

Chapter 10: Ethnic Diversity in Southeast Seattle

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The citizens of Seattle represent many ethnic backgrounds. White citizens predominate, but Blacks, Asians from a variety of ethnic origins, Hispanics, and Native Americans are also in evidence in both the neighborhoods and the political life of the city. According to the 1990 census, the city's population is 75.3 percent White, 11.8 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, 10.1 percent Black, 1.4 percent Native American, and 1.4 percent other (of these, 3.5 percent identify themselves as Hispanic). But population figures for the city as a whole must be examined carefully before conclusions about integration can be drawn.

We began our southeast Seattle case study with a degree of suspicion about the actual level of integration in the community. We were concerned that analyzing data at the census tract level might lead to an appearance of diversity that might not be well supported if smaller geographic aggregations were examined. Topology is important in Seattle. The census bureau defines census tracts everywhere in x,y (horizontal) space. However, in Seattle the z (vertical) dimension is of particular significance: The views afforded by hills and the availability of lakefront property in the southeast substantially affect property values. Thus census tracts in southeast Seattle are composed of areas with very high and very low property values.

Definition of Integration

If each ethnic element of Seattle's population were distributed evenly throughout Seattle, non-White residents would feel as if they were a small minority in each neighborhood. We measured the degree of integration in each subarea by comparing it with that in the city overall. We were concerned that these measures aggregated at the tract level could, at least in the case of Seattle, overrepresent the degree of interaction among different racial and/or ethnic groups. Since the primary research project team in Chicago had already identified statistically diverse tracts in southeast Seattle, we wanted to apply additional measures that assume that meaningful social interaction does not take place until a minority group is present in minimum numbers in a community.

This case study was written in 1996. We emphasized then that, although details change as new opportunities and crises arise, what has endured in southeast Seattle is a commitment to sustain and enhance the diversity of the community. Although Seattle now has a new mayor; political coalitions, community groups, and newsletters have come and gone; and new challenges have arisen, the nature of the changes and willingness to recalibrate specific activities as necessary to preserve diversity in this dynamic environment have only reaffirmed our basic conclusion.

We propose an alternative criterion: Unless members of a particular ethnic group make up at least some minimal proportion of the population of a subarea, they are said—for the purposes of our analysis—to be unrepresented as a group. For this analysis, we have chosen 20 percent as that critical minimal proportion. Thus we have defined an *integrated* subarea as one that contains at least 20 percent of two of the three major ethnic groups in Seattle (White, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Black). We have designated areas that contain at least 20 percent of all three groups as *integrated+*. Areas that contain more than 20 percent of only one of the major groups are designated by the name of that group.¹

Levels of Integration by Subarea

We were concerned that the apparent integration of southeast Seattle at the census tract level was an artifact of the boundaries of the tracts. Some boundaries cut across areas that include both high-priced view and lakefront housing as well as some of the lowest cost areas in the city. To understand the structure of housing diversity more fully, we analyzed census data at the block group and block level. Exhibit 1 shows the percentage of geographic areas that fall into various integration types by level of analysis. There is clearly some reduction in the level of integration within smaller geographic units. However, even at the block level there is a high degree of integration in southeast Seattle. More than 70 percent of the blocks are integrated according to our definition.

Exhibit 1

Ethnic Composition (Percentage) at Census Block and Block Group Levels

Type	Block	Block Group
Integrated+	13.9	22.9
Integrated	56.8	60.2
White	11.3	6.0
Black	7.4	6.0
Asian	10.6	4.8

With overall integration at 83.1 percent at the block group level and at 70.7 percent at the block level, integration is evident not only at the census tract level but also in most local neighborhoods in southeast Seattle.

Neighborhood amenities are a significant factor of the potential for neighborhood diversity, and perhaps the most crucial amenity in southeast Seattle is the nature of the topography. The topographic map in exhibit 2 shows southeast Seattle and surrounding areas, from Beacon Hill in the north to Rainier Beach in the south, including the high bluffs throughout southeast Seattle, with especially appealing views on the bluffs above Lake Washington. The close contour lines in exhibit 2 reflect the steep slopes in southeast

Seattle. Neighborhoods that have particularly attractive features, such as panoramic views or lakefronts that raise the cost of housing considerably, tend to be predominately White, even in southeast Seattle, but ethnic diversity is nevertheless apparent to a substantial degree.²

Exhibit 2

Topographic Map of Southeast Seattle

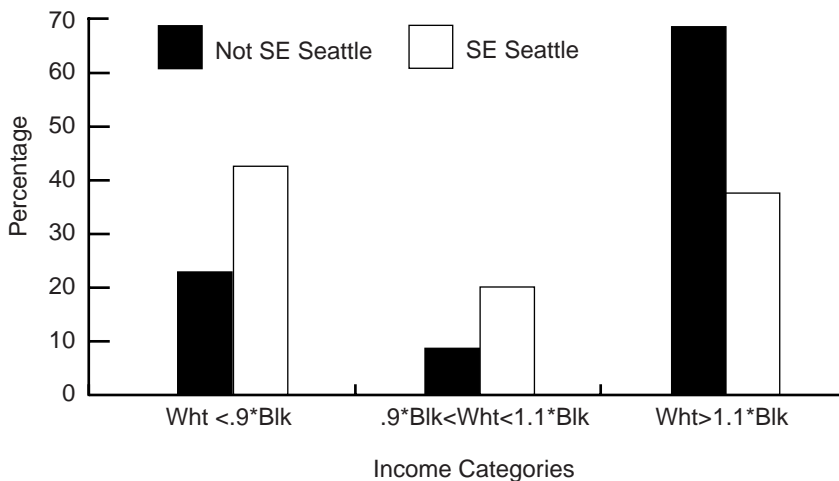


Diversity is apparent in southeast Seattle along other dimensions as well, and exhibit 3 illustrates another phenomenon that distinguishes southeast Seattle from many other neighborhoods. In southeast Seattle (designated *SE Seattle* on exhibit 3), income diversity and relative equity across ethnic groups accompany the housing diversity. We analyzed median household income by the ethnicity of the head of household. We found smaller differences in income by ethnicity in SE Seattle than in other parts of Seattle. Exhibit 3 shows the percentage of block groups in which the median household income of Whites is higher than, about equal to, or lower than the mean household income of Blacks. In SE Seattle, the percentage of block groups in which Black income exceeds White income is about the same as the percentage in which White income exceeds Black income. This is not the case in the rest of Seattle (designated *not SE Seattle* in exhibit 3). Although the median income of Whites is somewhat *lower* in SE Seattle than for Whites in the rest of the city, the median income for Blacks in SE Seattle is somewhat *higher* than for Blacks in the rest of the city. Similar patterns exist for other ethnic groups, except that the income of Asian-headed households tends to be higher than that for other types of households.

Thus the diversity of southeast Seattle seems to be real and worth understanding more fully. The rest of this case study will explore the context for this diversity and the nature of ongoing efforts to ensure its longevity.

Exhibit 3

Block Groups in Income Categories by Location*



*This example compares White and Black residents

Recent History

Seattle has experienced profound shifts in its ethnic makeup during the past several decades in ways that are central to this analysis. For example, in 1960 the city was 92 percent White and the other 8 percent was split nearly equally between African-Americans and Asians, with a scattering of Native Americans. By 1980 the city was 20 percent minority, with 3 percent of these minorities classified as Hispanic. Within a decade Seattle was 25 percent non-White, with 10 percent of the total population

classified as African-American. Most of the increase among minorities has come from various Asian populations. The White-flight phenomenon that affected so many U.S. inner cities in the late 1960s and early 1970s was evident in Seattle as well. Although the racial tensions of that era were evident throughout Seattle, one report concludes that “the South End suffered more directly [and that] negative public perceptions about the South End were formed at this time and remain deeply embedded.” (South End Seattle Community Organization, 1990.)

A history of activism and a sense that individuals and organized citizens can make a difference are other important aspects of the Seattle context.³ The transition from the Seattle politics described as “downright dull” in 1965 by Edward Banfield (though some thought that his perspective on Seattle was already dated at the time) to today’s citizen activism and participation is attributed by many observers to the protracted citizen-initiated efforts to revive Lake Washington.

By the mid-1950s, Lake Washington—a crucial border of southeast Seattle—was a smelly, polluted lake dying from the raw sewage being dumped directly into the lake. Citizen engagement led to the establishment of METRO (the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle) to coordinate sewer, transit, water, solid waste, park, and planning functions in the region. That success preceded several other successful citizen-led initiatives, including the Seattle World’s Fair of 1962 and the founding of Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), the Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound, and the Puget Consumer’s Cooperative (PCC), all thriving and nationally recognized businesses that began as “bottom-up” cooperative initiatives by Seattle citizens.

This case study focuses on the immense amount of time, effort, and organizational energy that currently goes into maintaining an essentially integrated community. The story of how such integration occurred in the first place is relatively uncomplicated. Asian-Americans came to Seattle in the early 1900s and settled in clusters in the Beacon Hill section of the city. African-Americans, who were present in Seattle even earlier, clustered in the central area. Both sectors lie to the northeast and northwest of the sector of Seattle that is the focus of this report.

A look at the topography of the city, both natural and constructed, tells most of the rest of the story. As in-migration of both ethnic communities increased their numbers, the direction of expansion for both communities has been to the south, blocked as they have been on the north (that is, north of Madison Street) by affluent housing, the Ship Canal, and the University of Washington; on the west by Interstate 5; and on the east by the gold coast strip of upscale homes and Lake Washington. The story of southeast Seattle, therefore, is in large measure the story of an area that became integrated by overspill but that has remained integrated because of the hard work of many people within and outside of the area who are committed to maintaining a diverse community.

People, Organizations, and Coalitions Pursue Diversity

Seattle seems to us to be distinguished not by the occasional efforts of a few individuals to make a difference on issues of concern to them but by the consistent energy put into these activities over time. The visibility of activities in support of diversity varies considerably, but the efforts seem to be characterized by an appropriate level of response to current issues: New, often innovative programs surface in response to changing realities. Activities are sufficiently but not excessively funded and rely heavily on voluntary efforts. The public sector cooperates in these efforts to a degree that is unique in our experience, and public officials in the city are held accountable for their demonstrated contributions to diversity. Examples are cited throughout this case study.

The literature on the redlining of American inner-city neighborhoods focuses on the importance of disinvestment in inner-city communities (see, for example, Bradford and Rubinowitz, 1975). The result is often a tipping point beyond which it is very difficult for a neighborhood to recover. In southeast Seattle, it is as if a positive tipping point operates to ensure the continuing ethnic vitality of the area. There seems to be a sufficient accumulation of concerned citizens across ethnic lines, so that local initiatives arise as necessary to keep these neighborhoods diverse.

Government Action: Accountability for Diversity in the Current City Administration

Seattle has a national reputation for its emphasis on and encouragement of diversity. For example, Seattle was one of the first cities in the Nation to offer full medical coverage for the partners of city employees, regardless of sexual orientation—a level of inclusiveness reflected in many of the region’s largest employers. Mayor Norman Rice, an African-American, was elected in 1989 and reelected in 1993 by a landslide despite the low percentage of African-Americans in the city; he enjoyed widespread support among all ethnic groups.

Under the current administration, a wide range of energetic efforts have been undertaken to ensure that diversity is taken seriously. The administration’s mission statement, which specifies an emphasis on making “our diverse city and the surrounding region an even better place to live, learn, work, and play,” highlights the following:

- “We will expect and promote diversity in the City’s workforce, boards, commissions, council, and neighborhood organizations.”
- “We will seek to empower individuals and neighborhoods to be responsible for the solutions to problems [that] affect them.”

In our interviews with city department leaders, including the head of the department of neighborhoods, the head of the neighborhood planning office, and employees in various departments, we were told that diversity is singled out in meetings with the mayor as an area in which he expects action.

As one agency head put it, “Norm sets a tone [that] is reflected in most departments.” This commitment is regularly reasserted to highly placed city employees. The mayor’s Accountability Contract with department heads, for example, specifies that these directors must detail the “activities/projects/collaborations you or your department will be part of to help ensure success for [the] Administration’s priority areas,” and efforts in pursuit of diversity are of particular significance.

Seattle’s distinction in this respect has been recognized. For example, Seattle won first place in National League of Cities’ Second Annual Cultural Diversity Award competition “for efforts to promote diversity in our workforce and among our citizens.” The criteria required entrants to explain:

- How their city enhanced quality of life in the community and improved equal opportunity and access to government services by minority populations.
- How their city increased citizen participation in government and community activities (*Mosaic*, 1995).

The phases of Seattle’s “Valuing and Managing Diversity Strategy” were identified by the city in its successful application for the NBC (National Broadcasting Company)-LEO City Cultural Diversity Award:

Phase I (1990)

- Outlined the roles and responsibilities of the mayor’s office, task force, department heads, and employees in developing and implementing diversity initiatives.
- Identified diversity as a priority initiative at cabinet meetings to integrate into city policy and operations.
- Developed outreach strategies to ensure that city services reach diverse groups of customers.
- Outlined steps to develop and implement a mandatory 2-day cultural diversity training for supervisors and managers.
- Established criteria for annual department and citywide diversity action plans.
- Established measures to enable the mayor to hold department heads accountable for their diversity activities.

Phase II (1993)

- Developed *Mosaic*, the diversity newsletter for the employees of the city of Seattle, which is published three times per year, to “explore diversity issues in the workplace and community.”
- Set up the annual Diversity Awards Ceremony to honor city employees “for their commitment to diversity.”
- Set up CIDINET—the Citywide Diversity Network—a coalition to share ideas across departmental lines.
- Established a mentoring program.
- Began to develop an employee mobility resource guide.
- Established racism-free zones and developed a more diverse membership through the department of neighborhoods, which assists community organizations.
- Developed mechanisms to advertise the emphasis on diversity.

At the first annual Diversity Awards Ceremony on January 12, 1994, then-Deputy Mayor Robert Watt said that the mayor is “proud of city employees who don’t just talk about diversity, but put our values into practice.” At the second annual Diversity Awards Ceremony in January 1995 on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday, Mayor Rice cited “every outreach program that provides education, training, and promotes inclusion and self respect—every community celebration that honors traditional and indigenous cultures—as proof positive that Dr. King’s dream is alive.”

Honorees were celebrated for diverse activities, including “bridging gaps between the city and the community,” developing “one of the most multicultural and gender-diverse apprenticeship programs in the country,” and researching and writing a “nationally recognized handbook and video entitled *Respect*.”

A variety of evidence demonstrates the reach of Seattle's public commitment to diversity. For example:

- The chief of police and deputy mayor both gave detailed testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Law and Justice in opposition to House Bill 1999, which was “designed to prohibit State and local governments from using affirmative action tools.”
- A City of Seattle pamphlet titled “Making the Business Case for Diversity” argues the importance of diverse workforces to “improve productivity (and) customer service, and the capacity to attract and retain employees.”
- Seattle distributes a diversity information packet that includes a fact sheet on diversity and a statement of the administration's vision.
- Multiethnic, multilingual posters on subjects including parking, health issues, water treatment, and recycling, are in evidence throughout the city.⁴
- Seattle sponsors citywide training on valuing and managing culture and diversity by and for city employees.

The Department of Neighborhoods

Of particular relevance to southeast Seattle's emphasis on diversity is the range of activities of Seattle's department of neighborhoods. Established in 1988, the department's major activities include a neighborhood planning and assistance program and a national award-winning neighborhood matching fund for neighborhood self-help projects. The department's mission statement says that it seeks to “preserve and enhance Seattle's diverse neighborhoods” and to “encourage neighborhoods to value diversity and be inclusive.” Internally the department seeks to “ensure that the department's workforce reflects the diversity of Seattle's communities.” One-half of the points for the neighborhood matching fund competitions are for “projects that involve diverse interests (for example, people of different income levels, people of different racial and ethnic groups, tenants, and homeowners).”⁵

Examples of southeast projects funded by the department of neighborhoods matching fund include the following:

- The Southend Tenants' Council, which seeks “to develop and expand three neighborhood tenant groups.”
- The Powerful Schools implementation project, which is implementing a grassroots plan for neighborhood and school collaboration to improve student performance and strengthen neighborhoods through the expanded use of school facilities.
- The Refugee Women's Center renovation project, whose goal is “to create a multiservice center for refugee women and their families.”
- The business improvement area implementation project, which works “with public agencies to organize beautification, security, and business development services in the southeast.”

Numerous other efforts by the department of neighborhoods demonstrate its emphasis on diversity. For example, the department organized and sponsored a series of workshops called “Bridging People, Building Power” to help community groups assess diversity-related issues in their neighborhoods. It provides neighborhood organizations with tangible self-assessment tools to help them assess their diversity status and plan outreach

strategies to underrepresented neighborhood populations, and it publishes a series of citizen-accessible handbooks to inspire and assist people with projects related to art, cultural heritage, playgrounds, school/neighborhood partnerships, and the environment (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 1995).

The department runs neighborhood service centers throughout the city. The director of the department thinks that the Southeast Neighborhood Service Center, in the heart of the community, has been its most effective tool for supporting diversity in southeast Seattle. The center serves a diverse customer base for utility payments and human service referrals; works closely with all community-based organizations, many representing people of color; and brings people together through district council activities for a variety of projects and issues.

Neighborhood Planning Office

In October 1994 the Seattle Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO) was established “to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the neighborhoods of the city, consistent with neighborhood goals and the citywide vision.” NPO supports communities that “come together to craft a desired improvement for their neighborhood and create a plan to achieve it.” NPO has 10 project managers and makes funds available to neighborhoods to hire planning experts as required. To help neighborhoods prepare their plans, NPO provides community maps, community profiles, and access to a “toolbox of resources to address issues ranging from planting trees to changing traffic patterns.”

NPO insists that the planning process be inclusive and community driven. The community’s organizing committee must be “composed of individuals representing a variety of interests,” and no group can be “excluded from the opportunity to participate.” The results of the outreach strategy must “demonstrate efforts to reach all stakeholders, document levels of involvement, and reflect balanced participation among stakeholders.”⁶

The head of NPO says that it focuses on “getting all stakeholders” in a neighborhood involved in the planning process, and that such a focus will naturally engage a diverse group of individuals. However, NPO is careful not to define any non-White population as a particular set of stakeholders.⁷

NPO does require efforts to engage different language and ethnic groups as part of the outreach portion of the planning process.⁸ The focus is on recognizing ethnic groups as members of the variety of stakeholder groups in the neighborhoods rather than as a single stakeholder group.⁹

Citizen Action and the Nonprofit Sector

The previous section focused on government initiatives to promote diversity. This section focuses on the activities of nongovernment organizations and individuals engaged in collective activities that sustain diversity in southeast Seattle. These examples are chosen from many activities to illustrate citizen-initiated efforts to celebrate, preserve, and enhance the diverse character of the southeast.¹⁰ Our descriptions illustrate ways in which the various sectors cooperate to leverage one another’s diversity-related activities.

Powerful Schools

Powerful Schools is an independent, nonprofit organization that brings four public elementary schools (Hawthorne, John Muir, Orca, and Whitworth) and two community-based organizations (Mount Baker Community Club and Columbia City Neighborhood Association) into a unique coalition.

Powerful Schools' mission is "to help foster a positive learning environment at school and at home and to build stronger neighborhoods." Powerful Schools works to build strong communities through strong schools using a variety of activities, including afterschool and evening classes, mentoring programs that link volunteers with specific children, and meetings between parents and school personnel. It also works to ensure that these vehicles will enable diverse parents to meet and mix with one another.

The coalition uses a variety of strategies to get neighborhoods actively involved in school life. It has won statewide recognition for its outstanding community partnerships and in 1995 received a "Golden Apple Award" for educational innovation from KCTS Public Television and the Washington State Superintendent of Public Education.

The South End Seattle Community Organization

Though now defunct, the South End Seattle Community Organization (SESCO), founded in 1975 as a "grassroots community organization ... concerned with the problems and quality of life of South Seattle," deserves mention for its emphasis on diversity and direct action and for the legacy it has left in the community and in the city. Modeled after the initiatives of Saul Alinsky, with an emphasis on grassroots activity, SESCO helped initiate efforts to unify low- and moderate-income residents. Its process incorporated research, civic engagement, and timely pressure on city and regional leaders (including mass demonstrations) to call attention to local needs and to insist on action to improve the community. When developing projects within the community, SESCO staff insisted on a viable and sustained ethnic mix. The former director of SESCO not only remains active in the community but also serves as the head of Seattle's department of neighborhoods.

North Beacon Hill

North Beacon Hill covers a 3.25-square-mile area bounded on the west by I-5, on the north by I-90, on the east by Rainier Avenue South and Martin Luther King, Jr., Way, and on the south by South Graham Street. North Beacon Hill consists of approximately 20,000 residents and reflects the integration evident in southeast Seattle (85.7 percent of the block groups and 70.4 percent of the blocks are integrated; the parts that are less integrated are almost entirely Asian and Pacific Islander, reflecting a neighborhood composition that has existed for decades).

The North Beacon Hill Action Plan (NBHAP) is a neighborhood planning effort funded in 1991 (Phase I) and 1993 (Phase II) through the matching fund program of the department of neighborhoods. Inclusion of a wide variety of people in any part of the planning effort was a challenge for NBHAP. In addition to the general diversity in the North Beacon Hill community, language is an issue that complicates communication. In about one-third of the households in the area, English is not the primary language spoken at home. As part of the planning effort, a communitywide survey was translated from English into five other languages and distributed to determine what people wanted for the area. Interpreters were provided at communitywide gatherings held to gather more information and to inform the public about ideas arising during the planning process.

The efforts to involve a cross-section of the North Beacon Hill area in neighborhood planning illustrates the difficulties found in every part of the city. The people who are willing to sit through long planning meetings, review technical analyses, and stay with the process over a long period of time tend to hold high-income jobs and have more formal education than the general public.

The NBHAP planning group recognized that a broad cross-section of the community would not participate directly and regularly in the planning process. Therefore the group emphasized initiating contacts with as many community groups and individuals in the community as possible to learn about community desires.

As with any such effort, no objective measure can indicate the level of the group's success in this endeavor. But its "Action Plan Background" report details an assessment of the history, existing conditions, concerns, and "shared vision" of the diverse citizens of North Beacon Hill to the extent that they could be captured by this process.

The Southeast Seattle Action Plan, 1991

The development of the Southeast Seattle Action Plan illustrates the cooperation of a wide variety of community organizations in a grassroots community planning effort to identify the "needs and priorities for revitalization." Described as a collaboration between the city and the community, the planning process incorporated a survey of 1,400 people and included 12 diverse southeast Seattle community organizations on its steering committee. Crime, image, disinvestment, housing, and transportation emerged through this process as problems needing attention, and this blueprint for the southeast identified and prioritized a variety of recommended responses, from simple, street-related capital improvements to an integrated strategy to capture public and private reinvestment in the area.

From the perspective of participants, the process was as important as the product. The involvement of diverse groups throughout the plan's development meant that the community held both the city and itself accountable for its implementation. The city responded to the plan with several actions funded through the 1991 Community Development Block Grant. Since the plan's approval by the Seattle City Council in 1991, the department of neighborhoods has been responsible for coordinating the production of annual interdepartmental work programs and progress reports keyed to the plan. The plan's highest priority, the construction of a new \$4.7 million recreation center in the Rainier/Genesee area, the largest and best-equipped in the city, was completed in 1996.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this major effort is that it was only one of several coordinated strategies to bring people of the community together to find ways to sustain the vitality of this area of city.

Seattle Foundation Neighbor-to-Neighbor Grants

The Neighbor-to-Neighbor program is designed expressly to promote the work of "resident-based" organizations in southeast Seattle, particularly projects initiated and completed by neighborhood residents, not government or social service agencies. Successful applicants receive grants of up to \$5,000 along with training and technical assistance. Initially funded in 1990 by the Mott Foundation, the Seattle Foundation sought and secured additional resources from local corporations to continue the effort once the Mott funding cycle ended. The formal criteria for selection follow:

- Applicants had to be resident-based organizations that work with predominantly lower income persons in southeast Seattle. Southeast Seattle was chosen to concentrate funding in one area and because it is "the most ethnically diverse" area in the city.
- Applicants had to have 501(c)(3) status or be sponsored by a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization.

- Applicants were to be “governed by residents of the affected area, and have a clear purpose [that] emphasizes community improvement through citizen involvement.”
- Projects had to be initiated and completed by neighborhood residents, not government or social services agencies.

Neighbor-to-Neighbor staff looked in particular for projects that would promote cooperation between organizations and have long-lasting, beneficial effects on the community. Although these criteria were taken seriously in deciding among applicants, the following distinctive features of the Seattle Foundation’s implementation of the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program may have been more important in the long run to the vitality of the neighborhood.

The enormous effort by staff was dedicated to becoming familiar with each applicant’s proposal. The staff actively sought out new groups and neighborhood leaders that were committed to local development,¹¹ and worked with them, often in many meetings over weeks or months, to develop application strategies before proposals were submitted—even for these small grants. As a result of their efforts, they became sufficiently acquainted with the relevant details of neighborhood life—and with the differences among the applicants—and understood that no single form of technical assistance was appropriate to all organizations.¹²

Four series of formal training sessions were held specifically to develop leadership skills of participants from southeast Seattle. Topics included recruiting leaders, running meetings, working in multicultural communities, and writing grants). Funded organizations were expected to attend, but invitations were sent to all applicants, whether or not their applications had been successful. Moreover, all sessions were open to all residents of southeast Seattle and were provided free of charge, in the neighborhood, with childcare and transportation assistance available as needed.

The Neighbor-to-Neighbor staff prepared general documents of value to neighborhood efforts. For example, their January 1994 pamphlet, “Resources for Southeast Seattle Neighborhood Empowerment Organizations,” details sources of public and private grants, identifies officials and media relevant to community efforts, and lists meeting places in the community. Neighbor-to-Neighbor staff and advisers also encouraged funded organizations to attend training sessions offered by the department of neighborhoods and arranged meetings with various public officials, including Mayor Rice. A representative list of funded projects follows:

- Powerful Schools: community outreach.
- Touchstones: youth leadership.
- King County Organizing Projects: social change activities related to youth and violence.
- Southeast Arts Council: involving community artists from various ethnic organizations in arts projects and working with representatives of 10 cultural organizations to photograph and exhibit celebrations characteristic of their group.
- Black Dollar Days: organizing Black-owned businesses for community celebration.
- Community Resource Center: providing local access to computers and copiers.
- Neighborhood House: leadership training in public housing.

- Mothers Against Police Harassment: training on how youth should conduct themselves when stopped by police.
- Rainier Valley Heritage Festival: development of leadership and positive relationships among different ethnic groups.
- Mutual Housing Cooperative of Southeast Seattle: working with Powerful Schools to encourage and support first-time homeowners.
- Esperanza para Las Mujeres: a housecleaning cooperative in the Hispanic community.
- Lao Highland Association: a school liaison/parent advocacy program to improve school experiences for Lao Highland youth.

Several of these projects received additional funding once Neighbor-to-Neighbor staff were persuaded of the continuing usefulness of the initiatives.

To its credit, success in the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program was not defined narrowly to require meeting the criteria under which the projects were funded. In fact, some of the most successful outcomes may have involved organizations that have since ceased to exist. Keeping in mind that the larger purpose was to create a dynamic that enhanced the local leadership, some of the most successful grants were those to unsuccessful organizations whose leaders later applied their skills to some other community activity.¹³

South East Effective Development (SEED)

SEED is a multifaceted, nonprofit community development corporation founded in 1975 “to revitalize the southeast Seattle community by creating effective partnerships and new working relationships among [the] public and private sector[s] and the community” and to “strive for housing preservation, business retention, commercial redevelopment and revitalization, cultural enhancement, and reinvestment in southeast Seattle.”

The planning and economic development program uses comprehensive zoning analysis and conceptual design planning to prioritize needed public and private improvements. The Southeast Action Plan, SEED’s redevelopment plan for revitalization of southeast Seattle with “strong community-based support and specific recommendations” was accepted by the city. Through this program, SEED works with local merchants, district councils, and businesses to “improve existing commercial areas and broaden the mix of retail and commercial enterprises available to residents.” SEED has assisted numerous businesses in locating or expanding in southeast Seattle. Recent projects representing an investment of more than \$40 million include an Eagle Hardware store, the Pepsi Cola Bottling company, a Safeway grocery store, and a Drug Emporium.¹⁴ SEED has also served as a partner with private developers in building Rainier Valley Square, the first new retail shopping center in this neighborhood in 20 years.

The housing program acquires affordable housing units in southeast Seattle, manages low- and moderate-income housing, sponsors mutual housing cooperatives, and assists other associations in the renovation and management of local housing.

The arts program produces an annual community arts schedule and manages the Rainier Valley Cultural Center, which SEED developed. It assists in producing the Rainier Valley Heritage Festival;¹⁵ manages a foundry to teach inner-city students metal fabrication; sponsors the Rainier Valley Children’s Theater; and provides staff for the Southeast Seattle Arts Council, “a catalyst for arts development and community revitalization” that includes more than 50 ethnically diverse resident artists.¹⁶

The capital improvement program is designed to provide young adults with onsite experience in construction projects and assist trainees in finding employment.

The Rainier Community Capital Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SEED, was formed to enhance the “physical, social, cultural, economic, and natural environment of southeast Seattle through a citizen-based community and neighborhood development program.” Since its incorporation in January 1993, the corporation has been a partner in the development of more than 100,000 square feet of commercial space and has created more than 200 permanent jobs.

The involvement of these organizations with the public sector remains central to the process of redevelopment in southeast Seattle. John Manning, a member of the Seattle City Council and a local business owner, reminds people of the “will from the residents to invest in this community” and that businesses developing in the southeast can benefit by noticing their “opportunity to tap what the community needs.” The extent to which a wide variety of actors work together to overcome obstacles, build on achievements, and develop increasing momentum in the community by taking advantage of diversity is compelling. Many owners of both large and small businesses say that the diversity of their clientele provides a substantial business opportunity.

SEED has been an important force on its own and a catalyst for local achievements. Its emphasis on the arts as well as business development and housing has been distinctive and enriching to the community.¹⁷

HomeSight

HomeSight is a community development corporation “best described as a community-based financing vehicle designed to produce up to 250 owner-occupied homes ... strategically located in central and southeast Seattle.” HomeSight’s aspiration is to “produce homes affordable to current residents of these largely minority neighborhoods and to attract new residents willing to invest.” (“HomeSight: Neighborhood Revitalization Through Affordable Homeownership” brochure.¹⁸ Public-sector assistance includes Nehemiah funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and city of Seattle and Washington State funds to enable first-time homebuyers to enter the housing market with minimal downpayment requirements. HomeSight works with prospective buyers for up to 3 years to help them prepare for the purchase of these homes. Its activities are overseen by a volunteer board of 10 private lenders, planners, and business owners, 8 of whom “currently live and/or own business in the target neighborhoods.”

A Territory Resource

This unique, Seattle-based foundation funds projects in Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Its public commitment is to support organizations attempting to build a society that is politically and economically democratic, equitable, and environmentally sound.¹⁹ Southeast Seattle-related community and cultural projects that have received recent funding from A Territory Resource include:

- King County Organizing Project, whose goal is “to build an organization that gives low-income people the tools and training to speak for themselves, and to identify and train leaders who will organize around issues in their communities.”
- Black Dollar Days task force, which is responsible for “building a multi-issue community organization committed to enabling African-Americans to build a united power base to address the root causes of poverty.”

- Southeast Asian Leadership Development project, a “part-time organizer to build a community council to act as a voice for low- and moderate-income southeast Asians and provide leadership development.”
- Brighton/Dunlap Community Council, which used seed money to begin the Rainier Valley Youth Choir Southeast Heritage Festival.

Citizen/Government Partnerships

The neighborhood matching fund of the Seattle department of neighborhoods and the Neighbor-to-Neighbor fund of the Seattle Foundation cooperated formally and informally to leverage one another’s activities, funding similar and complementary activities. Examples include P-Patch gardens—a community initiative to develop shared urban gardens, often reclaiming deteriorated plots of land—and Powerful Schools.

The Southeast District Council (SDC) began an effort to plan a series of actions. With an initial planning grant from the neighborhood matching fund, SDC launched a collaboration that included extensive opinion surveys and dozens of meetings designed to prioritize needs and reach consensus on what needed to be done to revitalize Rainier Valley.

On May 4, 1996, a community vision event occurred in Columbia City, in the heart of southeast Seattle. The event was sponsored primarily by the Columbia City Merchant’s Association with strong support from NPO and the department of neighborhoods. The merchant’s association used part of its neighborhood matching grant to hire a facilitator for the event.

The event began with a pancake breakfast in one of the local restaurants. More than 100 people attended, with more than 90 percent from the Columbia City neighborhood. The crowd was obviously diverse—by ethnicity, age, and income. The facilitator initiated a process for identifying topics of interest to the people in attendance. Ideas stated by attendees were pinned up on a board on one end of the room. Each person who contributed a topic was asked to lead a discussion and come up with an action plan to accomplish it. These small discussions were held in neighborhood places of business in volunteered space. The small groups reconvened to share ideas. The event ended with a concert given by a local singing group.

The event was advertised throughout the community using multilingual fliers and posters in an attempt to attract a wide variety of people.²⁰ The use of several languages in the advertisements probably made the event seem more accessible to a wide variety of community residents and successfully accomplished the objective of attracting a diverse group of people. Inviting ideas from all the participants fostered a sense of involvement and ownership in the process that is difficult to engender using more traditional group meeting formats.

The successful dynamic in southeast Seattle is not reflected in the activities of any individual, group, or sector of the community. Rather, the success of efforts to keep southeast Seattle vital and diverse is due to a subtle combination of formal and informal partnerships among people and groups that know the current needs and potential of the community. These actors are themselves firmly rooted in the neighborhood and remain so committed to making the southeast “work” that they can engage in appropriate steps to keep the community healthy.

Several criteria may be required to make this goal achievable. Among them:

- There must be a sufficient number of committed local people so that an active pool is always available. Indeed, perhaps the community itself must be small enough so that the necessary actors have an opportunity to work together.
- Their commitment must be sufficient to survive the inevitable difficulties that arise in any community.
- The individuals must be well-connected enough to secure resources as necessary.

Who Chooses To Live in Southeast Seattle?

People are attracted to the southeast for a variety of reasons. Some people with a wide range of choices, for example, choose to live in southeast properties “which can be improved, and which have excellent views.” One program from the KUOW-FM public radio series included the following comment:²¹

Among the many older homes is the occasional affordable fixer-upper with a view of the lake, mountains, or skyline.... In this part of town there are roughly an equal number of Blacks and Whites along with a mix of other racial and ethnic groups, all with a variety of income levels, making greater Mt. Baker one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Seattle.

This resulting gentrification of the neighborhoods is clearly a double-edged sword. Some people are concerned that the mixture brings together people who share too little in common. As one person remarked:

Whites may be concerned about planting trees and paving alleys and that kind of stuff. Sometimes with Black people there may be other issues, economic issues, maybe more like improving businesses. But maybe some of those White people don't frequent the Black businesses. They want to plant a tree but we have some more serious economic problems.

Said another:

My experience, not only in Mt. Baker but in the central area, too, is that when it comes to community activism and who's at meetings about land-use planning and other issues like that, the participants don't reflect the statistics of the neighborhood. I mean it's predominantly White, out of proportion to the neighborhood.... Some of the older African-Americans have felt resentful. They think people came in but it really wasn't real integration anyway.

Although driving up housing values inevitably closes off options for others, it also has led to an apparent turnaround in some pockets of the southeast:

If you have a nice house that you've had for 4 years and the house next to you is kind of derelict, you might welcome someone coming in and cleaning up the garbage or ... boarded-up windows.

Another person commented that:

We had a house on our street and it was purchased and fixed up, but it was left to the style to which it had originally been built. It's better now that it's fixed up. I don't think that on my street you can tell what color a person is by driving by. I think the

attitude when you come into a neighborhood and to live there and make your home there, that's different than if you're coming in to fix up and make a profit.

Nature of People Who Choose the Southeast

Southeast Seattle is palpably different from the rest of Seattle. Interracial couples are far more in evidence. Many languages are heard and foreign language signs are encountered everywhere. As one person noted, "The southeast may be as important for who chooses to be there, as [it is] for what is done through formal mechanisms. It's amazing how many activists live in the neighborhood."

Some people claim that diversity in the neighborhood just happens because of the activities that draw people together and because of the people who choose to move into and stay in the neighborhoods.

Southeast Seattle is not uniformly attractive. Many areas of the southeast have the feel of inner-city neighborhoods and are often perceived as such. One person said that his fiancée:

Looked at this house first.... I told her "we can't live in that neighborhood. It's too dangerous. It's just too hard to live there." I had a lot of baggage, I think, about this neighborhood.... When we first got here I used to take the bus to work, and a lot of times I'd be the only White passenger on the bus. Now I actually like the fact that I might be a minority in this neighborhood. And that's something that's, I think, hard to find in Seattle: where a White male is a minority.

Once they have settled in, complexities often arise. According to one resident:

People aren't frightened about differences here.... Ideally, it's nice to think that you can put a bunch of people together from different cultures and different backgrounds and they'll all come together. And they'll learn all these wonderful things about each other and they'll pass it along to their children and somewhere down the road everybody will be happy with each other. But realistically, people tend to pull to people who look like them, act like them, and think like them.

People Who Value Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Schools

Many people who choose to live in southeast Seattle were active in attempts to integrate more of Seattle through busing in the 1960s and have become equally active in resisting busing in the 1990s. They came to believe that, given the proportions of minorities in Seattle, the major impact of busing was to undermine the sense of community in already integrated neighborhoods. One resident said that in spite of its good intentions, busing undermined "much of the integration that made this neighborhood attractive. School-age kids were bused out of the area, integrating schools in other neighborhoods but making neighborhood-based integration work much more difficult."

Said another:

Busing didn't work. You know it just didn't. Look at Garfield High School, where the students or the young people in the community cannot go to the school that is right across the street or in the same neighborhood but going outside the community. It puts integration out there as a goal rather than creating relationships where you are.

The statistical evidence supports residents' claims of a disproportionate impact of busing programs on minority students—particularly on students in southeast Seattle. Substantially greater numbers (and even greater proportions) of African-Americans and Asians than Whites are bused to achieve desegregation in Seattle. And because the schools in the southeast are the only ones where enrollment exceeds maximum capacity, more students are bused out of southeast Seattle than are bused out of any other local schools in the city, with too few advantages for the bused students.²²

Many people come to the southeast seeking a sense of community: “More than anything else, the value of life in this neighborhood is the sense of neighborhood itself ... a sense which has been lost in white suburbia [with experiences like] playing cards on the porch up the street or finding a bag of Mrs. Frazier’s green beans on their doorstep.”

In a community that is already ethnically diverse, busing away from neighborhood schools may severely undercut the degree of family involvement in the community and in the schools. Writing generally about the impact of busing throughout Seattle, one school board member put it this way:

Mandatory busing failed to achieve its goals, not because of race or ethnic origin, but because busing takes the parent out of the child’s education. What happens with mandatory busing is that children are taken out of their neighborhoods and bused across the city. This causes the parents to be disengaged from their children’s educational activities and makes it virtually impossible for them to regain their involvement. (Kohn, 1996.)

People Who Seek Integration

Ethnic diversity in the community is a cherished value to many in southeast Seattle. But whether integration itself is an aspiration is hotly debated in the southeast, just as it is throughout the region and the Nation. For example, the principal of a southeast elementary school recently declared that:

Integration for me is not the goal anymore.... Just from a professional standpoint, I’m more interested in: Will my kids—will African-American kids—be able to compete in the workplace? At one point it was a “Let’s sit next to each other” and “We are the world” type of thing. I’m not concerned about that anymore.

Some people simply live in southeast Seattle and have little to do with their neighbors in this ethnically diverse setting. One public official whose own block is very diverse said his family has White neighbors who send their children to private school, shop on Mercer Island (a less diverse area outside southeast Seattle), and seem altogether uninvolved in community life. The principal quoted above expressed his frustration at people who fail to take advantage of opportunities in the neighborhood, including experiences of integration:

The man that bought that house right there sends his kids to another school. He lives right across the street. Now this is a nationally recognized school, why wouldn’t you send your kid [there]? He gets up in the morning; they get in their car and drive their daughter to school. [So if their concern is integration, they should] send their kids over to a school that is ethnically mixed. They’re in a neighborhood that is, but they send their kids somewhere else.

Nevertheless, the southeast still draws people who want an integrating experience for themselves and for their children. “I think it’s good for our children to be around different

types of people in this community,” said one resident, “and to go to school with different people. Just that background is good to have.”

Integration doesn’t seem to come naturally—in Seattle or anywhere else in the United States. Throughout the southeast, church congregations are mostly single race, with the exception of the geographically based Catholic churches. At the local high schools, students still seem to cluster largely by race.

In general, children’s activities and the range of opportunities at local schools are seen as important to the integration of the southeast. Sports provide a particularly fertile opportunity for integration. The Rainier Valley Little League, for example, has more than 500 active members and is well integrated. Practice sessions, games, and tournaments offer opportunities not only for children to mix, but also for informal conversations among parents.

One Realtor active in the community stated that “southeast Seattle does have the highest percentage of children of anywhere in the city, and a lot of people are looking for good neighborhood schools.”

Schools provide opportunities for activists to encourage people to mix across ethnic lines: One commentator noted that the diversity of the neighborhood is evident at a nightly community computer laboratory at Hawthorne Elementary School—a project of Powerful Schools.

At the multiethnic dinner at Maple Elementary on Beacon Hill, people are encouraged to bring food from their culture. This yearly event is always very well attended, with approximately five times the draw of most evening school events. Community centers also regularly draw a mix of young people. The Seattle parks department has had a persistent emphasis on diversity.

But integration among children does not necessarily lead to integration among adults: “Unfortunately, there isn’t as much interaction between the adults as you see with the children, and I’m not sure how that can happen.”

Others point out the advantage of living in communities in which one can choose whether to integrate with others: “Sometimes it’s a good thing for people to get together and do things together, and then sometimes it’s a good thing for people to be with their own group of people and of what they need to do within that group to better themselves.”

People and Organizations Engaged in Deliberate Community-Building Activities

Regardless of whether integration is sought, living together in a healthy community is desired by people throughout the area. One representative from the Mutual Partnerships Coalition, a group committed to making diverse communities work, said recently that:

I almost have a problem with the word “integrated.” I think that it has been a very misused word, and very misunderstood. When I look at a neighborhood, I don’t look at it from the perspective of integration. That in itself sets up a lot of boundaries, because the goal becomes trying to become integrated rather than trying to develop relationships. I think throughout the whole civil rights movement the issue was not necessarily integration, it was about having equal access, about choice, about education, about economic development. So for me, a neighborhood—I see it from the

perspective of people who have things in common regardless of where they're coming from [or] what their ethnic background might be. But they're working toward building a healthy community through healthy relationships. And healthy means when people come together because they care about each other, and they care what's happening in their neighborhood, on their streets, and to each other.

People in the southeast recognized that active participation in neighborhood life would continue to be required if this diverse area were to thrive as a community. As a KUOW-FM commentator said: "Living together is the first step; getting together is the next step."

How To Maintain a Community

The easiest thing to say is "hello" to a neighbor—to talk across the fence, to get to know who lives right next door or for that matter upstairs or downstairs. Out of those stories shared informally comes the knowledge of some things in common. From that come things of interest that people can start to connect and work together on, whether it is the traffic issue or litter, and they can start forming close-knit groups.

Baking cookies for neighbors, taking time to play with the small children on the street, just saying hello, sweeping somebody's sidewalk for them, or bringing in their mail when they are out of town are things that bring out a sense of community. Because people are busy and may not take time for their neighbors, it is more difficult to establish a sense of community.

Currently, Seattle seems to have attained the mix of activists, organizations, relationships, and publicly and privately supported programs that together provide the necessary infrastructure for healthy communities, including the southeast.

Authors

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This chapter of Cityscape is dedicated to the memory of one of its authors, Professor Cy Ulberg of the University of Washington GSPA. In addition to teaching city planning and transportation policy at GSPA, Dr. Ulberg was a longtime researcher and community activist. His contributions to local planning and transportation policy in the Puget Sound region of Washington improved the effectiveness of highway design and public transportation in the region.

Notes

1. Note that this means that the group could make up as little as 60 percent of the population, and even less if it includes a substantial proportion of Native American or other residents.
2. Economic diversity is also evident throughout southeast Seattle, though not to the same extent as ethnic diversity.
3. The Industrial Workers of the World—the Wobblies—found “particularly fertile ground” in the early 20th century in the Northwest. Dick Lilly, neighborhoods reporter for the *Seattle Times* (in “Citizen Activism in Seattle: What’s Next?” n.d.), considers them to be “among Seattle’s earliest citizen activists.”
4. One of the first surprises for many visitors to Seattle is that the announcements on the Sea-Tac Airport subway train are repeated in several languages; the languages change to reflect the origin of incoming planes.
5. One employee says that the department of neighborhoods “sees our task as bringing people together. We work hard at diversity, not only in the southeast, but also in Madrona, Leschi, and other neighborhoods.” Dick Lilly of the *Seattle Times* has suggested that the neighborhood matching fund represents a remarkable change in how public money is distributed. There are virtually no strings attached and, to a large extent, no intermediary. The matching fund recognizes that neighborhoods know best what they need.
6. An outreach handbook published by NPO is an important resource for working with ethnic minorities, non-English-speaking groups, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and other often disenfranchised populations.
7. To some extent this is regarded as a matter of respect. In addition, diversity is required as part of the process in every community, and whether that involves a range of ethnicities or some other criteria (for example, income or sexual orientation) depends on the particular neighborhood.
8. The office provides translation services for neighborhood planning efforts.
9. Concern for reaching Seattle’s diverse population is evident in various forms in many other city agencies. For example, multilingual brochures from public agencies are produced in various languages that include Chinese, English, Korean, Lao, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.
10. Other institutional involvements deserve exploration as well, for their obvious and subtle influences on diversity. For example, churches have had no visible role in maintaining integration, if integration is measured by the degree to which churches are racially and ethnically integrated in membership. The latter has been the traditional way of examining the question of integration in churches; it may well be an inept or even illusory way of doing so. But perhaps a far better measure of the role of churches in this regard is to ask which of their activities, presence, or influence contributes to maintaining the stability and attractiveness of a community that, in turn, becomes or remains a viable or desirable place to live? Do churches deal with underlying problems in a community (for example, with afterschool and youth center programs, daycare services, or care of the homeless and the temporarily dispossessed) that might, if unattended, turn into delinquency,

vagrancy, or other problems? Do church members develop skills and an interest in community building and get involved with community organizations? These are issues for further exploration.

11. An explicit emphasis here was on identifying groups that were often so small or marginal that they did not have 501(c)(3) status. This emphasis was contested by some well-established groups that believed funding should have been given to them based on their track record and, perhaps, allocated by them to other, small groups.
12. Our own experience with Neighbor-to-Neighbor leaves us uncomfortable with trying to describe general principles for others to follow. We believe that the enormous talent, sensitivity, and dedication of the individual staff was crucial to the success of Neighbor-to-Neighbor and cannot be readily transmitted to other programs.
13. Note our earlier comments about SESCO, whose influence is deeply felt even though the organization is gone. Especially in cases such as the Neighbor-to-Neighbor project, of which the purpose is to identify and enhance local talent rather than to ensure the survival of specific organizations, fully assessing the ripple effects and the long-term value of particular interventions becomes complex and intriguing.
14. To the surprise of the business owners themselves, some of the chain stores have found that their southeast Seattle branches, with goods appealing to a wide variety of people with various financial circumstances and cultural interests, are among their most profitable.
15. The Rainier Valley Heritage Festival (particularly through the efforts of Darla Morton) is one of several projects of the Rainier Chamber of Commerce, which is working aggressively to bring new businesses into the Rainier Valley. The Rainier Chamber is well known for its activism, and the way its members “really get involved in the community” is described by Chamber president Larry Vinson as “unique.”
16. The Children’s Theater has 40 or more students aged 8 to 14 in each class.
17. Students and faculty at the University of Washington Business School recently finished a video for SEED, designed to provide them with a tool for marketing the area to a wider array of businesses and developers. An initial video was successful enough to attract additional resources from the Seattle Chamber of Commerce for a more polished effort. The video features not only business development achievements in the southeast but also initiatives such as the Rose Project to plant 14,000 roses throughout the Rainier Valley.
18. The brochure is available from HomeSight, 3405 South Alaska Street, Seattle, WA 98118.
19. More information about A Territory Resource Foundation can be found on the Web at www.atrfoundation.org.
20. Other strategies to contend with specific issues demonstrate the community’s level of commitment to attaining true diversity. For example, in an attempt to ensure that the African-American community was well represented, an African-American

children's choir was featured and the parents of all choir members were individually invited to come to hear their children perform.

21. Several quotes in this section are excerpted from the extensive KUOW–FM series on “Segregated Seattle,” which was broadcast in 1995. Tapes are available from KUOW Public Radio, Box 353750, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.
22. For a thorough analysis of the history and consequences of busing for desegregation, see Laura Kohn, *Priority Shift: The Fate of Mandatory Busing for School Desegregation in Seattle and the Nation*, Institute for Public Policy and Management, University of Washington, March, 1996.

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