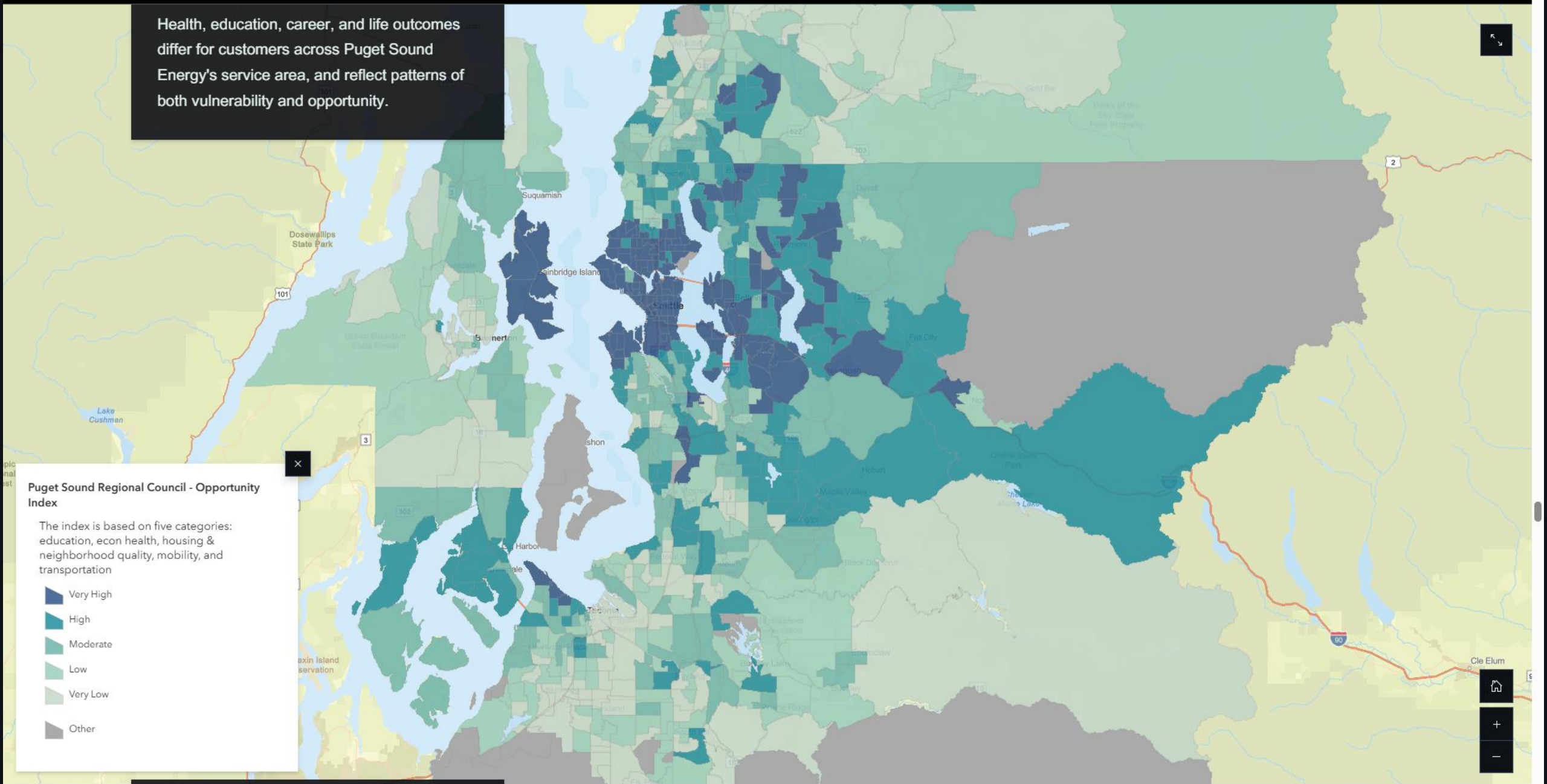
Puget Sound Energy recognizes that there are barriers in place for our vulnerable populations that may limit access to not just our programs, but social services and opportunities in many parts of their lives.

Health, education, career, and life outcomes differ for customers across Puget Sound Energy's service area, and reflect patterns of both vulnerability and opportunity.

Puget Sound Regional Council - Opportunity Index

The index is based on five categories: education, econ health, housing & neighborhood quality, mobility, and transportation

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low
- Other



The Puget Sound Regional Council has developed an Opportunity Index that can help to visualize areas of higher and lower opportunity.

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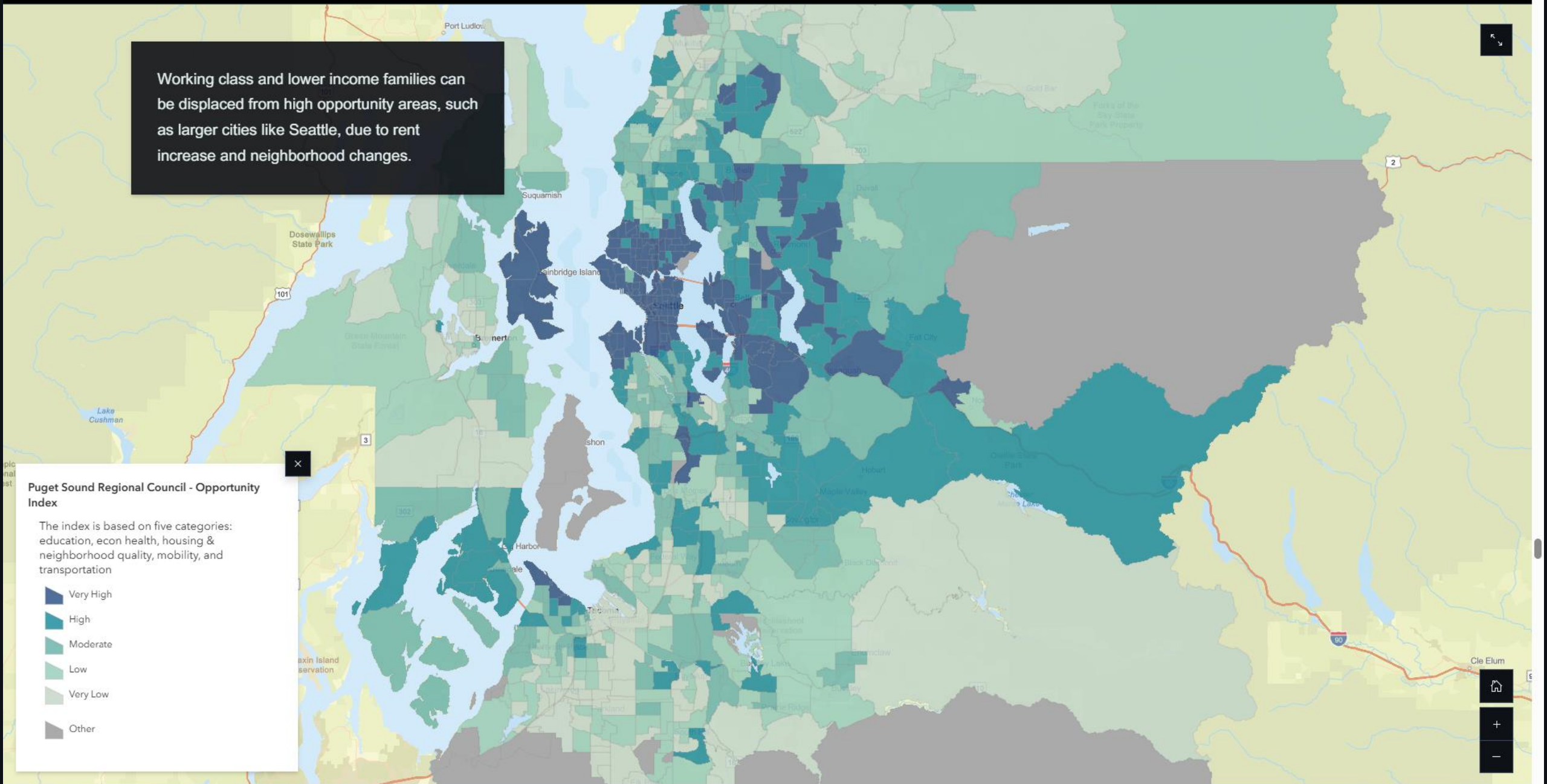
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Working class and lower income families can be displaced from high opportunity areas, such as larger cities like Seattle, due to rent increase and neighborhood changes.

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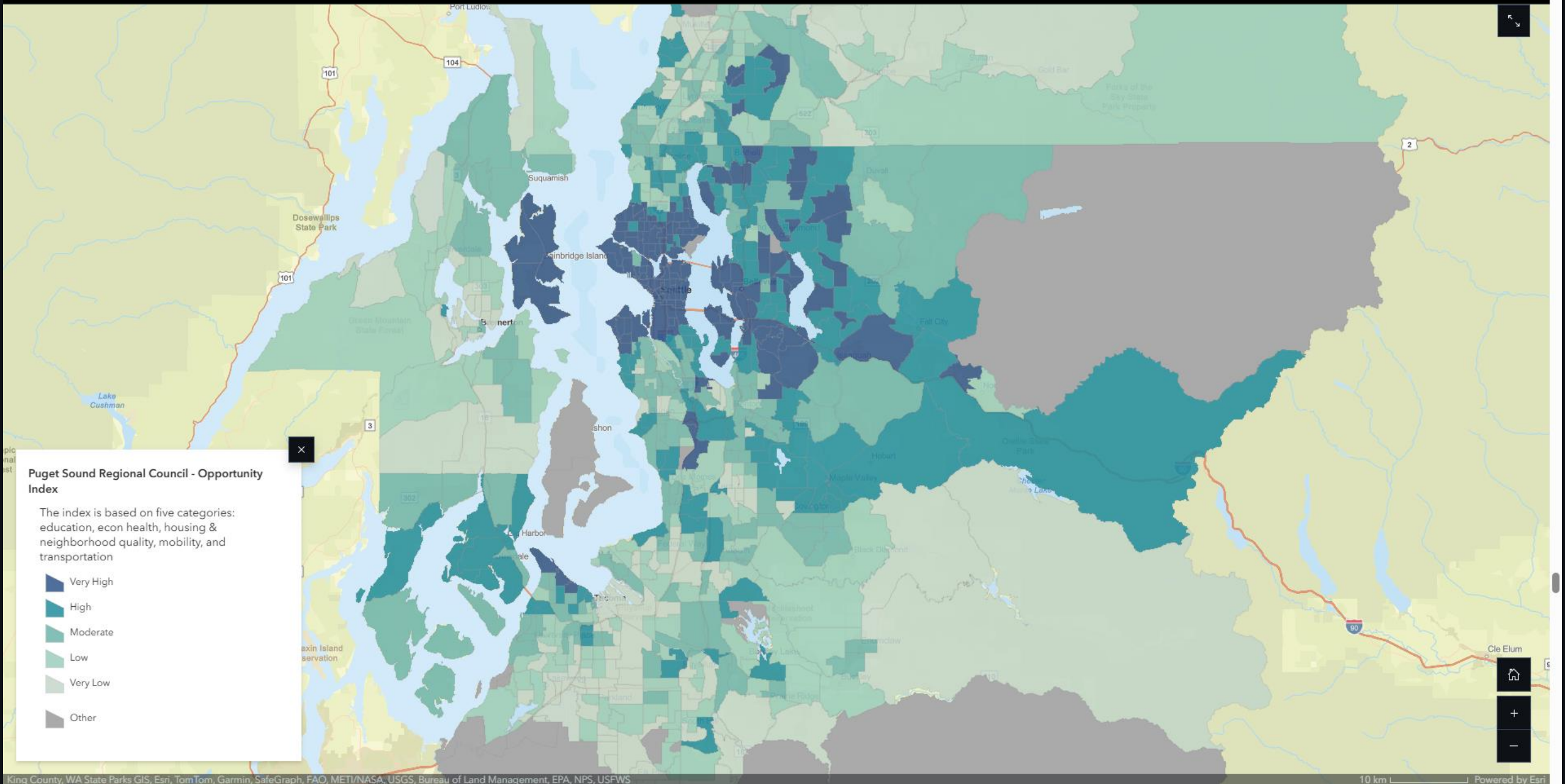
"In 2019, households of color were three times more likely to move and three times more likely to be displaced than their white counterparts." [6]

Puget Sound Regional Council - Contemporary History and Policies (arcgis.com)

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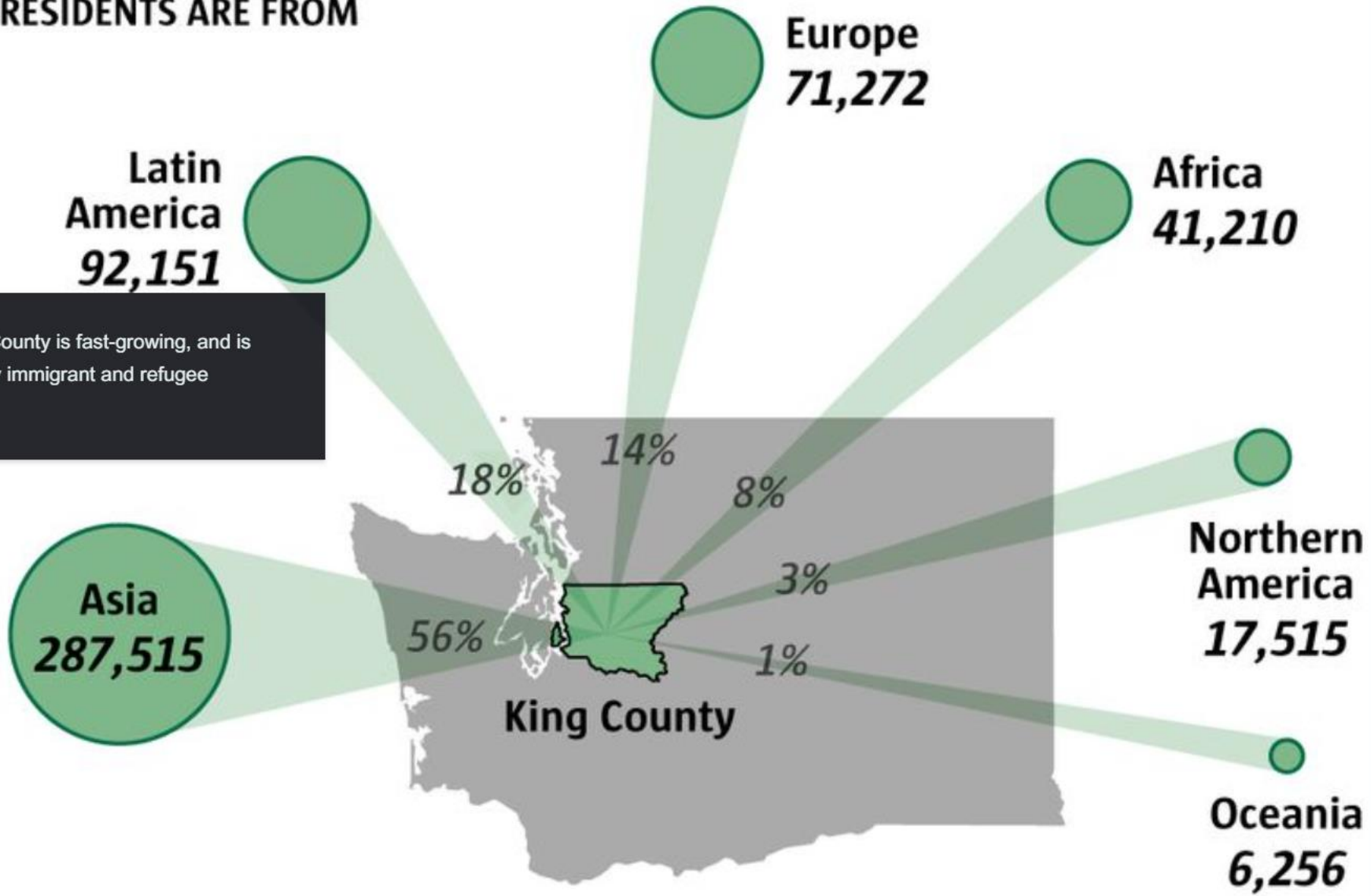
The Puget Sound region continues to grow and become more diverse.

Both displacement and growth mean that smaller municipalities and suburbs are both economically and racially diverse. However smaller cities and unincorporated areas tend to have less robust social services and safety nets for vulnerable residents.

Since 2010, King County has welcomed the third largest increase in foreign born residents in the US [5].

WHERE KING COUNTY FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS ARE FROM

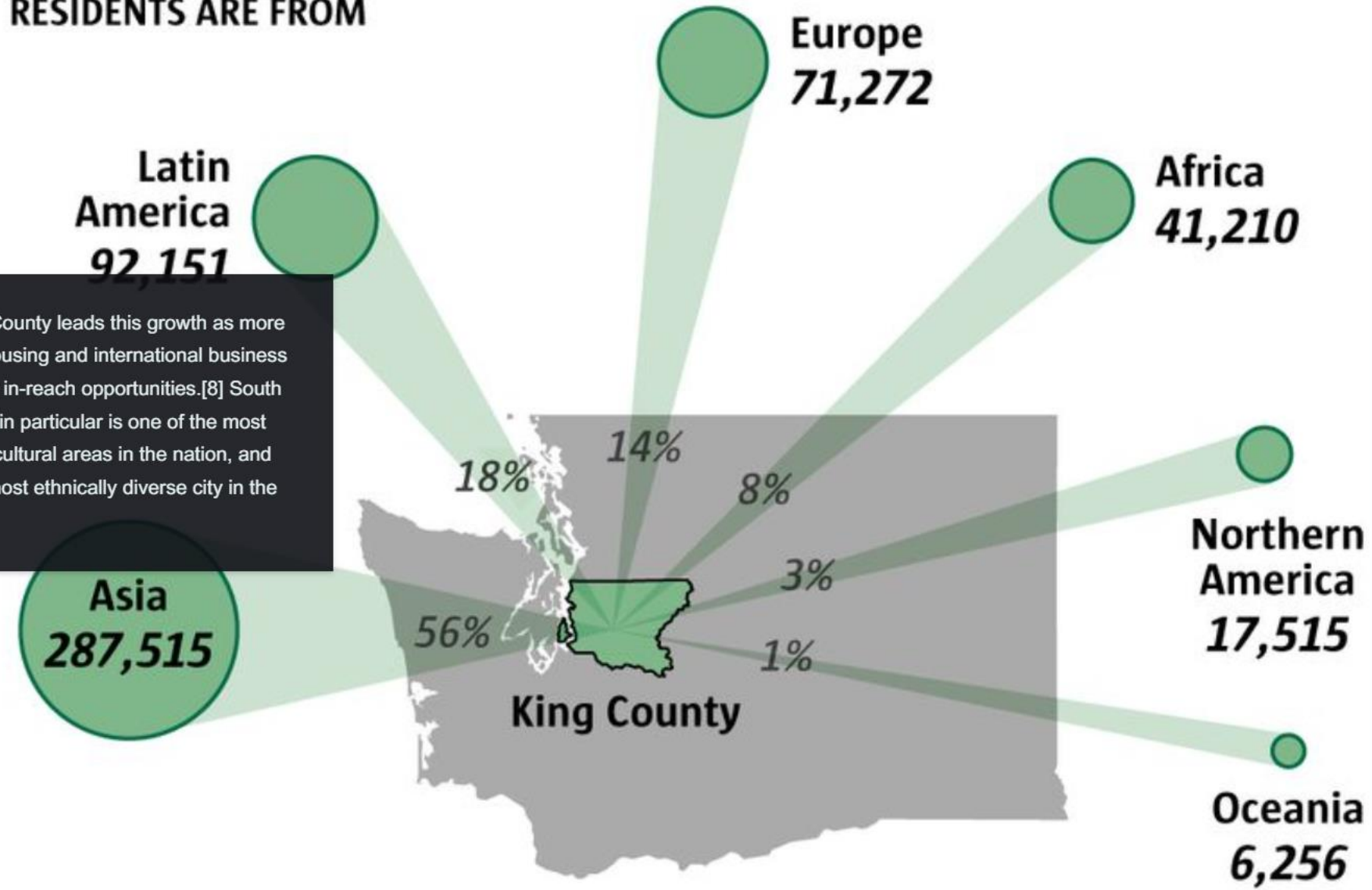
Today, King County is fast-growing, and is home to many immigrant and refugee communities.



Source: U.S. Census

EMILY M. ENG / THE SEATTLE TIMES

WHERE KING COUNTY FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS ARE FROM



South King County leads this growth as more affordable housing and international business districts offer in-reach opportunities.[8] South King County in particular is one of the most vibrant multicultural areas in the nation, and Kent is the most ethnically diverse city in the state.[9]

Source: U.S. Census

EMILY M. ENG / THE SEATTLE TIMES

WHERE KING COUNTY FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS ARE FROM

Latin America
92,151

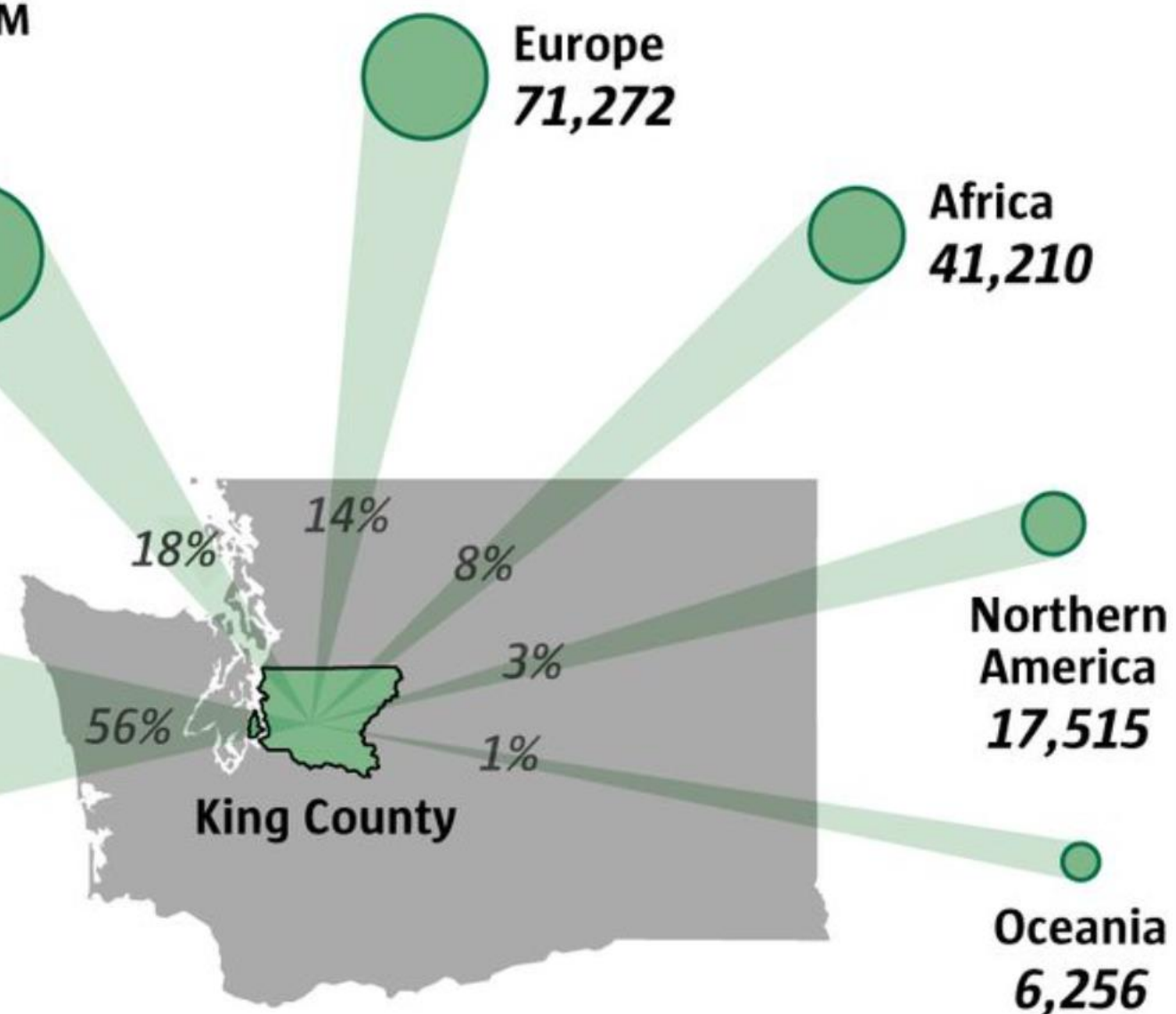
Europe
71,272

Africa
41,210

Northern America
17,515

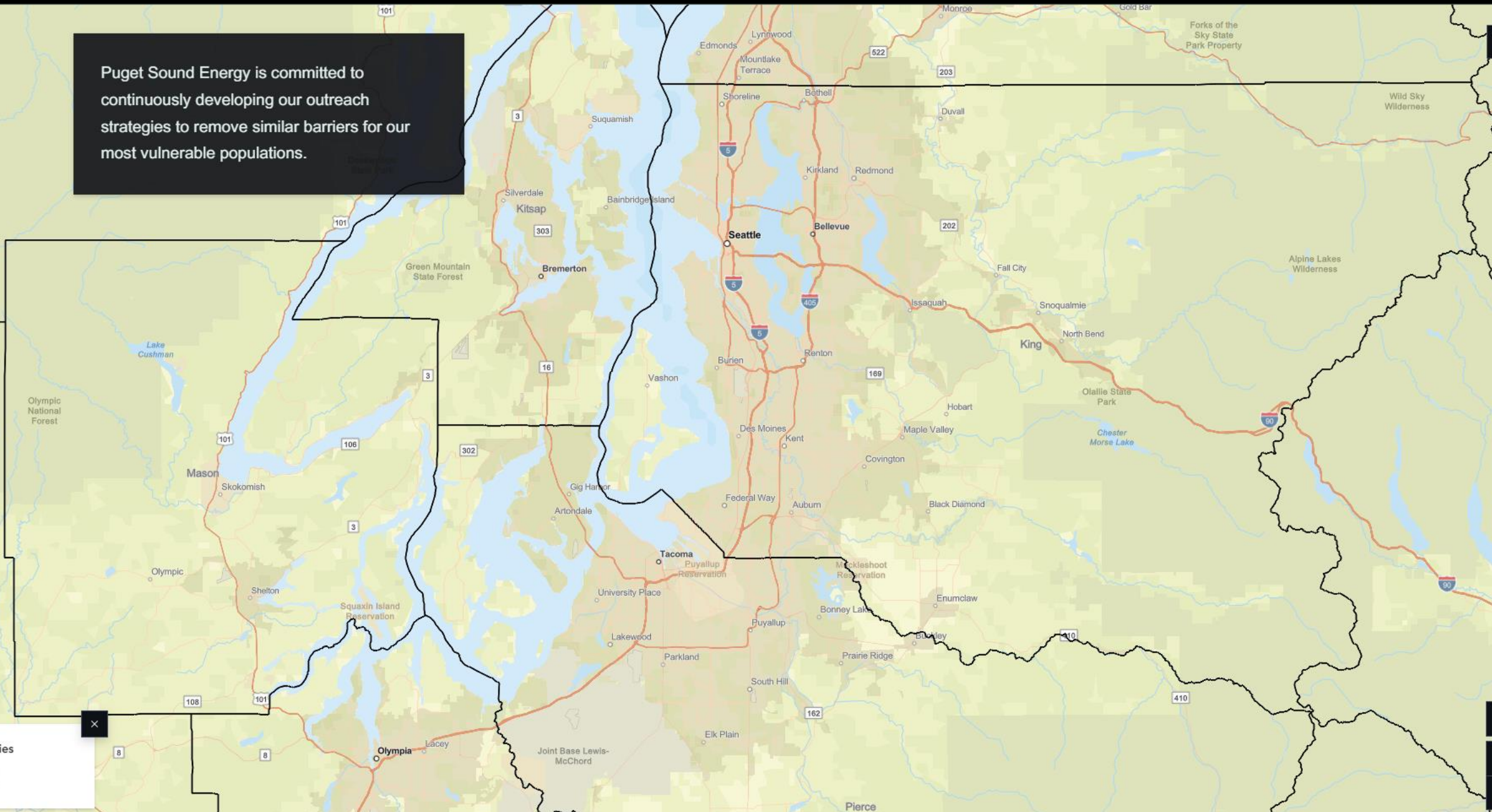
Asia
287,515

Oceania
6,256



Diverse communities often face access barriers, like language, health insurance, and affordability, to health care. Community health and wellness programs can help reduce these barriers by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services.[10]

Puget Sound Energy is committed to continuously developing our outreach strategies to remove similar barriers for our most vulnerable populations.



Counties

A small inset map of the state of Washington with a black rectangular box highlighting the Puget Sound region. The word "Counties" is written above the map.

Map navigation controls including a home button, a plus sign for zooming in, and a minus sign for zooming out.

Feedback we have received in listening sessions from customers and community organizations in Named Communities is helping to shape next steps.

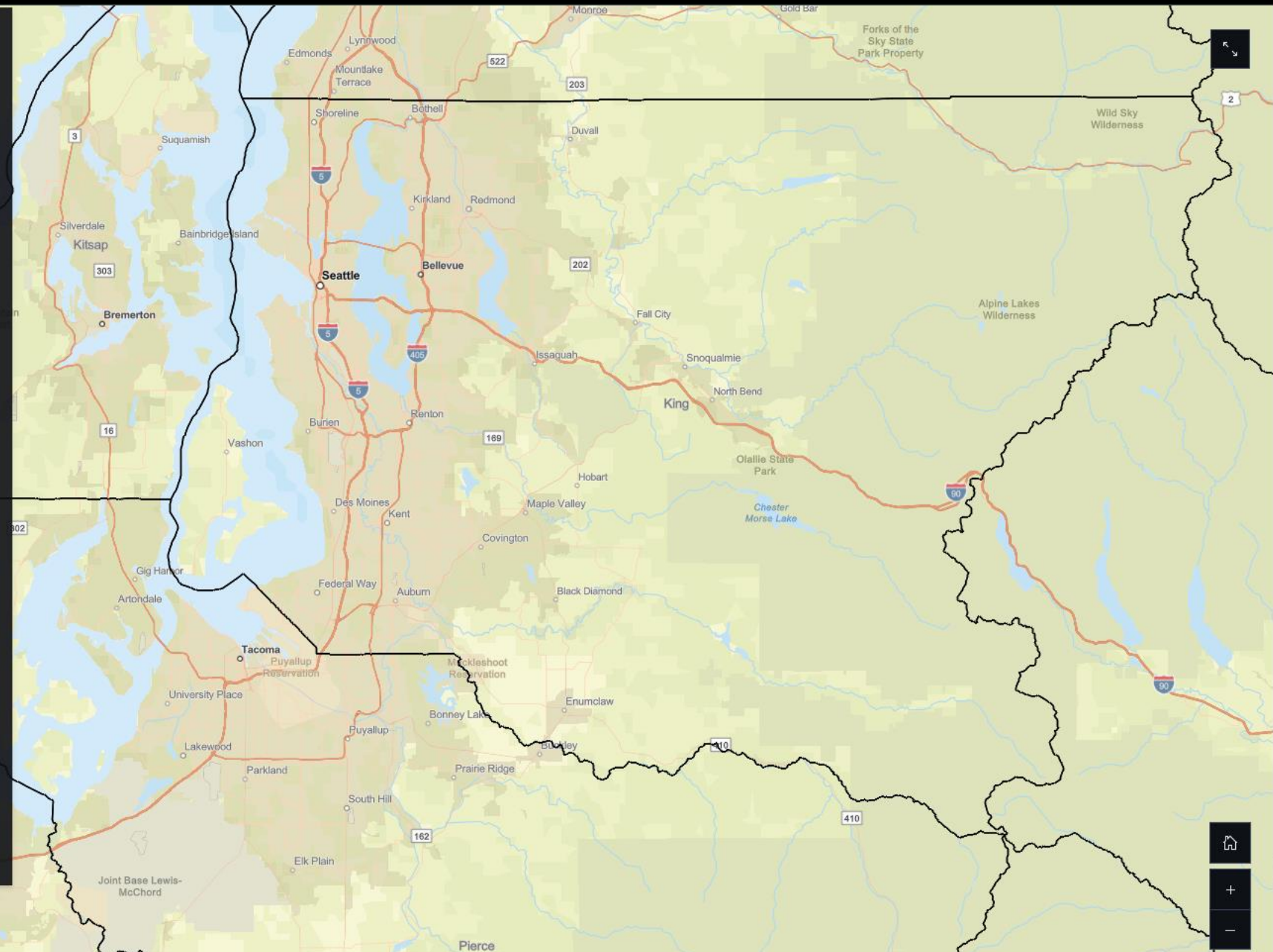
Counties



"Community organizations emphasized that customers most vulnerable to cost increases are also the most at risk of being left behind in the clean energy transition.

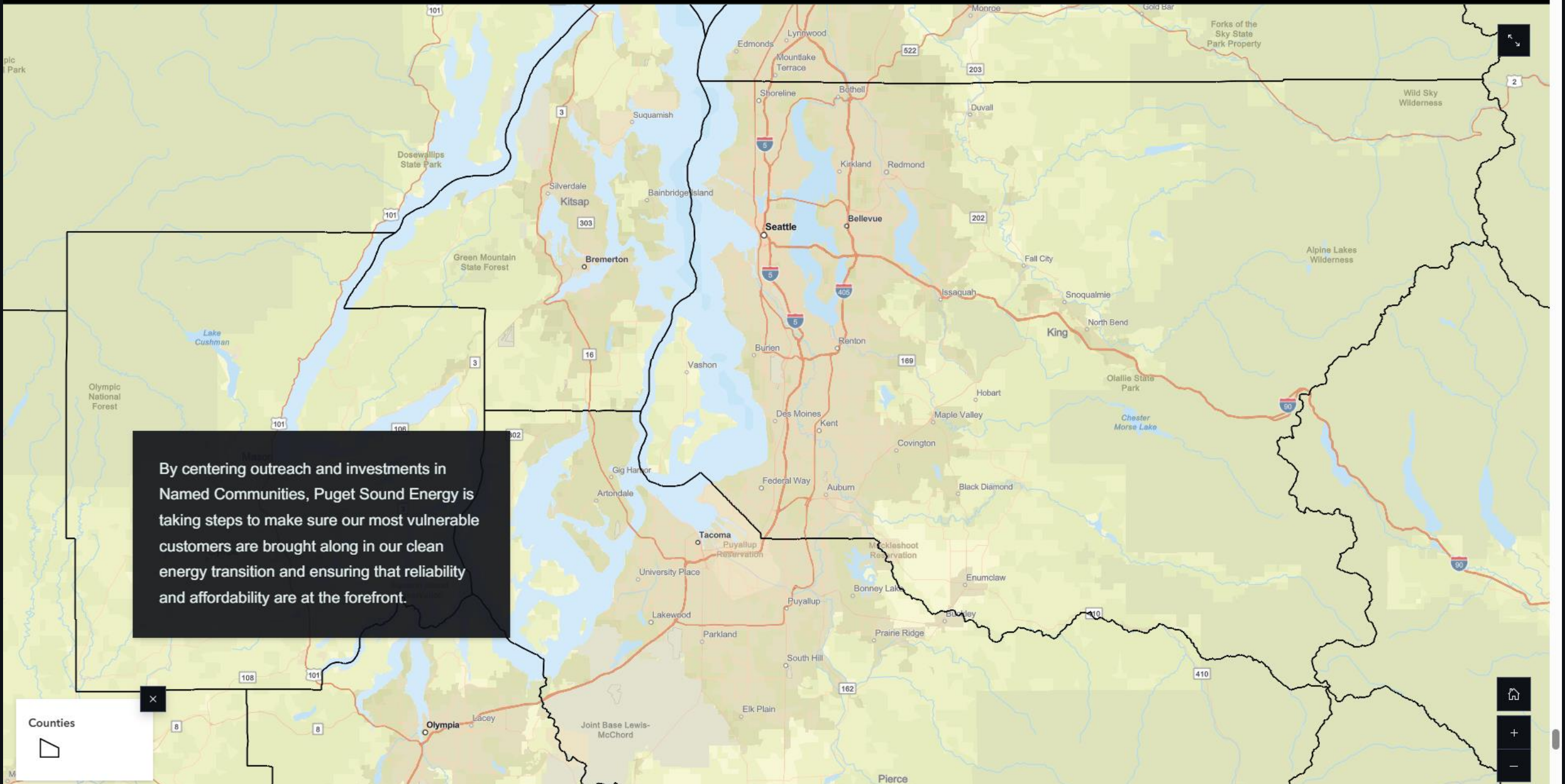
Renters or customers at risk of homelessness find it difficult to take ownership of their energy decisions due to program restrictions or navigating property-owner relationships. Additionally, without a baseline understanding of and education on clean energy, underserved customers will continue to question their part in the transition."

*Clean Energy Implementation Plan - 2023
Biennial Update*



Counties





By centering outreach and investments in Named Communities, Puget Sound Energy is taking steps to make sure our most vulnerable customers are brought along in our clean energy transition and ensuring that reliability and affordability are at the forefront.

Counties

References

- [Fair Housing Equity Assessment for the Central Puget Sound Region \(psrc.org\)](#)
- [New exhibit reveals how historic 'bird's-eye' maps helped WA sell itself | Crosscut](#)
- [White Supremacy and the Alien Land Laws of Washington State - Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project](#)
- [Leaving home behind: The fates of Japanese American houses during incarceration | National Museum of American History \(si.edu\)](#)
- "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/47.236/-122.596&city=tacoma-wa&area=D3>
- <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/poverty-hits-home-in-local-suburbs-like-s-king-county/>
- [New milestone in King County: Immigrant population tops 500,000 | The Seattle Times](#)
- [Seattle's Race and Segregation Story in Maps 1920-2019](#)
- [Confronting the myth of Seattle as a "white city" – The Seattle Globalist](#)
- [Kent ranks 7th as most ethnically diverse city in the nation | Kent Reporter](#)
- [Programs rooted in community culture improve access to services | The Seattle Times](#)
- [Contemporary History and Policies \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al.,
- Seattle Times
- Seattle Times
- James Gregory
- Sarah Stuteville
- Steve Hunter
- International Community Health Services
- Puget Sound Regional Council