

Timeline of Race-Based Real Estate Practices in King County

1855

Washington Governor Isaac A. Stevens compelled Indigenous tribes to cede their lands and move to reservations to make room for white settlers.

1882

The U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending all Chinese immigration to the U.S. for 10 years.

1916

New York City became the first to adopt a zoning ordinance. Afterward, 21 cities adopted zoning ordinances to segregate their cities into Black and white sections.

1917

The U.S. Supreme Court banned zoning detailing “Black” and “white” neighborhoods and outlawed state-sponsored racial deed restrictions.

1921

The Washington State Legislature passed the Alien Land Law, which restricted property ownership and the leasing of land to non-citizens.

1923

The City of Seattle implemented its first single-family zoning ordinance with guidance from Harland Bartholomew, proponent of exclusionary zoning.

1926

The U.S. Supreme Court validated racial deed restrictions between private property owners, and they spread throughout King County, primarily centered in Seattle.

1934

The U.S. Federal Housing Administration provided developers with a manual that declared racial deed restrictions a more effective means of assuring homogenous neighborhoods than zoning ordinances.

1936

The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation produced a redlining map for Seattle which used a color-coded grading scale—often based on racial demographics—to identify areas for investment or disinvestment.

1937

King County adopted its first zoning ordinance, introducing single-family zoning to all unincorporated areas.

1941

The Seattle Housing Authority developed a low-income housing project (Yesler Terrace) and set a 20 percent quota on the number of Black residents who could be housed there.

1942

President Roosevelt signed EO 9066, expelling Japanese residents from the West Coast to concentration camps. King County officials unfairly incarcerated 9,600 Japanese Americans at these concentration camps.

1943

The U.S Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, provided a small annual quota for Chinese immigrants, and enabled them to become naturalized citizens.

1948

The U.S Supreme Court declared racial deed restrictions legally unenforceable, but left open the possibility for voluntary agreements between real estate agents and homeowners.

1957

The Washington State Legislature passed the Omnibus Civil Rights Act, which declared housing discrimination illegal.

1959

The King County Superior Court reversed the Omnibus Civil Rights Act. This ruling was upheld in both the Washington State Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

1963

Seattle's Mayor responded to a four-day housing segregation protest by establishing the Seattle Human Rights Commission, which later drafted an open housing ordinance that banned racial discrimination in housing. Seattle's voters rejected the ordinance.

1968

The U.S Congress passed the Fair Housing Act, which outlawed housing discrimination based on race or ethnicity, making it illegal to act on the racial deed restrictions in Seattle and King County.

1975

The Central Seattle Community Council Federation released a detailed report that identified redlining and disinvestment as the primary cause of neighborhood decline in the Central District of Seattle.

1990

King County adopted its first zoning ordinance, introducing single-family zoning to all unincorporated areas.

1994

The City of Seattle adopted an Urban Village strategy. This strategy contributed to the displacement of predominantly low-income and Black households, as urban villages were only developed in land dedicated to multifamily zoning, where that demographic was primarily located as a result of historic redlining.

2008

The 2008 housing crisis disproportionately impacted Black households in the U.S. Many banks targeted Black households for subprime mortgages, leading to a higher rate of foreclosures.
