

# Thriving in Place

VISIONS FOR  
Community Stewardship  
Across King County

## STORIES FEATURING

Congolose Integration Network

Friendly Hmong Farms

Na'ah Illahee Fund

The PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust

sləpələbəx™





## We are on Indigenous Land

In the Puget Sound Region, we are on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish Nations, including the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Suquamish, Puyallup, and Tulalip Tribes. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the diverse Coast Salish people, many of whom still fight for Federal recognition, who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and who continue to steward this land today in resistance to colonization.

We are grateful for the wisdom and leadership of Indigenous, Black and Brown people who have informed this document, directly and indirectly.

## Introduction: What is the King County Equitable Development Initiative?

Displacement is a countywide problem. Over the last decades, we have seen displacement pressures increase across the county as people who could formerly afford Seattle have been pushed out to the suburbs, as light-rail expansion has made areas across the county more attractive, and as real estate speculators have caused an increase in the price of land and housing exponentially.

Black and Indigenous communities are at highest risk across the County, and the risk of displacement is most acute in unincorporated King County. More than half of Black households in unincorporated King County are cost burdened, meaning they pay over a third of their income on rent, and this includes 25% who are severely cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 50% of their income on rent. BIPOC households are twice as likely as White households to be housing cost burdened in Skyway-West Hill and North Highline. Among King County's low-income households today, owning a home is more than twice as common for Whites and Asians (on average) than everyone else.

To withstand change and avoid displacement, communities need to be rooted. BIPOC communities across King County are holding the seeds—bold visions for community stewarded, permanently affordable housing, cultural, and farming projects—which would create those roots. But they need the resources that would make it possible for these seeds to grow. With centuries of policies resulting in forced displacement, underinvestment and broken promises, the County owes these resources to BIPOC communities.

King County Equitable Development Initiative (KCEDI) is a government-wide initiative that would change how King County orients toward solving the displacement crisis by prioritizing equitable development across programs and departments and resourcing historically underinvested communities most at risk for displacement to lead development in their communities.

KCEDI was born in 2022 out of a coalition of over 40 BIPOC led organizations across King County, some of whom engaged in deep learning about community led real estate. The Initiative draws inspiration from the program of the same name in the city of Seattle which has moved over \$100 million into BIPOC communities to ground and stabilize their communities as they face high risk of displacement. Seattle EDI has funded over 75 projects across the city led by and for BIPOC and other impacted communities.

A KCEDI would prioritize projects in unincorporated King County. Projects like Skyway Coalition’s Brooks Village and White Center CDA’s White Center HUB demonstrate that when the County actually invests in community-led solutions we make inroads into the problem of displacement. In this booklet, we highlight three stories from across the County: Congolese Integration Network, the NW BIPOC Farmland Trust, and the Na’ah Ilahee Fund. These stories show the great need to support equitable development and root BIPOC communities in place in every district in the county. For every project we’ve documented in these stories, there are countless others.

Across King County, BIPOC communities are seeding equitable development projects in urban communities and rural communities. They are seeding housing, cultural, community centers, agricultural and conservation projects. The stories we’ve included showcase the vision, determination, and challenges these projects face and how a KCEDI would help them overcome those challenges. With a well-funded King County EDI, their projects can bloom.

**A KCEDI would...**

**1**

Align departments and programs around equitable development values and increase coordination to prioritize equitable development projects

**2**

Provide deeply needed capacity building dollars to BIPOC communities and other impacted communities seeking to lead community wealth building in their neighborhoods

**3**

Grant robust land acquisition funds to impacted communities to purchase land now before it is unavailable or completely out of reach

**4**

Provide community and project-centered staff to support projects through fund application and permit application processes

## King County Coalition Partners & Supporters

- African Community Housing and Development (ACHD)
- Africatown Center For Education And Innovation
- Al-Noor Islamic Center
- Asian Counseling And Referral Service
- Black and Tan Hall
- Black Dot Underground
- Cham Refugee Community
- Chief Seattle Club
- Comunidad Latina de Vashon
- Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition
- Duwamish Valley Affordable Housing Coalition
- Eastside for All
- Equity In Education Coalition
- Eritrean Community Center
- FAME-Equity Alliance of Washington
- Friendly Hmong Farms
- Friends of Little Saigon
- Futurewise
- Lake City Collective
- Global to Local
- Got Green
- Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County
- Interlm CDA
- Khmer Community of Seattle King County
- Kidane, Haregu
- Living Well Kent
- Multicultural Community Coalition
- Na’ah Ilahee Fund - E’lip Tilikum Conservancy
- PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust
- Puget Sound Sage
- Rainier Beach Action Coalition
- Skyway Coalition
- Somali Health Board
- Sustainable Seattle
- Tenants Union Of Washington State
- The Church Council Of Greater Seattle
- The Rhapsody Project
- Wakulima USA
- Washington State Coalition of African Community Leaders
- White Center CDA
- Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience
- yehaw Indigenous Creatives Collective

# Welcoming Refugees in Washington

Congolese Integration Network  
SeaTac, WA



## THE VISION

To establish a Welcoming and Healing Center in SeaTac for refugees that would have a dedicated space for healing circles, a place for youth to convene and learn English, a space for community events for people to gather and share food, a business center to learn job skills, an early learning center and daycare, a computer lab, and even a community garden.

Since their founding in 2016, the Congolese Integration Network (CIN) has centered their work to create a sense of belonging for refugees navigating the resettlement process. Floribert Mubalama, the founder of CIN recounts his own experience within the refugee community, “I noticed how many people felt isolated like I did, and this isolation affected so many aspects in their lives. How can you find housing when you’re traumatized from war and violence? How can you find a job and maintain it? How can you support your family?” CIN’s programs focus on ways refugees can have a successful integration into American society, from career coaching, tenant rights education, ESL tutoring and supporting youth through the public school system, to healing circles where families can collectively process their trauma. To date, their staff speaks a total of 12 languages and serves over 2,000 refugees and immigrants from across the regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

“The way conventional resettlement works is the government gives you food and housing, and after 90 days you’re supposed to continue on your own,” says Angela Ngiangi, CIN’s Fund Developer & Data Manager. “But when you’re serving people who came from refugee camps—some of them were even born there—that’s all they know. We sometimes have to teach people how to clean their homes, how to flush the toilet, how to do laundry, how to turn on the lights. When you’re helping someone who came from a country that doesn’t speak English, which is most of us, they need more than three months to resettle.”

## The Congolese Integration Network Anchors Refugees who face a Rising Risk of Additional Displacement

As clients settle into new lives, the fear of losing their homes due to high housing costs and moving further away from community is prevalent now more than ever. For a lot of immigrants in Washington, SeaTac is the first place they see as they step off the plane. It's where they get their first jobs, put their children into schools and rent their first homes. But over the years, King County's high housing costs have pushed immigrant communities further away, with some experiencing sudden rent hikes and evictions. Angela has had the same experience as many of her clients. She lived in Des Moines, close to SeaTac, for most of her life in the United States until it became unaffordable and her family was forced to move to Pierce County. But she says her cultural ties remain in SeaTac. "I go to work here; my place of worship is here. My community spaces are still here." As a result, six days out of the week, she makes a 45-minute commute to and from her current home to SeaTac.

CIN's proximity to SeaTac Airport is essential to their work. "Two weeks ago, we received a family that came from a refugee camp. We picked them up from the airport, prepared them a cultural meal, helped their kids enroll in school, took the family to DSHS," says Françoise Milinganyo, CIN's Operations/HR Director. "When you're coming into a new place, it makes a world of difference to see that someone is there to make you feel welcome, to know that someone has your back."

Lack of affordability has gotten so bad that even the organization fears being displaced themselves. CIN currently rents their office space in SeaTac and constantly worries about increasing rent prices. The landlord also insists that noise must be kept to a minimum, something that is hard to do when the work consists of hosting families with children and throwing community gatherings. "As a grassroots organization embedded in the community, what would happen if today we just had to take up and leave? Who knows if we're going to go to a place that's going to be accessible to the people we're serving, keeping in mind that they don't have access to a car most of the time," says Angela. Over the years the client base has also grown to the point where their current spaces can no longer hold people to host training courses and must rent other spaces for events.

"We have already witnessed our communities getting priced out of South King County and moving to Tacoma, Everett, and even out of the state. Land ownership is vital to our stability. Our organization is helping to identify community needs and we are developing effective solutions, but without owning land where people can be welcomed, healed, and supported, they remain vulnerable to displacement," says Floribert.

“

I noticed how many people felt isolated like I did, and this isolation affected so many aspects in their lives. How can you find housing when you're traumatized from war and violence? How can you find a job and maintain it? How can you support your family?”

Floribert Mubalama  
Founder, Congolese Integration Network



Left to right: Françoise Milinganyo, Floribert Mubalama, Angela Ngiangi Diansasila



CIN's Welcoming and Healing Center hopes to stay in SeaTac to serve refugees who have made South King County their new home. SeaTac is the place where many immigrants and refugees arrive, and often times it's where they get their first jobs, put their children into schools and rent their first homes.

## CIN wants to Permanently Steward land and a Healing Center for Refugees that can Withstand Displacement

CIN wants to prevent displacement by acquiring land and building a permanent Welcoming and Healing Center for all refugees across the state. "Despite the fact that immigrant and refugee resettlement is one of the values that this country has upheld for generations, there has never been a welcoming space in Washington where staff not only can speak the languages of refugees, but also have the cultural competencies and lived experiences that people are coming in with." CIN seeks to fill that gap through the creation of a Welcoming and Healing Center that anchors refugee communities who have made SeaTac, as well as the South King County area, their new home.

The Center will have a dedicated space for healing circles, a place for youth to convene and learn English, a space for community events for people to gather and share food, a business center to learn job skills, an early learning center and daycare, a computer lab, and even a community garden. It will also create permanent affordable housing to welcome incoming refugees and anyone seeking shelter, like those fleeing from domestic violence.

The development project will expand on existing programs to serve more refugees across the state, as well as make space for programs the community has advocated for. "Everything we do at CIN is community-informed," says Angela. "We meet clients where they are because integration looks different for everybody."

"We need a space where we can support refugees holistically and effectively," says Francoise. "The Welcoming and Healing Center will be a place for people not just to get help in finding jobs or learning English, but to receive the healing needed because they have people who understand them and the trauma they're carrying. They can receive the services according to who they are and where they're coming from." With this Welcoming and Healing Center, the organization hopes to leave a legacy of resilience as the pathfinders for refugees and immigrants who have strived despite adversity. They envision CIN as a model that can be adapted to other states around the country.

A King County Equitable Development Initiative could make a permanent home for Congolese refugees possible.

### How can King County EDI support this vision?

CIN currently has a space in mind for the Center but not the funds to acquire it, which is why they're excited about a future Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) in King County. An EDI is the only potential source of funding for community land acquisition that combines multiple uses, including non-profit space, cultural celebration space, recreation, and affordable housing. "This initiative empowers the citizens of South King County, both those who are new and those who have been here. We urge the council members and the executive of King County to recognize the critical need for funding for an Equitable Development Initiative as it directly supports the stability and growth of our communities."

Floribert says he dreams of a future where most refugees and immigrants have a place where they feel genuinely welcome, can access all essential services, and gain stability. "Our work today is laying the foundation for the next generation of leaders who will emerge, guided and supported by this sense of belonging. By bringing people together, we aim to create a stronger, more resilient community that fearlessly advocates for its needs and doesn't shy away from seeking change."



CIN offers a diversity of youth programs from homework help to soccer.



A staff meeting at Congolese Integration Network.

Thinking of your experience, or someone you know. Please rank which of these services are most important to have in the Welcoming and Healing Center.

1 – Most important / I would likely access this service  
 7 – Would be nice, but not a service I would use

- Food Bank and Infant Pantry
- Early Learning Center
- Community Rooms
- Transitional Housing
- Mental / Health Care
- Recreation/Open Space
- Education/Workforce Development

The development project will expand on existing programs as well as make space for programs the community has advocated for.

# Envisioning a Land Trust for BIPOC Farmers

The PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust & Friendly Hmong Farms  
District 3 & 5, King County, WA



## THE VISION

To buy a total of 60 acres of farmland in King County that would be owned by a BIPOC farmer land trust for agricultural production and leased to farmers below market rates.

“We are a country-less people. Our written language has been erased. We aren’t supposed to exist, yet here we are, preserving our culture while adapting to where we have re-settled.” – Friendly Vang-Johnson

## Community Care Helped the Hmong Farmers Weather the COVID-19 Crisis

Friendly Hmong Farms, and subsequently the Pacific Northwest Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Farmland Trust (PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust), were both born out of mutual aid and community. It was 2020 at the height of the pandemic and everyone was scared to leave their homes. The Hmong Association of Washington’s executive director called on community for help: markets were shut down and farmers had huge surpluses of flowers with no place to sell them. Knowing how crucial farmers’ markets are as a sales channel for farmers, Friendly Vang-Johnson was one of the first to act. During her maternity leave, Friendly coordinated bouquet sales and logistics, leveraging social media and a network of 40+ volunteers, which included her son and



his middle school friends in the neighborhood. The social media posts went viral. By the end of the season, the volunteers raised over half a million dollars for farmers. By the next season, Friendly expanded the work to include a youth leadership program and established Friendly Hmong Farms as an LLC.

### From Political Displacement to Economic Displacement

King County has been home to Hmong refugees fleeing from Laos since the 1970's. To this day, many of these families are farmers and have continued to cultivate land to grow local produce and fresh flowers to sell in markets. Yet very few own the land they farm. Most of them rent by the acre and commute daily to their farmland to tend to their crops. Their livelihood is subject to the whims of landlords.

Over the years, farmers have started to get displaced from these lands. As real estate prices have skyrocketed in King County, farmland has been quickly snatched up by developers and speculators seeking to maximize returns, reducing available farming land. Friendly herself was priced out of her neighborhood in North Seattle, moving out of her home of fifteen years and back to Minnesota. The cost of living became so expensive that she could no longer afford to care for a family of 6 that included three children in need of childcare. Since 2021, Friendly has flown back and forth from Minnesota to Seattle every month to run the youth program, help farmers, and build the Trust, often staying longer during the summers. "Seattle has gotten so expensive, that it makes more sense financially to live in a whole other state and commute back and forth than live in this city."

Born in Minnesota from a long line of refugee farmers, Friendly spent her summers growing up helping around her family's farm. Though she respects the hard work it takes to feed and nourish a society, she decided her contribution to her people's legacy and love of the land would be a career in federal government. Community organizing would be a hobby. However, early in the 2022 farming season, Friendly had a seizure and was rushed to the emergency room. During that experience she recalls feeling her grandmother's spirit guiding her to rise as a shaman, a community healer. True healing for her community, she thought, went beyond helping farmers sell flowers and produce; true healing required developing a deeper spiritual connection to the land the farmers had been working on for so many years.

### Solidarity Across Communities Led to a Bold Vision for Permanent Stability

Alongside other farmers of color, Friendly created the PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust in 2022. The Trust's initial goal is to buy 60 acres of farmland – about the size of a large shopping mall—that would be permanently kept in agricultural production

“  
**Short-term leases are not great for the farmers or the land. If someone has a one-year lease, they don't have any incentive to invest in the soil or in infrastructure, as opposed to a land trust model which has a lifetime tenure.**

Deepa Iyer  
 Board Member, PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust



Deepa Iyer with her partner Victor Angali at Ayeko Farm in Enumclaw, WA. PHOTO COURTESY OF AYEKO FARM



Rendering of potential public spaces held by future PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust to include area for children, crop fields, and convening areas.

in trust and leased to farmers below market rates. “Everybody is priced out of purchasing farmland in King County. If you want to farm, leasing is the only option, and most of the time farmers are on a one-year lease or a five-year lease, which can be challenging,” says Deepa Iyer, a board member of the Land Trust. “Short-term leases are not great for the farmers or the land. If someone has a one-year lease, they don’t have any incentive to invest in the soil or in infrastructure, as opposed to a land trust model which has a lifetime tenure.”

### Land Isn’t Something to be Owned; It’s About People, Culture, and Mutual Stewardship

For the farmers, land is seen not just as an asset or a commodity, but an integral piece of preserving culture and people. The Hmong have been engaged in traditional farming practices for millennia and have deep spiritual practices tied to their connection to land. “This work is about justice,” says Friendly. “Colonialism and white supremacy have long benefited from the fruits of our labor, generational wealth built from institutional racism and the oppression of Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Community Stewardship of Land gives power back to our communities.”

The land will be available not just for the Hmong farmers, but for Black and Brown farmers all over King County. “The Hmong people are perpetual migrants; we have been working and living alongside other communities for thousands of years. We cannot achieve our vision now unless we are in solidarity with other communities.” The Trust advisory committee and board is comprised entirely of BIPOC, with a supermajority who have lived experience as farmers. Farmland Trust intends to foster continued accountability to the Coast Salish Nations, the Indigenous peoples of King County, whether it’s paying rent to the tribes or allocating a significant plot of land solely for Indigenous farmers.

At the time of this writing, the Trust has won a grant from King County Conservation Futures, and its advisory board is currently searching for land. But the work doesn’t stop at just providing land to farmers. “There are a lot of factors that lead to the viability and success of farm businesses. It’s one thing to have land, but someone might have crops they have no market for, or they don’t have childcare while working in the field, or their family might not have enough food to eat,” Deepa shares.

Farmer leadership is also a key aspect of the land trust, where structures and solutions are co-created and led by the farmers themselves. The Trust will also continue to expand the youth leadership program, exposing youth of color to issues like food insecurity, food justice and the work it takes to cultivate nourishment while continuing to be in relationship with the land. Deepa shares,

“We want our organization to foster a community network of services that will help our farmers thrive.” Members of the Trust will also receive training through an anti-racist and anti-capitalist lens. “It’s important to decolonize ourselves in order to sustain the land trust’s model of mutual aid and solidarity,” Friendly emphasized.

### How can King County EDI support this vision?

The PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust offers inspiration, but also a powerful lesson for what happens when departments are not working together or talking to each other. The Trust received \$4 million in Conservation Futures land acquisition funding, only to be denied by a separate King County program for capacity building and pre-development costs. Without the latter funding, the Trust’s ability to support the deep community engagement needed to expend these funds has been hampered.

Conversely, King County EDI would put BIPOC communities at the center and ensure projects get what they need from across programs at the County. As Friendly says, “If economic development is going to work for BIPOC communities, public programs and policies must be coordinated and accountable to BIPOC communities. Ultimately, BIPOC communities must own and steward key assets. We will never get to a just and equitable agricultural system without holding this authority.” An effective King County EDI would be an interdepartmental program where existing King County programs are working together to prioritize BIPOC and other communities at high risk of displacement, and making sure these projects get what they need as easily as possible. It would also provide sufficient capacity building and pre-development funding to ensure projects are successful.

The PNW BIPOC Farmland Trust’s initial goal is to buy 60 acres of farmland—about the size of Northgate Mall.



“We grow and experiment with vegetables that are not as commonly grown in the PNW that reflect our cultural traditions such as amaranth, bottle gourd, long bean, okra, fenugreek leaf, and even peanuts.”

**Ayeko Farm**  
Enumclaw, WA

“We actively work with Yesler Terrace community partners to develop educational programs for youth, share the stories and knowledge of our elders growing in the garden, and share our greenspace with this diverse community.”

**Black Farmers Collective**  
Yes Farm in Seattle, WA



“We use growing practices learned through generations of Hmong farmers who brought their knowledge from Thailand.”

**Bryant Her**  
**Younique Gardens**  
Monroe, WA



### Our Advisory Commitee

We are a group of individuals who are deeply committed to our mission of preserving farmland and supporting BIPOC farmers. With a shared passion for social justice and sustainable agriculture, we work tirelessly to create a more equitable and inclusive food system.



\*Transitioned off the advisory committee but are Founders of the project.



A famer tends to flowers in Monroe, WA. PHOTO BY KATIE SIMMENS. COURTESY OF FRIENDLY HMONG FARMERS

# Native Lands in Native Hands, Everywhere

sləpələbəx™ & Na'ah Illahee Fund  
Seattle, WA



## THE VISION

To build an intertribal traditional ecological knowledge center on two to four acres of land and create Native Neighborhoods across King County.

“The feeling of disconnectedness and isolation, it’s generational. We want to have spaces to just be with each other.” – Demarus Tevuk

The process of colonization turned land on Turtle Island from something shared, nurtured, and stewarded by Indigenous peoples for all life, to something owned by individuals and used for profit. Colonizers used white supremacy to justify the expulsion and genocide of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and created the concept of private property by claiming Native land for themselves. In 1865, shortly after white settlers established a town on stolen land and named it after its leader, Chief Seattle, white town leaders passed Ordinance No. 5: An Ordinance for the Removal of Indians. This law forcibly displaced Natives out of their ancestral homelands and prohibited them from being within town limits after dusk. Duwamish Longhouses, Potlatch Houses and countless personal possessions were burned down by settlers and their ceremonies made illegal as well.<sup>1</sup> Even after “Law No. 5” was repealed two years later, the Duwamish had no more homes to return to.

Native exclusion has persisted throughout this country’s existence—Reservations, often isolated and resource-scarce, were established to confine and control Tribes.

Laws prohibited them from practicing traditions and ceremonies or speaking their languages both within and outside these borders. In 1956, the Indian Relocation Act forced thousands of Natives to assimilate into cities with a false claim of better economic opportunities through a severely underfunded and unorganized national effort. More than 71 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives now live in urban areas.

In addition to these historic harms and barriers, a new threat has emerged today: many urban Native people now face displacement from their neighborhoods due to redevelopment, skyrocketing housing costs and gentrification.

### E'lip Tilikum Land Conservancy

Over 150 years later, Na'ah Illahee Fund, a Native-led organization based in Seattle has established the E'lip Tilikum Land Conservancy. E'lip Tilikum translates to First People in Chinook. Their vision for the conservancy is to heal the centuries of harm done to Native communities by restoring Native peoples' relationship to land.

"The phrase Native Lands in Native Hands can be just as easily flipped. The work is just as much about Native hands in Native land – the healing of the land is also a healing of people. That for people to be involved in the land, touching the land, being connected to it and it to be connected to them is vital to their healing and beginning to repair the harm of the last several centuries," Aaron Clark, Na'ah Illahee's Director of the Land Conservancy, describes.

E'lip Tilikum will have two parts. First, donated or purchased land will be set aside for ecological conservation in the hands of Tribal stewards. Their initial goal is to build an intertribal traditional ecological knowledge center on two to four acres of land, half of which would be green space with native plants restored for traditional foods, medicines, and uses. The other half of the site will have office spaces for small Native-owned businesses and nonprofits, and a commercial teaching and learning kitchen with opportunities to teach, learn and practice food or medicine preparation and storage methods. "There are very few opportunities to learn, to create spaces where knowledge can be transferred across groups to many people at once," Aaron says. The second part of the E'lip Tilikum Land Conservancy will be to support creating spaces by and for the Native community across King County.

### sləp̓iləbəx̌w: Native Neighborhoods Across King County

sləp̓iləbəx̌w (Rising Tides), a collective of Native planners, is leading a project to create Native neighborhoods by and for Native community across King County. There are few spaces in King County where Native communities can see themselves

### E'lip Tilikum will have two parts:

- 1 Donated or purchased land will be set aside for ecological conservation in the hands of Tribal stewards, including building an intertribal traditional ecological knowledge center.

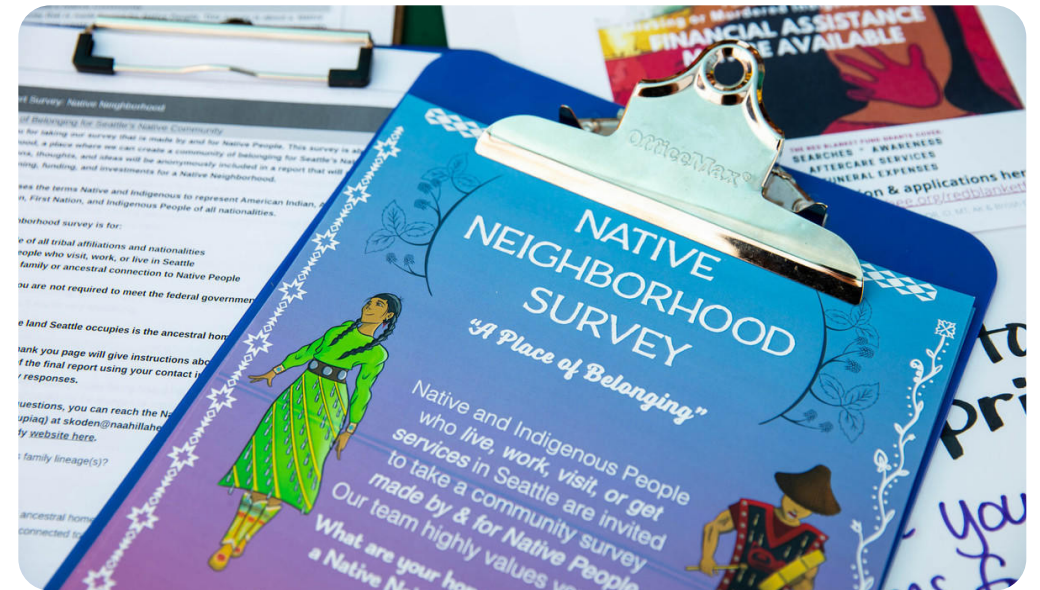


- 2 The other half of the site will have office spaces for small Native-owned businesses and nonprofits, and a commercial teaching and learning kitchen with opportunities to teach, learn and practice food or medicine preparation and storage methods.



“  
It’s important to have those third spaces for communities, as a creative place of belonging where we can be with one another, share our traditions, and celebrate each other.

Tim Lehman  
Northern Arapaho Tribe



Community surveys for the Native Neighborhood Report.

belonging and are able to be with one another, despite King County having a relatively large urban Native population. sləp̓iləbəx™ is leading work to bring Indigenous representation and methodologies into city planning through the creation of Native Neighborhoods. sləp̓iləbəx™ is collaborating with multiple Native-led organizations, including Na’ah Illahee Fund, Seattle Indian Services Commission, and The Common Acre, to build community spaces for the urban Native community.

“We all saw a need for Indigenous voices and perspectives in city planning, in the way we think about the built environment and the natural environment in our city. Since our group carries knowledge from both a western educational background and traditional cultural standpoint, we all bring unique perspectives and skills needed to create a clear vision for Native Neighborhoods,” said Kimberly Deriana (Mandan and Hidatsa Nations).

sləp̓iləbəx™ surveyed over 700 urban Natives across the county and facilitated talking circles to envision what the neighborhoods could be like. Applying Indigenous methodologies was the core of their research – deepening relationships, checking in with communities at every step and making sure they do everything with intention. Demarus Tevuk (l̓iṇupiat) shares, “People were talking about making a walkable neighborhood with lots of green space. When you’re there, we will make sure you have food. There will be clinics, pharmacies, even entertainment and nightlife. The



From left to right: sləp̓iləbəx™ members Kim Deriana (Mandan and Hidatsa), Vicky Murray (Bad River Chippewa), Demarus Tevuk (l̓iṇupiat), Dakota Murray (Bad River Chippewa), and Tim Lehman (Northern Arapaho) in front of Bison Coffeehouse, a Native-owned business in Portland, Oregon.

goal is to give holistic care, and it's not going to be just for Natives, but for everyone."

They also see Native Neighborhoods promoting visibility and representation of Native issues, values and culture to be in the forefront. "It's important to have those third spaces for communities, as a creative place of belonging where we can be with one another, share our traditions, and celebrate each other," says Tim Lehman (Northern Arapaho Tribe).

Beyond E'lip Tilikum Land Conservancy and Native Neighborhoods, there are many Native and Indigenous organizations working to alleviate the harm and separation imposed on them through colonization and gentrification. There is a great need for expanded financial support towards land repatriation efforts across the county. Native-led organizations such as Chief Seattle Club, Seattle Indian Health Board, yəhaw Indigenous Creatives Collective, The Common Acre, Native Family Learning Lodge, Seattle Indian Services Commission, Mother Nation and others have identified land and projects needing local government funding support.

### How can King County EDI support this vision?

A King County EDI would make these dreams, and the rightful return of Native land, more possible. The Conservancy and Native Neighborhoods project faces many challenges including incredibly expensive real estate across King County, lack of community and intergenerational wealth within the Native community, and having to operate in a capitalist, colonized economy. For example, one of the biggest challenges is building the capacity within Native organizations, and a King County EDI could provide critical funding to support staff capacity, technical knowledge, and preparing for land acquisition. Aaron says, "For us as an organization that has never done a land transaction before, we're trying to learn how to do this." And unlike other housing and economic development programs, a King County EDI can enable Native-led, bottom-up planning and neighborhood building that makes self-determination the highest priority.

"We as Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities are the experts on what we need and don't have. We need more opportunities to empower us and make those plans ourselves. We need to be able to craft that ourselves, a traditional, fully Indigenous process where community is involved. That's not something that can be created by someone outside the Native community," said Dakota Murray (Bad River Chippewa).



NIF Board and staff, with other Native leaders and Dakota Murray from City of Seattle (middle)



This is a project of the King County Equitable Development (EDI) Coalition, anchored by Puget Sound Sage and Multicultural Community Coalition and was guided by our Community Stewardship of Land framework.  
[communitystewardshipofland.org](http://communitystewardshipofland.org)

**PUGET SOUND SAGE STAFF**

Kristine Cancio  
Howard Greenwich  
Eliana Horn  
JM Wong  
Abdirahman Yussuf

**MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY COALITION**

Shiku Wainaina  
Yordanos Teferi

**DESIGN**

Nicole Ramirez

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SHARE THEIR STORIES WITH US:**

Aaron Clark  
Kim Deriana  
Angela Ngiangi Diansasila  
Deepa Iyer  
Tim Lehman  
Françoise Milinganyo  
Floribert Mubalama  
Dakota Murray  
Vicky Murray  
Demarus Tevuk  
Friendly Vang-Johnson

