

Conflicts and Common Ground Between Density, Affordability, and Historic Preservation in the
Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District Case Study

Charlotte Ann Hevly

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Manish Chalana

Gregg Colburn

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Charlotte Ann Hevly

University of Washington

Abstract

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Charlotte Hevly

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Manish Chalana

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Abstract

The nomination of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places following the passage of citywide rezones and Mandatory Housing Affordability in Seattle prompted a variety of community responses. The purpose of this research is to identify and understand the key points of tension between historic preservation, housing density, and housing affordability which arose around the nomination. First, the literature on historic districts, the housing affordability critique of historic districts, development opposition in historic districts, and coordination between preservation and affordability is reviewed. Next, understanding of the district is developed through lenses of morphology, sociology, and history and the affordability landscape of the neighborhood and historic district are explored. Finally, tensions within press reports and public comment related to the National Register nomination are identified and categorized as policy: intent versus impact; experiences of affordability: accessible

versus exclusionary; sense of place: aesthetic versus historic; neighborhood: form versus function; and demolition: destruction versus growth. Common ground between perceptions of density, affordability, and preservation in this case study and ongoing work in other jurisdictions point to opportunities for greater inclusion in preservation processes and outcomes, mitigation strategies, climate action, and actively promoting affordability in historic buildings.

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1. Introduction

Density, affordability, and preservation are interrelated and at times in conflict in cities today. Goals of greater residential densities to increase housing supply and build more sustainably to address the housing and climate crises face pushback based on fear that the identity, history, and sense of place tied to the built environment will be impacted by redevelopment. The purpose of this research is to identify and understand some of the points of tension between community members' perspectives on housing and historic preservation as well as their shared values and goals. The case study of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 2022 illustrates such conflicts which can arise from the designation of a residential historic district in an urban neighborhood. Areas of tension may need to be resolved or addressed in community engagement in order to move forward with goals of both preservation and housing and shared values point to strategies with potentially broader community buy-in.

This research responds to three questions. The first research question is: how do we understand the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District? The second research question is: what is the housing affordability landscape in this neighborhood and historic district? Conflicts can be better understood based on the morphology, sociology, history, and affordability of the neighborhood and historic district as well as recent events surrounding housing affordability and historic preservation policy in Seattle. The third research question is: what are the tensions between community members' perspectives on historic preservation, density, and affordability as they relate to the designation of a residential historic district in a streetcar suburb? Wallingford community members' perspectives on the nomination of the district expressed through press reports, public comment, and community organizations contain several

tensions between efforts to protect the historic and aesthetic value of the district as it exists today and efforts to support denser and more affordable housing options in the neighborhood.

Literature

The second section of this paper considers these tensions in the context of the literature on historic districts and those in residential suburbs in particular; the motivations behind development opposition pursued through historic districts; and the ways in which historic preservation does and does not support affordable housing goals. I first lay out the goals of historic districts as defined by regulations and characterized in the literature. Historic districts in residential suburbs, and specifically streetcar suburbs are highlighted as a specific category (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018; Hamer 1998). Furthermore, I include authors proposing streetcar suburb neighborhoods as a model for future planning and redevelopment (Saunders 2020; Newcombe 2022). Next, I review critiques of historic districts from a housing affordability perspective. The literature describes how preservation and affordability can clash around property values (Ford 1989; Haughey and Basolo 2000; Leichenko, Coulson, and Listokin 2001; Avrami, Leo, and Sanchez 2018; Oba and Noonan 2020; Kinahan and Ruther 2020), housing density and supply (Glaeser 2010; New York Landmarks Conservancy and PlaceEconomics 2016), ideology, and displacement (Lemar 2015; Snyder and Thomas 2020; McCabe and Ellen 2016). Development opposition plays a central role in these conflicts; I next explore literature on motivations for development opposition pursued through historic districts (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020; Whittemore and BenDor 2019; Trounstine 2023; Logan 2017). Lastly, literature on both historic preservation and housing affordability notes the common ground between the two fields. Example collaborations include preservation of affordable housing and adaptive reuse

(Frystak 2021; National Trust for Historic Preservation 2021; Milder 2016; Wood 2014; Joe 2015; Riggs and Chamberlain 2018). The literature on conflicts and common ground between historic preservation and housing affordability previews many of the same themes which arise in the Wallingford-Meridian historic district case study.

Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District Case Study

The literature on historic districts, housing affordability, and development opposition contributes to an understanding of factors at play in the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District. Historic streetcar suburbs in Seattle are recognized as vibrant, desirable, and in many cases a model of walkable, centrally-located, mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhoods (Kreisman 2011; Bergman 2021, 72). Wallingford, a neighborhood well-known for its thriving commercial strip and collection of bungalows located north of downtown and adjacent to the University District, developed in tangent with streetcar lines between 1901-1941 and maintains many characteristics and buildings from that era. Residential buildings and street patterns from the era are captured in the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar National Register Historic District, which comprises 929 buildings roughly bounded by N and NE 50th Street to the north, 5th Avenue NE to the east, NE 45th Street and N 46th Street to the south, and Interlake Avenue N to the west. The district was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 2022 (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022). The nomination followed the City of Seattle's implementation of rezones and a Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) policy in 2019. Ongoing discussions around land use and housing policy in Seattle and connections to historic preservation fed some of the tensions around housing affordability and density which arose from the nomination of the Wallingford historic district.

Findings

This research responds to three questions. The first research question is: how do we understand the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District? For the purposes of this case study an understanding is developed through three lenses: morphology, sociology, and history. The morphology of the historic district is understood to be visually harmonious with some boundaries which separate it from its surroundings and other edges which are indistinguishable from adjacent areas. A demographic snapshot of the neighborhood informs our understanding of a comparatively middle-aged, whiter, more educated, more English-speaking, and higher paid neighborhood than average for Seattle (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018). This somewhat mirrors the end of the streetcar era in the 1940 Census, when Wallingford was similar to citywide measures for age and whiteness but had higher education levels and lower unemployment compared to the city as a whole (Social Explorer 2023c). The historical development of Wallingford has resulted in many of the qualities of streetcar suburbs as described in the literature (Folke and Nyberg 1975; Veith 2005; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022).

In other examples of residential historic districts such as streetcar suburb neighborhoods, desirability and central urban location paired with zoning for low residential densities has limited access to housing. To understand the impacts of these factors in Wallingford, the second research question is: what is the housing affordability landscape in this neighborhood and historic district? Affordability is understood through the presence of diverse housing typologies and the historic demographics of housing consumers; the value of selected parcels over time; the presence of potential affordability in current housing stock; and a brief review of the cost of consuming housing (through renting or homeownership) for a newcomer to Wallingford in 2023. Although

historical accounts of the neighborhood describe its middle-class character (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022; Veith 2005), current land use and housing options are more restricted. The value of selected parcels over time shows that although the building footprints have changed little over time, property values which were below the median for Seattle in the 1940 Census are now significantly above it (Social Explorer 2023; United States Census Bureau 2021; King County Assessor 2022). Lastly, affordable options for renters and homeowners are currently limited in the historic district and almost half of current renters there are cost burdened (Social Explorer 2023b).

Building on the exploration of Wallingford's affordability landscape, the third research question is: what are the tensions between community members' perspectives on historic preservation, density, and affordability as they relate to the designation of a residential historic district in a streetcar suburb? The critical lack of access to affordable housing options is not limited to Wallingford; the need for greater housing affordability motivated the City of Seattle to convene and implement the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) in 2014. The central events of this case study are the City's implementation of HALA through rezoning and Mandatory Housing Affordability requirements in 2019 and the nomination of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places in 2022. The tensions between the goals of HALA and the implications of the National Register Historic District are identified from press reports, public comment, and stakeholder organizations' statements regarding these events. Tensions are categorized as policy intent versus impact; experiences of affordability: accessible versus exclusionary; sense of place: aesthetic versus historic; neighborhood form versus function; and demolition: destruction versus growth.

Limitations and Future Work

In Wallingford and elsewhere, tensions arise between historic preservation to capture place history, memory, and identity; density of residential development to support more environmentally sustainable growth and a diversity of housing options; and affordability and access to well-located and resourced neighborhoods through pathways to renting and homeownership for households with a variety of incomes. These three policy goals are closely interrelated and at times in conflict. Whereas the literature on housing economics suggests that density and affordability go hand in hand, community response to Wallingford's historic district shows that preservation is often viewed in opposition to both (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 4; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c). Analysis of the Wallingford historic district case study suggests future planning and preservation approaches which balance tensions between historic preservation, density, and affordability.

For preservation, more flexible and inclusive narratives, policy tools, and processes can adapt to representations of place history and identity throughout development over time. To reconcile preservation with increased residential densities, the City of Seattle can pursue alternative strategies for mitigating the impact of rezones on historic resources. Although increased density is divisive among residents, strategies which center environmental sustainability are ripe for coordination, especially when they provide alternatives to demolition. Additionally, ongoing work visualizes how units can be added in compatible ways based on existing patterns, daylight, and open space (Hutchins 2022; Low-Rise n.d.; McKernan 2020). To promote affordability in historic buildings local housing authorities, land trusts, and preservation organizations' ongoing efforts in this area can be supported, coordinated, and expanded. Conflicts between historic preservation, density, and affordability are not unique to Seattle.

Programs and initiatives in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis provide examples of ongoing work to support all three goals within the common ground between preservation, density, and affordability.

Despite the focus on tensions, this research aims to identify policy approaches in areas of common ground. However, this limits the scope of the findings. In many cases, the tensions identified here cannot be fully resolved and a jurisdiction must prioritize certain goals over others. Additionally, although the strategies identified in this research balance preservation, density, and affordability it is important to recognize that they occupy one narrow space within the broad range of efforts to meet today's housing crisis, for which both historic resources and new development are required. Evolution and change to meet current needs is a function of cities, just as the development of Wallingford as a streetcar suburb met the needs of that era. This case study approach identifies tensions and strategies relevant to Wallingford and Seattle, but future work can explore how the implementation of these ideas can be tailored to specific communities and contexts.

2. Literature Review: Housing and Historic Preservation in Streetcar Suburbs

The Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District illustrates elements of the relationship between historic preservation, housing affordability, and housing density in cities today. The literature on these topics highlights conflicts between these goals as well as areas of common ground. I lay out the goals of historic districts as defined by regulations and characterized in the literature. Historic districts in residential suburbs are highlighted as a specific category with shared qualities. Next, I review critiques of historic districts from a housing affordability perspective. The literature describes how preservation and affordability can clash around property values, housing density and supply, ideology, and displacement. At the center of these conflicts is the issue of development opposition; I next explore motivations for development opposition pursued through historic districting. Lastly, the literature on both historic preservation and housing affordability includes areas of common ground between the two fields. Preservation of the vernacular, preservation of affordable housing, and adaptive reuse as well as other collaborations are provided as examples. The literature on conflicts and common ground between historic preservation and housing affordability previews many of the same themes which arise in the Wallingford historic district case study.

2.1 Goals of Historic Preservation through Historic Districts

Goals of historic preservation include continuity from the past into the present and future, tying memory into the built environment to represent cultural values, and capturing cultural identities to convey histories and meaning. Preservation recognizes the significance of heritage in the built environment and protects resources which are irreplaceable when lost (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 1-3). Historic districts are one tool intended to achieve these goals. Historic

districts are geographic areas containing significant historic resources. Under federal regulations for the National Register of Historic Places, they are geographically definable and the historic resources (sites, buildings, structures, or objects) are connected by concentration, linkage, or continuity. These linkages can be in connection with past events or aesthetic connections based on plans or physical developments. Although districts are often geographically contiguous, they can be spatially discrete areas if the thematic linkage exists (36 CFR 60.3. 1981). A unifying element establishes the significance of the concentrated group of historic resources, which in many cases are significant as a whole more so than as individual buildings (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 145). This protects the character of a place through the context of its built environment, even when individual properties are not eligible for landmarking (Hamer 1998, 139). Listing a federal historic district on the National Register of Historic Places creates no restrictions on owners' use of the land. By comparison, local districts offer legal protection and administrative oversight, often through design and demolition review (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 127-128). Federal districts, by contrast, recognize the historical significance of the resources in the district, qualify some properties for tax incentives, and inform planning efforts for projects with federal funding. Activities with federal funding are obligated to assess their impacts on historic sites and consider mitigation options if the impact is significant (Hamer 1998, 19-21).

Per federal regulations, historic district boundaries with integrity are defined by the unifying element or theme (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 145). Historically significant boundaries might be based on topography or physical barriers like highways or natural features. Despite this intent, many boundaries are drawn to ensure the district contains a high proportion of contributing properties or to exclude property owners who oppose the designation (Tyler,

Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 145; Hamer 1998, 155). Once boundaries are delineated, they distinguish historic areas from their surroundings, sometimes with signage or other boundary markers (Hamer 1998, 166). Boundaries creating a contiguous district are more successful at capturing an area's sense of place based on unifying aesthetic elements (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 146-147). Preserving the sense of place is often a motivator for historic districting and a rationale for a district's significance (Hamer 1998, 191).

Reasons for establishing an historic district include to protect the significant historic resources within it, to prevent a specific development threat, to incentivize redevelopment in older neighborhoods including through the use of tax incentives for rehabilitation, to stabilize or increase property values, and to shape an attractive image for a city often as a form of boosterism (Tyler, Tyler, and Ligibel 2018, 129). In *History in Urban Places: the Historic Districts of the United States*, David Hamer notes these motivations as well as several more. Primarily, he categorizes motivations for historic districts as stabilization and protection (1998, 105). This includes protecting an investment, such as a financial investment in a building restoration, through the security of local historic district protections and design review for compatible construction as well as the probability of increased property values after designation (Hamer 1998, 105; 131-132). In addition to financial stability, themes from the past represent an ideal of urban and cultural order (Hamer 1998, 26-27; 134). A response to urban renewal, the protection of places is meant to preserve fragments that are representative of all that has been removed (Hamer 1998, 16).

He argues that these fragments with one shared period of significance create "simplified historical landscapes" which Americans appreciate (Hamer 1998, 37). This appreciation has fostered historic districts as a form of display for architectural history, showcasing styles, uses,

and architects from different time periods (Hamer 1998, 143). Historic districts are a form of usable history: they can promote housing rehabilitation, neighborhood stabilization, protection of neighborhood character, tourism, place-based pride and identity, and a sense of prestige or status (Hamer 1998, 107-108). Lastly, historic preservation at the district level is usable due to its suitability for collaboration with planners, who tend to work at the community scale (Hamer 1998, 136).

In Seattle and King County, historic preservation efforts have been motivated by a desire for historic continuity, especially in the face of threats (Kreisman 1999, 13). Federal and local tax incentives developed in the 1970s and 1980s spurred many landmark nominations (Kreisman 1999, 18-19). In his overview of historic preservation in Seattle and King County, Lawrence Kreisman suggests that property owner's primary motivations for landmarking have been tax credits and safeguarding against change whereas the significance of the building itself may be secondary (1999, 23). The City of Seattle designated local historic districts with the intention to create awareness of the value of the neighborhoods and ensure compatibility of the design of new development with historic resources (Kreisman 1999, 84). Some local historic districts in Seattle were originally independent prior to their annexation and the landmarking controls provide a way to "maintain their individual identities despite the encroachment of industry, multifamily housing, traffic arterials, and automobile-related business" (Kreisman 1999, 83).

Residential Suburb Historic Districts

Ballard and Columbia City, both locally designated historic districts, fall into this category of independent communities later annexed by Seattle (Kreisman 1999, 83). Columbia City, like Wallingford, is also an example of a streetcar suburb. Streetcar suburb historic districts

can be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multi property listing titled *Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960*. This multi property listing was established in tandem with the publication of a bulletin outlining guidelines for evaluating and documenting residential suburbs for nomination to the National Register (Ames and McClelland 2002). David Hamer describes affluent 19th century suburbs as a “significant category” of historic districts. The dominant architectural styles in these neighborhoods represent romantic ideals of that time period and lead to the types of harmonious neighborhoods which possess integrity and eligibility for the National Register. Neighborhoods with one primary developer particularly fall into this category. Several examples of 19th century rail suburbs are listed on the National Register, including Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia, Inman Park in Atlanta, and Cleveland Park in Washington, D.C. (1998, 55-58). In Seattle recent federal historic districts have been established in streetcar suburb neighborhoods Mount Baker (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2018a) and Ravenna-Cowen (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2018b). In Tacoma the College Park Historic District in a streetcar suburb neighborhood is listed on the National Register (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2017) and in Spokane the Cannon Streetcar Suburb, which contains two National Register Historic Districts, was added to the Spokane Register of Historic Places in 2023 (City - County of Spokane Historic Preservation Office n.d.)

A recent University of Washington Master of Architecture thesis on preservation in Wallingford proposed piloting a neighborhood conservation district (NCD) as opposed to an historic district. The intention of an NCD is to preserve neighborhood character through design guidelines for new construction while also allowing for denser development. The analysis suggests that Detached Accessory Dwelling Units and sensitive house conversions can add more

housing units to the neighborhood with minimal visible impact. This proposal includes setback and height alignment for new multifamily buildings to make them compatible with existing patterns, facades that break up bulk on new single-family dwellings, and preferred housing types for new construction (cottage housing, row housing, and townhouses) for compatibility with the surrounding areas. An NCD would have more stringent requirements than a National Register Historic District, but less so than a local historic district (McKernan 2020).

2.2 Housing Affordability Goals and Critique of Historic Districts

Historic districts are a potential tool to recognize and sustain the qualities of significant neighborhoods. However, preservation of the low-density patterns in streetcar suburbs can have negative impacts for housing supply and affordability. Additionally, the literature explores the implications of historic districts for race, class, history, memory, and gentrification (Lemar 2015; Snyder and Thomas 2020). The relationships between historic districts and these factors can be difficult to define. This is in part because of the distinction between local and national historic districts and their relationship to local zoning and development regulations. Historic districts are often characterized as preventing change in the built environment. However, due to the lack of protections provided by National Register designation, some argue this overstates the controls of federal historic districts (Tisher 2017, 613). Despite these complexities, the literature is clear on the positive relationship between historic districts and property values. Properties in designated districts increase in value more than undesignated properties in the same area. This relationship is also stated in many local preservation policies as a motivation for property owners to nominate historic districts (Ford 1989; Haughey and Basolo 2000; Leichenko, Coulson, and Listokin 2001; Avrami, Leo, and Sanchez 2018, 111; Oba and Noonan 2020; Kinahan and Ruther 2020, 491).

This relationship is often cited as the reason historic preservation and housing affordability are at odds.

Density and Housing Supply

Historic districts are also critiqued for restricting newer, denser, more affordable housing development and limiting housing supply, which in turn drives up demand and raises prices. Broadly, housing literature and advocacy suggest that there is insufficient housing supply which has left many unable to access housing that meets their needs (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 4). With the limited amount of urban land in cities like Seattle, one major route to address this is through accommodating growth by increased housing density. In Seattle, this looks like allowing middle housing types (such as Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs, cottages, duplexes, and triplexes) in neighborhoods currently zoned single family and allowing denser multifamily housing in urban centers. For Seattle the goals of removing barriers to denser residential development include affordability, housing choice, minimizing displacement, reducing traffic congestion, and meeting the City's equity goals (Seattle Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda 2015, 3-5).

In federal historic districts development restrictions are not a direct function of the designation. David Hamer argues that the use of historic districts to regulate zoning and regulation in large swaths of urban areas is not in line with their intended function as pieces of history (1998, 178). However, local historic districts can regulate development via design and demolition review. Federal historic districts are regulated locally based on their underlying zoning, which the jurisdiction could change regardless of the district status. There are conflicting views on to what extent local historic preservation protections tie up real estate supply and

impact housing prices on a citywide scale. This conflict is illustrated in New York City by the viewpoints of The New York Landmarks Conservancy and Edward Glaeser. The Landmarks Conservancy argues that the impact is not significant, as only 4% of New York City lots are protected by Landmarks with the rest of the city remaining available for development of more housing and affordable housing (New York Landmarks Conservancy and PlaceEconomics 2016, 7). Additionally, they find that historic districts in New York City are not demonstrably less affordable than other areas of the city (New York Landmarks Conservancy and PlaceEconomics 2016, 13). By contrast, Glaeser (2010) takes a closer view of lower Manhattan, where 16% of buildable land was in historic districts at the time to argue that this limits housing supply in a specifically desirable area of the city. In places like lower Manhattan, restricting development can be even more problematic when the reasons the neighborhood is desirable are the same reasons it is well-suited for dense housing and affordable housing.

The same is true for many streetcar suburb neighborhoods in American cities. As Anika Lemar describes:

In housing markets, desirability is a function of location—proximity to employment centers, transportation infrastructure, and other amenities. In this way, the most desirable locations are often the most sustainable because residents of these areas do not have to commute long distances by car on a daily basis. Regulations that force development into less desirable locations have the unintended consequence of forcing development into less sustainable locations (2015, 1577).

Development opposition by residents is one factor which can push development to less sustainable locations, arguments which are at times based on the historic value of the neighborhood. In *Neighborhood Defenders*, Katherine Einstein, David Glick, and Maxwell Palmer argue that individual neighborhoods' prevention of new housing construction, when repeated many times, has widespread implications on housing availability and in turn price (2020, 4). Much of the opposition is expressed against dense, multifamily development needed to

house populations such as lower- and middle-income households, young workers, and the elderly (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 10). There is an inherent tension between residential historic district proponents and housing affordability because increasing housing supply and, as a result, decreasing home values is counter to financial incentives for existing homeowners (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 33). Lastly, although some authors disagree on how historic areas should accommodate growth and change, many writing on the relationship between preservation and housing support the integration of preservation policy with solutions for housing affordability (Rypkema 1994; Lemar 2015; Fine 2017; Tisher 2017, 625-629).

This raises questions about whether historic districts limit density or accommodate housing growth to meet current needs. Many historic areas already contain great levels of density, even more so than adjacent undesignated areas (New York Landmarks Conservancy and PlaceEconomics 2016, 7; Fine 2017; PlaceEconomics 2021). In cases such as streetcar suburbs, advocates for preservation claim what Lemar calls a “Goldilocks density,” where apartment buildings are too dense, new detached houses are too big, and older single-family dwellings are the desirable size and scale (Lemar 2015, 1554). Elizabeth Tisher describes the small single-family home as more affordable than both a new detached house and a multifamily building would be on the same lot, with space for infill strategies such as ADUs (Tisher 2017, 626). However in many cases the land alone is so valuable it would preclude any significant affordability. In these cases, Tisher argues new development will not increase affordability either because the actual area of historic districts is limited or because new market rate development will continue to be available only to wealthier consumers (Tisher 2017, 620). This position is in contrast to Einstein, Glick, and Palmer (2020) who argue for the construction of both new market-rate and affordable housing to meet the need for both types (151). As with affordability,

authors advocate for a more integrated approach with both planning and preservation tools to foster the kind of urban fabric that retains its historic sense of place while accommodating density (Idziorek and Chalana 2019; Lemar 2015). Despite this, a 2018 analysis showed that jurisdictions did not integrate considerations of urban or population density into their preservation policies (Avrami, Leo, and Sanchez 2018, 111).

Single-Family Zoning and Ideology

In particular, authors identify the impacts of preserving single-family zoning and densities as problematic for both planning and ideological reasons. Although exclusionary zoning would not have directed the form of early streetcar suburbs, the rise of residential zoning stems from similar ideologies as suburbanization (Lees 1994). Initial suburban development in Boston included small lots with two- and three-family houses at moderate cost, but the implementation of zoning towards the end of the streetcar era halted previous patterns of conversion and maintained some neighborhoods as homogenous middle-class residential areas (O'Connell 2013). As many jurisdictions revisit single-family zoning due to its implications for both inequality and climate change (Wegman 2020), preservation strategies like historic districts have been employed to maintain the patterns of single-family neighborhoods. The use of historic districts to mark significance suggests that definitions of neighborhood character are limited to the architecture from only one time period (Lemar 2015). This represents history as static when change and variety are essential characteristics of American cities (Hamer 1998, 95). Rather than freezing places at one moment in time, other preservation strategies permit places to adapt and respond to change. More recent preservation frameworks strive to accommodate and advance housing affordability, equity, and growth (Meeks and Murphy 2016).

In some cases, the ideology behind historic districts are rooted in racist histories and mythologies. Erica Avrami, Cherie-Nicole Leo, and Alberto Sanchez argue that these conceptual bases have spatial implications when knowledge and decisions are based in normative ideals and dominant ideology (2018, 108). This is of particular concern in residential suburbs, where preserving the traditional form reflects the economic status and values of its residents, including in many cases the exclusivity and homogeneity. As Sam Bass Warner (1962) and James O'Connell (2013) point out in Boston, the development of streetcar suburbs set the precedent for a geographical social and political division of the city. Similarly, Hamer argues that class stratification impacts the shape of cities today and historic districts reinforce the divide. When residents designate their neighborhood as an historic district, controls enabled by the status further differentiate between areas based on class (1998, 73-74).

Using a case study in Spokane, Janice Williams Rutherford demonstrates how neighborhoods that retain their integrity, and as such are eligible for historic district designation, then also have been successful in preventing neighborhood change and as a result have likely maintained their exclusivity and homogeneity. Additionally, the fact that homogenous and unchanged areas of cities still exist is counter to dynamic historic patterns of urban development (2005, 50). Hamer's analysis of historic districts supports this perspective. He argues that some neighborhoods employ historic district designation as "regimes of control" with similarities to other controls such as covenants, zoning, and boundary marking (1998, 77). Hamer concludes that artificial districts created with the intent of control are less likely to succeed over time as compared with areas that have endured due to inherent characteristics (1998, 204). Like Rutherford, he argues that in many cases integrity is established through harmony and consistency. This means that homogeneous neighborhoods, which are unrepresentative of

histories of American urbanization, are more likely to have integrity and be eligible for landmarking (Hamer 1998, 28; 35-36). Because urban development and redevelopment is dynamic, it is particularly concerning when districts identify one moment in history to preserve which impedes their ability to respond to change (Lemar 2015, 1541). When the selected moment represents a problematic history and future, a dominant group of current residents have the power to define a place's identity and both communicate exclusion as well as pursue it through development opposition (Snyder and Thomas 2020, 66).

Race, Gentrification, and Displacement

The perception of historic districts as white and wealthy enclaves is supported by some analysis on race and racial transitions in historic districts. Brian McCabe and Ingrid Ellen's (2016) findings did not show significant changes by race in historic districts, but did show increases in household income. Kelly Kinahan and Matthew Ruther found that between 2000 to 2010, declines in the shares of Black and Hispanic residents are significantly related to the designation of a local or national historic district 10 years earlier. Additionally, designation prior to 1980 was related to growth in median household income from 2000 to 2010. The difference between these two studies was the time span, suggesting that demographic transitions in historic districts may occur differently over the short, medium, and long term (Kinahan and Ruther 2020, 492). This can differ by location. Although in Manhattan historic districts are whiter and wealthier compared to the rest of the borough, in other boroughs of New York racial makeup in historic districts is similar or less white than the rest of the borough and in Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island historic district residents do not skew wealthier than the rest of the borough (New York Landmarks Conservancy and PlaceEconomics 2016, 12). In Seattle the Preservation Green

Lab found higher racial, ethnic, and economic diversity in mixed-vintage blocks than in newer neighborhoods. Similarly, mixed-vintage blocks were found to support high levels of density with more diversity of housing costs (2014).

However, this can be difficult when opposition to development is used to perpetuate exclusion. Einstein, Glick, and Palmer connect support for restricting development with places where more vocal community members have an outsize role in delaying new housing construction in neighborhoods. These individuals give many justifications for their opposition and often include expert voices but are frequently not demographically representative. Over time, the impact of this has been to slow the construction of housing units and push new construction to areas with weaker regulations or lower levels of public participation, which has implications for gentrification in lower income communities and communities of color (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020). Specific to streetcar suburbs, in Los Angeles some neighborhoods which saw investment in the street railway era later went through stages of disinvestment, revitalization, and gentrification regardless of historic designation (Lin 2019). To anticipate gentrification or displacement, planners should strive to anticipate the needs of future housing consumers and accommodate those needs, those who have historically been excluded from the neighborhood (Lemar 2015, 1570).

Unlike current neighbors, future residents and visitors don't always have a unifying characteristic that enables them to mobilize around policy decisions that impact their housing choices (Lemar 2015, 1567). Additionally, in cases where historic districts prevent development spillover impacts to other neighborhoods can mean accelerated development and potentially displacement in areas with more renters and people of color. The impacts of the housing crisis are disproportionately felt in communities of color, made worse by restrictive zoning which in

many cases was implemented to ensure residential exclusion based on race. Without housing options in high opportunity neighborhoods, access continues to be restricted (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 9).

Gentrification and exclusion have resulted in displacement and a lack of affordable housing in some historic districts. Edward Glaeser argues that designating some housing as historic turns access to architectural beauty into a luxury good. If consumers are willing to pay a premium to live in historic housing, that can have dangerous implications for exclusivity and affordability in historic district neighborhoods (Glaeser 2010). Although in some cases older housing can be more affordable than newer housing, rents vary greatly by neighborhood in cities including Seattle (City of Seattle, Office of Housing and Office of Planning & Community Development 2016). Whereas many whiter, wealthier neighborhoods have succeeded in limiting multifamily and rental housing by preventing zoning changes, and that housing has higher average rents, upzoning or redevelopment in neighborhoods with more renters and people of color means more vulnerability to displacement (Meeks and Murphy 2016). The positive relationship between historic districts and property values can increase rental costs as well, furthering the risk of displacement (Hamer 1998, 105). This narrative of gentrified and exclusive historic neighborhoods is exemplified by displacement of Black communities in Charleston and Philadelphia in what are now historic districts and preservation used as a tool to prevent accommodating housing quotas in Cranbury, New Jersey (Snyder and Thomas 2020). However, Tisher argues that there is a fine line between preservation as a tool for economic revitalization and gentrification as a cause of displacement (2017, 616) and in some cases, community storytelling and other preservation strategies are used to enhance identity-based ties to the built environment in the face of gentrification and displacement (Fine 2017; Lemar 2015, 1547).

2.3 Historic Districts and Development Opposition

Although not all historic districts are created with the intention of restricting new development, there are parallels between the literature on motivations of historic districts and motivations of development opposition. The example of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. shows these shared goals as well as an example of an historic district used for restricting development. The literature on development opposition more broadly highlights concerns held by residents as well as indicators of areas of compromise.

Georgetown, Washington, D.C.

In *Historic Capital: Preservation, Race, and Real Estate in Washington, D.C.* Cameron Logan's depiction of the history of preservation in the Georgetown neighborhood illustrates the parallels between the goals of historic districts and development opposition (2017). In Georgetown economic stagnation from the 1880s onward acted as a neighborhood preservative, keeping historic houses intact. As interest in living in an historic house in Georgetown grew from the 1920s onward, the age of homes added value and social and cultural prestige but access to living in such a home was restricted by race and economic status. Additionally, once cultural prestige was secured homeowners had an interest in maintaining the historic identity of the neighborhood, tied to its domesticity and architectural aesthetic. A neighborhood revival in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, spurred by preservation of historic houses, resulted in economic development, higher property and real estate values, and organized neighborhood groups (Logan 2017, 8-11).

Neighborhood groups in Georgetown advocated for early zoning policies in the 1920s to prevent apartments and hotels which were seen as fundamentally different from the homes in

Georgetown. Their arguments were similar to those heard today: the protection of natural beauty, exceptional architecture, property values, neighborhood character and scale, light, air, and open space against the construction of apartment buildings (Logan 2017, 13-16). In particular, the Georgetown Citizens' Association and the Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown set a precedent for arguments in favor of future historic districting in D.C.:

A promotion of the idea of home as the single-family house, an invocation of the progressive planning idea of the neighborhood as a collective household, a sense that this neighborhood and community ideal was threatened by urban growth and rapid change, and a belief that such growth and change was a form of uneven development that provided great financial benefits to a few real estate developers and a loss of value and amenity to the community at large (Logan 2017, 14).

This also parallels the motivations for zoning, with shared goals of orderliness, environmental control, and stability of property values (Logan 2017, 16). Stability, control, and investment in preservation in wealthier, better organized neighborhoods meant that those same neighborhoods were able to avoid characterizations of blight and subsequent urban renewal (Logan 2017, 28-29). Importantly, the narrative of residential historic districts in Washington, D.C. are centered on their character or atmosphere, an intangible element of the urban fabric which comprises the everyday, ordinary, background, or vernacular buildings which make up the majority of buildings in the city. In D.C. preservationists understood that these buildings were central to the economic value of preservation, based on maintaining and improving property values in the designated area (Logan 2017, 33). Georgetown illustrates the connection between preservation and development opposition, rooted in the desire for stability and environmental control and fear of erosion of property and aesthetic values by uses like apartment buildings. In these cases, the value in historic districting is based in buildings which some might consider to have no historic or cultural significance on their own, but as a district creates a character or atmosphere that conveys cultural and social prestige on residents.

Development Opposition Impacts and Motivations

As the example of Georgetown illustrates, protecting a neighborhood's residential patterns through historic districts has been one tool to oppose development. The literature on development opposition identifies the motivations of those who do so, including fear of lower home values and quality of public schools and parks. These fears of local impacts create the sentiment known as NIMBY (Not In My Backyard). For housing, this often appears as the belief that if housing must be more abundant and affordable, new units should be located elsewhere with no impact on one's own neighborhood. Although a NIMBY approach could prevent hazardous uses near vulnerable neighborhoods, for example, attendees of land use and zoning meetings are predominantly socioeconomically advantaged, opposed to new development, and not representative of their communities (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 13-16). Many neighborhood groups were empowered through a broader movement of participatory planning in response to urban renewal policies of the 1960s (Einstein, Glick, and Palmer 2020, 28). Although strong neighborhood groups can support equitable development, community ties, and prevent widespread destruction on the scale of urban renewal, their ability to delay or prevent projects in their own neighborhoods can have widespread impacts on housing availability and affordability citywide. These impacts are discussed in the previous section on housing affordability critiques of historic districts.

Exploring the demographics of development opposition, Andrew Whitemore and Todd BenDor (2019) find that age of the resident was significantly associated with more concern around size and bulk, public works and public services impacts, and a more unfavorable view of the new project overall. This might suggest that residents with longer neighborhood tenure have a stronger sense of guardianship, specific generational values, and more entrenched beliefs about

neighborhood character. Residents of exclusively single-family neighborhoods were significantly more likely to be concerned about property values and the type of people who the development would appeal to and significantly less likely to have a favorable view of the project. Although property values are a personal financial stake, the concern about residents of multifamily development could be more deeply related to the ideology of single-family neighborhoods and exclusion (437-438). Whittemore and BenDor identify that some groups are more likely to compromise around development and change: “those who strongly value their communities’ attractiveness, vitality, walkability, and bikability—are more likely to have specific concerns while remaining open to the development” (Whittemore and BenDor 2019, 424). These qualities in an historic district suggest that residents of those neighborhoods could be swayed to a middle ground where their interests are protected amidst new development. Jessica Trounstine’s findings suggest entrenched ideological opposition to multifamily housing. In the study, all subgroups preferred single-family dwellings to apartments. Common reasonings behind this preference are decreasing property values, increasing crime rates, lowering school quality, increasing traffic, and decreasing desirability. However, groups with a weaker preference for single-family housing could suggest where middle ground may be more likely: those who live in central cities, ideological liberals, people who currently live in apartments, smaller families, and renters (2023, 297).

2.4 Middle Ground between Historic Preservation and Housing Affordability

Although streetcar suburbs were originally accessible to middle- and working-class homeowners and renters, in many cases only a small subset of housing in these neighborhoods is considered affordable for those groups today. However, some authors identify the potential in

older, smaller, well-located housing stock to be affordable to middle-income groups without subsidy.

Preservation of Vernacular Multifamily Housing

As Seattle seeks to apply strategies for the preservation of existing affordable housing, the vernacular historic housing stock in streetcar suburb neighborhoods provides one source of examples. Historic preservation efforts and the need for housing affordability overlap in their interest in preventing the demolition of some historic housing. This framework for preservation necessitates centering the vernacular buildings, as Emily Milder (2016) highlights in the cases of preserving “architecturally unremarkable” buildings in Los Angeles. Similarly, Paul Groth focuses on “Generic Buildings and Cultural Landscapes as Sources of Urban History” in his article of that title (1988). Particularly relevant is “Visual Landscapes of a Streetcar Suburb,” published in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, edited by Groth and Todd Bressi (1997). In it, James Borchert describes the visual landscape of Lakewood, Ohio which was located along three streetcar lines from Cleveland. The suburb appears middle class at first glance, but in reality the various lakefront estates and apartment housing in their own sections actually make up a series of discrete visual landscapes. Additionally, building conversions over time mean that some multifamily buildings appear similar to detached single-family houses (1997).

Preservation of the vernacular and housing issues intersect around historic examples of housing density, variety, and affordability. Mid-rise and small multifamily forms have existed in American cities across history (Johnson 2021) and property owners in American cities have historically converted single-family houses to multifamily (Planning Advisory Service 1949). However, these forms are illegal to build in many urban neighborhoods today, including through

conversion. As cities decide whether to permit the construction of small and mid-scale multifamily housing in what are currently zoned as single-family neighborhoods, many point to the existing historic duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and small multifamily buildings (McNichols 2022b). Examples like Boston's North End, built prior to the invention of the elevator, demonstrate how high residential densities can be achieved while remaining at moderate heights (Speck 2012). In Baltimore, historic districts are denser compared to the rest of the city's residential areas due to small lots, small houses, and greater variety of housing types (PlaceEconomics 2021). These examples suggest that preservation efforts focused on vernacular housing in some residential neighborhoods are not inherently in conflict with density.

Specific to streetcar suburbs, in many cities the urban patterns driven by the streetcar have resulted in vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with considerably more residential density than automobile suburbs (Meeks and Murphy 2016). These qualities and others inform more recent literature which revisits streetcar suburbs in cities today to argue that this form creates walkable, transit-oriented, urban neighborhoods. William Fulton compared the intended product of New Urbanism, a walkable urban village with strong community ties, as similar to and inspired by the streetcar suburb's street grid and orientation around transit (1996, 7; 24). Pete Saunders (2020) identifies the mix of uses, strong community, adaptable street grid, and organization around transit as qualities of streetcar suburbs. He argues this provides a model for retrofitting auto-oriented suburbs and a suitable location for mid-scale residential infill to buffer between arterials with commercial and multifamily uses to single-family areas.

In some cases, the historic densities of streetcar suburbs are higher compared to more recent development. Leah Brooks and Byron Lutz (2014) identify commercial and multifamily buildings located on the avenues with single-family in the interior of the block as a hallmark of

streetcar suburbs in Los Angeles. They argue that zoning and agglomeration codified patterns around streetcar lines such that Los Angeles retains an imprint of past streetcar lines. Their study found that areas near former streetcar stops are denser than other areas of Los Angeles today due to more housing units on land as opposed to more people per unit. Density in the city has increased overall, but locations near former streetcar stops are still denser. Additionally, their measurements from 1950 onward show that relatively lower income people live close to the former streetcar. Emma Newcombe (2022) also considers the streetcar suburb a model for efficient transit-oriented development due to the mix of multi- and single-family buildings within a five-to-ten minute walk from commercial areas clustered around the streetcar stop. Denser development occurred prior to single-family zoning and was affordable to households with a variety of incomes.

Housing Affordability in Older Buildings

Just as with density, preservation of older housing is not inherently in conflict with affordability (Idziorek and Chalana 2019; Minner 2016). Units in older buildings can be a more affordable option than newly constructed units built in the same location (Historic Seattle 2020). Jane Jacobs' description of the role that older, smaller, ordinary buildings play in urban contexts has informed others' evaluation of historic fabric in a streetscape. Jacobs argued that buildings of a mix of ages provide access for a variety of incomes due to older buildings' depreciation and the rising cost of construction. In desirable districts, this is largely characterized as access for the middle class (Jacobs 1961, 190-193). PlaceEconomics, a preservation consulting firm, studies older housing stock to argue that smaller and more densely built historic neighborhoods are an important source of housing affordable to moderate-income renters. They argue that these older

areas, many of which pre-date single family zoning, are at risk of demolition without preservation protections (Frystak 2021).

In Seattle, for example, older buildings make up much higher percentages of existing mid-scale housing (in this analysis, defined as buildings with 2-19 units) as well as of the unsubsidized affordable housing stock. Small multifamily buildings can be more affordable due to their location outside of urban centers like Downtown or South Lake Union, and their age, as they are often older, more depreciated, and located in areas with less development activity (City of Seattle, Office of Housing and Office of Planning & Community Development 2016). In the case of single-family detached homes, some research has demonstrated how preservation supports housing supply by preventing vacancy or demolition without replacement (Kaul, Goodman, and Neal 2021). However, in the development context of Seattle neighborhoods like Wallingford, vacancy and demolition without replacement are less likely.

Middle housing typologies are also a potential source of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH). The loss of subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing units, which has been increasing over the past decade in King County, can occur when the affordability commitment expires, the building is sold and/or demolished, the building deteriorates, or rents are raised (National Housing Trust 2016; HUD User 2013; Schmidt and Proppe 2013; King County 2018). Due to demolition and rising rents in King County, loss of unsubsidized housing stock affordable to households earning between 50 to 80% AMI is accelerating. A subset of housing affordability strategies intend to prevent this trend through a focus on preserving NOAH (King County 2018). CoStar Group, a real estate data analysis firm, identified about 5.5 million units of NOAH in 2016. These units were mostly built more than 35 years ago and make up a higher proportion in smaller buildings with fewer units. In 2016, Seattle's almost 5,000 estimated

naturally occurring affordable buildings had an average asking rent of \$1,103 (Lupton and Vaisman 2016). Small buildings of the same scale identified by CoStar Group are more likely to be owned by single or small-scale property owners with less access to capital for rehabilitation than a large developer. This suggests that potential supports might include weatherization assistance, replacement requirements, and tax abatements for the preservation of affordable housing (HUD User 2013).

Historic preservationists with an interest in supporting housing affordability have coordinated with efforts to prevent the demolition of NOAH. The National Trust for Historic Preservation included support for creating and preserving affordable housing in their 2021 regulatory and legislative priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2021). Preservationists and housing affordability advocates have a shared goal of preventing the disrepair and demolition of NOAH, especially in cases where it would otherwise be redeveloped as luxury or market-rate (Lupton and Vaisman 2016). There are also shared arguments for the comparatively lower cost of preservation versus construction and preventing displacement of lower-income households from their communities by rehabilitating units rather than replacing them (HUD User 2013). Additionally, there is potential for higher quality housing through rehabilitation due to lower costs compared to new construction. This suggests a joint interest in reinvestment in older and historic neighborhoods through reuse of existing housing stock (Washington Trust for Historic Preservation n.d.; Rypkema 2003).

In Chicago, two- to four-unit buildings have long been a source of unsubsidized affordable housing and have lower average rents than both single-family houses and larger multifamily buildings (those with 10 or more units). These stacked flats are increasingly being demolished or converted to single-family homes. When stacked flats are demolished in

neighborhoods now zoned single-family, the unit count on the lot declines. This makes demolition both a preservation and housing supply issue. New residential towers cater to young professionals, whereas these two- to four-unit buildings are sized for households with children, often have yard space, and are often made more affordable by the ability to rent out or house family members in the other units (Podgers 2018).

The City of Chicago has supported preserving affordable rental housing in their Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental (PEAR) pilot program. Part of the funding for this pilot refinanced a portion of Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation's existing bank loan for the acquisition and rehabilitation of 18 foreclosed and vacant one- to four-unit structures. Through this partnership, 15 units in nine buildings will be preserved as affordable through 2047 (City of Chicago 2018). In select gentrifying neighborhoods, the City sought to slow demolitions and deconversions (from multi- to single-unit buildings) via a demolition tax and requirements for developers to maintain existing densities and apply for a permit to build a single-family home on blocks with two-flats. They found that this reduced deconversions and demolitions in the selected areas (Ionescu 2022). The Preservation Compact, housed at the Community Investment Corporation, a lender for affordable housing, is also focused on preserving small multifamily buildings in Chicago. With a focus on both subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing, the Preservation Compact offers rental assistance, redevelopment of middle housing, energy retrofits, interagency coordination, and advocacy for tax incentive legislation. Specific to stacked flats, they provide loans for acquisition and redevelopment of one- to four-unit buildings (The Preservation Compact, n.d.)

In Boston three-deckers are part of the city's character and history but after the 2008 recession were falling into disrepair and foreclosure. In 2012 the City of Boston, in partnership

with banks, launched the 3D initiative for grants and loans for renovation (Powers 2012). Although the City primarily positioned this effort as a bid to retain neighborhood character, it was also a strategy for preserving naturally occurring affordable housing. 3D is focused on assistance for moderate-income property owners and at the same time preserving the affordability of this older housing typology. At some points the program offered down payment assistance for new middle-income homebuyers aimed at people who will live in one unit and rent out the others but not those who already own rental properties (Shelterforce 2012). As of 2018 Boston continued to fund no interest loans for home repair and energy conservation updates as well as technical assistance to property owners (City of Boston 2018). Statewide, the Triple Decker Retrofit Pilot run by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Commission (MassCEC) is a model for coordination with environmental groups. MassCEC awarded money and technical support to both affordable and market-rate housing providers for retrofitting triple-deckers to high-efficiency, all-electric systems (Massachusetts Clean Energy Commission, n.d.) Programs in Boston as well as Chicago point to potential collaborations and financial models to connect the preservation of older, mid-scale housing with affordability goals.

Collaborations between Housing and Historic Preservation

The strategy of adaptive reuse has been used to rehabilitate historic buildings as affordable housing. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation promotes the use of federal rehabilitation tax incentives and state Special Tax Valuation for creating housing, including low to moderate income units (Washington Trust for Historic Preservation n.d.) Kreisman, writing on historic preservation in Seattle and King County in 1999, reported that special valuation had been used to support the creation of hundreds of units of affordable housing (19). Developers can

take advantage of tax credit opportunities for historic properties and low-income housing, and this approach can pencil for larger apartment buildings with subsidized housing. Additionally, larger buildings such as hotels are primed for conversion to apartment-style housing (Joe 2015). However, in many cases these larger reuse projects are only possible in already dense and mixed-use areas. For instance, an adaptive reuse ordinance in Los Angeles was successful in encouraging reuse of vacant buildings downtown and close to transit for commercial and mixed uses (Riggs and Chamberlain 2018).

The City of Los Angeles and the State of California have implemented tools to prevent demolition by incentivizing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. California's State Historical Building Code provides alternative building regulations for qualifying historic buildings which recognize the unique challenges of rehabilitation and reuse of older buildings as compared to new construction (California State Parks, Office of Historic Preservation n.d.) To counter concerns that demolitions and replacement with much larger homes are out of scale with historic fabric and driving out residents, L.A. adopted a revised and updated Baseline Mansionization Ordinance in 2017 to discourage demolition and incentivize infill homes to be smaller and at the scale of other development (Fine 2017, 31). Los Angeles' 1999 Adaptive Reuse Ordinance has been credited with facilitating more than 14,000 new units converted from underused office space. This streamlined and incentivized adaptive reuse projects through removing parking requirements and allowing an extra floor by right with a goal of economic revitalization in downtown L.A. The ordinance was expanded beyond downtown in 2003 (Garcia and Kwon 2021, 13). It is likely that comparatively fewer opportunities for large-scale adaptive reuse exist in streetcar suburb neighborhoods.

Preserving rent-stabilized buildings in Los Angeles, where a focus on the vernacular provides a more expansive and inclusive preservation movement, is one example of collaborations joining goals of historic preservation and affordable housing. Preservationists and housing advocates have worked together on landmarking, litigation, and infill and renovation to add units to a site without loss of the historic building. Based on these cases, recommendations for further enhancing the relationship between preservation and affordable housing include incorporating preservation training in tenant advocacy (Milder 2016). Puget Sound Regional Council's guidance on preservation and rehabilitation of existing multifamily buildings advises jurisdictions to limit the loss of affordable multifamily units in growth areas. They suggest transfer of development rights, alternative ownership models (such as community land trusts, limited equity, co-ops, and lease purchase programs), and affordability covenants as tools to support this effort (Puget Sound Regional Council 2020).

Historic preservation organizations contributing to housing affordability work primarily rely on revolving funds for acquisition and renovation of properties to be sold or rented with income restrictions, as well as some facade grant programs. Historic Seattle, a local preservation education and advocacy organization, has acquired or entered into a limited partnership with the owner of historic housing (usually locally designated landmarks) and utilized tax credits for their renovation and in some cases conversion to subsidized housing (Historic Seattle n.d.a; Historic Seattle n.d.b). The organization has also advised housing advocates on the historic review process (Wood 2014).

In Seattle, Community Roots Housing has acquired historic apartment buildings in the past and is committed to preservation of its existing portfolio, which includes buildings from the streetcar era as seen in figure 1 (Community Roots Housing, n.d.a). The Bremer Building in

Belltown (fig. 2) was built in 1924, serves households earning 30-50% of area median income, and is listed by the City of Seattle as an historic site (Community Roots Housing, n.d.b). Historic Seattle recognized the Bremer Apartments project team in 2022 with an Outstanding Stewardship Award for the seismic retrofit and envelope and systems improvements to the building and as an example of the ways in which preservation can assist in retaining affordable housing, limiting climate impacts, and minimizing displacement (Historic Seattle 2022a).



Figure 1. The Berneva building in Capitol Hill was built in 1914 and serves households earning 30% and 40% of area median income. Source: Community Roots Housing.



Figure 2. The Bremer Apartments. Source: Historic Seattle 2022.

Both King County Housing Authority and Seattle Housing Authority work to preserve existing affordable units. Seattle Housing Authority acquires and preserves units to make them available to people with low incomes. Their portfolio includes single-family houses and small multiplexes, in some cases with renovations to add bedrooms to offer affordable housing to larger households (Seattle Housing Authority 2019). For some affordable housing developers, the ability to convert a property to contain multiple units can make acquisition and maintenance possible when doing so for a single-family dwelling would be cost-prohibitive (Mills and Thornton 2023). King County Housing Authority, with support from private partners such as Microsoft, also acquires properties at risk of redevelopment or rent hikes to stabilize the rents at below market rates (Microsoft News Center 2019). Historic housing can also be acquired by a community land trust. For example the Delridge House, a bungalow like many in Wallingford, was Seattle’s first community land trust home in 2001. It was acquired, moved, and renovated by

Homestead Community Land Trust with support from interagency partnerships. The house is kept affordable to low- and medium- income families (Homestead Community Land Trust n.d.) These examples show how housing organizations can be partners in preservation and how preservation organizations can preserve housing as affordable.

Limitations

As historic urban neighborhoods become more desirable and in-demand and prices for urban housing and land rise, even older, smaller housing in cities such as Seattle becomes less affordable (Meeks and Murphy 2016, 14). Additionally, the approach of preserving unsubsidized affordable housing targets moderate-income households. Different solutions are needed to address housing supply for extremely low-income households (National Low Income Housing Coalition 2016). Lastly, there is a key difference between units that are affordable to a certain household and that household's access to an affordable unit. A 2016 analysis by the City of Seattle found that a third of units affordable to moderate-income households were being occupied by households with higher incomes (Office of Housing and Office of Planning & Community Development 2016). These factors demonstrate how although in many cases older, smaller housing can be a source of unsubsidized affordable housing, those opportunities in many of Seattle's streetcar suburbs today are limited. However, partnerships between housing and preservation organizations suggest potential strategies for affordability in historic buildings.

3. Methods

This thesis follows three research questions to understand the context of the nomination of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District to the National Register and the conflicts which arose from the event. The first research question establishes an understanding of the historic district based on morphology, sociology, and history. Next, the second research question explores the affordability landscape of the neighborhood based on historical accounts, parcel-level change over time, and a snapshot of current housing affordability in Wallingford. Lastly, the third research question analyzes events surrounding the nomination through press reports, public comment, and statements published by stakeholder organizations. Informed by the context of the first two research questions surrounding the historic district and its housing affordability, I identify conflicts between perspectives expressed in these sources as well as areas of common ground.

3.1 Understanding the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District

The first research question is: how do we understand the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District? For the purposes of this case study an understanding is developed through three lenses: morphology, sociology, and history.

3.1.1 Morphology

Understanding of the historic district's urban morphology is based on site visits with reconnaissance using photographs and observations and supported by parcel and boundary data from the Nomination Form and the feasibility study completed by Northwest Vernacular (Pratt and Howard 2018; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022). Photographs

and site visit observations inform the characteristics and edge conditions of the historic district. The site visits were conducted on foot around the boundaries and through the historic district. Northwest Vernacular’s Nomination Form provided the number of buildings, present uses, and boundaries of the historic district. Present use data from King County Assessor is spatially represented using GIS. King County’s 39 categories of present use are compiled to four: single family; multifamily; commercial, industrial, institutional; and parking, right-of-way, other (table 3.1). In GIS, a shapefile with parcel data was merged with King County’s present use data using the parcel number as the key. On maps created for this research the historic district boundary is an approximation created in GIS based on the maps and descriptions provided in the Nomination Form. Together, this information informs a description of the boundaries and features of the historic district to understand it from a morphological perspective.

Table 3.1. *Present use categories for spatial representation*

King County Present Use	Category
Single Family (Res Use/Zone); Single Family (C/I Zone); Vacant (single family)	Single Family
4-Plex; Apartment; Apartment(Mixed Use); Condominium(Mixed Use); Condominium(Residential); Duplex; Retirement Facility; Rooming House; Townhouse Plat; Triplex; Vacant(multi-family)	Multifamily
Bank; Church/Welfare/Relig Srvc; Conv Store with Gas; Daycare Center; Governmental Service; Grocery Store; Historic Prop(Office); Industrial(Light); Marina; Medical/Dental Office; Mini Lube; Mini Warehouse; Movie Theater; Office Building; Park, Public(Zoo/Arbor); Post Office/Post Service; Restaurant(Fast Food); Restaurant/Lounge; Retail Store; Retail(Line/Strip);	Commercial, Industrial, Institutional

School(Private); School(Public); Service Building; Single Family(C/I Use); Tavern/Lounge; Terminal(Marine); Terminal(Marine/Comm Fish); Vacant(Commercial); Vacant(Industrial); Vet/Animal Control Srvc; Warehouse	
Easement; Parking(Assoc); Parking(Commercial Lot); Parking(Garage); Right of Way/Utility, Road; Utility, Public	Parking, Right-of-Way, Other

Source: King County. 2012. "Present Use for KC Parcels." KGIS Center.

https://www5.kingcounty.gov/sdc/Metadata.aspx?Layer=parcel_area_presentuse#Description

Notes: To spatially represent categories of present land use in Wallingford and the historic district, King County Assessor's 39 classifications on the left were compiled into the four broad categories on the right.

3.1.2 Sociology

To understand the historic district from a sociological perspective, the City of Seattle neighborhood snapshot for Wallingford (2018) is briefly reviewed and compared with data from the 1940 Census on tracts E1, E2, and E3 which cover the historic district and additional areas to the south, east, and west. 1940 Census data for age, race, education, and unemployment in Seattle Census tracts was accessed via Social Explorer. The 2018 neighborhood snapshot uses data from the American Community Survey 2009-2013 five-year estimates for race/ethnicity, renter households, age, language, education, median household income, unemployment, and poverty in Wallingford and compared to citywide. The City's boundaries for the Wallingford neighborhood in comparison with the boundaries for the historic district are mapped in figure 3. Neighborhood and Census tract-level analysis provides general demographic context without the ability to isolate data for the historic district. However, present use and historical accounts show a higher concentration of multifamily uses outside of the historic district. The southern part of the neighborhood was also historically closer to industry. These differences could change

demographic qualities like age, income, and renter households in the historic district as compared to the neighborhood as a whole.

3.1.3 History

The historic district is called the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District and the nomination highlights its significance as an example of streetcar-driven development. To understand elements of that form, literature on the development of streetcar suburbs in American cities, including Seattle, is reviewed. At the neighborhood level, development histories are characterized based on the 1975 Wallingford urban design inventory by Folke Nyberg and Victor Steinbruek on behalf of Historic Seattle, Thomas Veith's 2005 context statement for Wallingford, and the 2022 National Register nomination for the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District written by Northwest Vernacular on behalf of Historic Wallingford. These sources were chosen because of their focus on Wallingford's built environment, because they represent perspectives from three different time periods, and because the Nomination Form includes data specific to the historic district. Walkability, connection to transit, and connection to urban centers are qualities of streetcar suburbs identified in the literature (McAlester et al. 2013; Bergman 2021). The Walk Score and Transit Score for the neighborhood (aggregated from walkability and transit access measures by Walk Score) connect this development history to the present. The Walk Score and Transit Score for Wallingford are included alongside scores for Seattle citywide and for core downtown neighborhoods to understand shared qualities of former streetcar suburbs and comparisons to other areas.

3.2 Wallingford's Affordability Landscape

This research characterizes housing affordability in Wallingford as an historic streetcar suburb to provide context for the tensions which arose in the nomination of a section of Wallingford to the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district in 2022. To do so, the second research question is: what is the housing affordability landscape in Wallingford and in the historic district? Affordability is understood through the presence of diverse housing typologies and the historic demographics of housing consumers; the presence of potential affordability in older, smaller, and more dense housing today; and a brief review of the cost of consuming housing (through rental or homeownership) for a newcomer to Wallingford in 2023.

3.2.1 Historical Accounts of Housing

To understand historical perspectives on housing affordability and access in Wallingford, I review historical accounts for how housing in the neighborhood has been represented over time. Historic housing typologies and characteristics of residents are primarily from the 1975 Wallingford Urban Design Inventory by Folke Nyberg and Victor Steinbruek on behalf of Historic Seattle and the National Register nomination for the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District compiled by Northwest Vernacular on behalf of Historic Wallingford. The Nomination Form includes typologies, changes in zoning over time, and sociological characteristics of residents: historic U.S. Census data on profession, country of origin, and household structure. The 1975 inventory includes building typologies and broad characterizations of age, class, and household structure in the neighborhood.

3.2.2 Parcel Analysis of Change over Time

Parcel-level analysis shows change over time in the built structure and the property value for selected parcels within the historic district. Parcels were selected in order to compare an assortment of typologies: duplex, triplex, apartment building, and single family. In addition to selecting one parcel per typology, parcels were selected based on availability of historic tax valuation data. Changes to property value over time were tracked using King County Assessor parcel data accessed online and King County Assessor Real Property Record Cards in the Washington State Digital Archives. Changes in property value are based on total taxable value for the year valued about every 10 years with some variety depending on which years data is available. One value from about every ten years was selected to create a timeline of taxable value for each parcel from 1938 to 2022. The value of these parcels over time is compared to median home values in Seattle as a whole using the 1940 Census median home value and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 five-year estimate for median home value of owner-occupied units. 1940 Census data for Seattle Census tracts was accessed via Social Explorer and ACS estimates were accessed via the U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts for the city of Seattle. Building footprint is tracked over time based on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1919 and 1950 accessed online via the Library of Congress as well as OpenStreetMaps aerial perspective today. The three images from 1919, 1950, and today were visually compared to identify changes in building footprint with some supplementary information on building conversions or additions from the King County Assessor or the Census as reported in the Nomination Form.

3.2.3 Current Affordability

The current affordability landscape in Wallingford is described by zoning, land use, and growth as well as rental and homeownership opportunities available in the historic district. Affordability is first assessed through the presence of or potential for a diversity of housing types in the historic district. The presence of diverse housing options in the historic district is based on present use data from the King County Assessor and the Nomination Form. Present use categories are grouped as single family and multifamily (table 3.1). The single-family parcels as a percentage of all parcels and multifamily parcels as a percentage of all parcels were calculated for the neighborhood and the historic district. The potential for diverse housing types is understood through zoning designations and growth analysis from the City of Seattle. Current zoning tells us what housing types can currently be built in the historic district and growth analysis tells us Wallingford's suitability for growth, development capacity for housing, growth projections, and building permit activity. This information was provided by the City of Seattle Office and Planning and Community Development and Department of Construction and Inspections. Data on development capacity and housing growth projections are for the Wallingford Residential Urban Village, which only overlaps in part with the historic district. Building permit activity and real estate listings were both isolated to the boundaries of the historic district.

Current examples of housing in Wallingford were selected from those on the market in the historic district with listings on Zillow.com in winter and spring 2023. Costs based on the listings are assessed to determine their affordability. Rental housing is determined to be affordable if households with annual incomes at 80% of the area median income (AMI) and below could pay for them without cost burden. This threshold was chosen because HALA seeks

to create and preserve affordable housing across the income spectrum of people with annual incomes at 80% AMI or less (Seattle Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda 2015, 13). Cost burden is defined as housing priced at more than 30% of income. More specifically, Seattle's 2022 Income and Rent Limits were used to define maximum rent (without cost burden) for units with different numbers of bedrooms (City of Seattle, Office of Housing 2022). Additionally, American Community Survey data for the three Census tracts covering the historic district but extending beyond its boundaries provides the number of renters paying 30 to 49 percent and 50 percent or more of income on rent. The three tracts in comparison with the boundaries for the historic district are mapped in figure 38. Data for the three tracts is combined for a summary of the area.

The affordability of homeownership was analyzed by comparing Zillow, Redfin, and Rocket Homes measurements of home prices (median and average) compared to citywide data. This data is at the zip code level, which again casts a broader geographical scope than just the historic district. The area of zip code 98103 in comparison with the boundaries for the historic district are mapped in figure 37. The zip code level is taken as a representation of housing prices in the area. Specific listings from within the historic district are compared to zip code level and citywide data to understand their relative affordability.

3.3 Review of Press Reports and Public Comment

This research reviews press reports and public comment related to the National Register nomination for the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District to answer the third research question: what are the tensions between community members' perspectives on historic

preservation, density, and affordability as they relate to the designation of a residential historic district in a streetcar suburb?

Key word searches for “Wallingford historic district,” “Wallingford meridian streetcar historic district,” and “Wallingford housing affordability” were made in University of Washington’s Newsbank/Access World News and in Google News. The relevant keywords which appear in each article are listed in table 3.2. All resulting articles about the historic district nomination were included, which include one from each of *The Seattle Times*, *MyNorthwest.Com*, *The Urbanist*, and *KUOW*. Other articles containing keywords were also included as context, particularly if they relate to local land use and housing policy. Public comment includes all letters submitted to the Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and posted in the meeting packet. This includes 34 letters in support of the historic district, 23 letters opposed to the historic district, and 9 student letters (table 3.3). All student letters are in opposition to the historic district. Some letters represent the opinions of more than one individual, such as letters from organizations or letters with multiple signatures, but are counted as one letter here. All letters were read and each packet was considered as a category; specific individual opinions from letters are called out and cited in text. Other perspectives include board member comments approving the nomination from the video recording of the Washington ACHP meeting and position statements posted on websites of stakeholder organizations Historic Wallingford in support of the nomination and Wallingford for All opposed to the nomination (table 3.4).

Table 3.2. *News articles reviewed and their keywords*

	Keywords
Beekman, Daniel. “Dozens pack city hearing	Wallingford

on housing affordability.” <i>The Seattle Times</i> . June 22, 2016: B6.	Affordable/Affordability Housing
Bowman, Nick. “Wallingford Could Be Next Battleground in Seattle’s War for Density.” <i>MyNorthwest.Com</i> . June 20, 2019.	Wallingford Historic District/Preservation Affordable/Affordability Housing
Chapman, Paul. “The Historic Preservation We Need: Four Floors and Corner Stores.” <i>The Urbanist</i> . March 18, 2021.	Wallingford Affordable/Affordability Housing Historic District/Preservation
Eliason, Mike. “The Narrowing of a Neighborhood: Wallingford.” <i>Sightline Institute</i> . May 24, 2018.	Wallingford Affordable/Affordability Housing
Groover, Heidi. “Wallingford Seeks Historic Status; Some Worry It’s a Roadblock to Density.” <i>The Seattle Times</i> . October 17, 2022.	Wallingford Historic District/Preservation Housing
McNichols, Joshua. “Seattle’s Wallingford Neighborhood Gets ‘historic district’ Status.” <i>KUOW</i> . October 14, 2022.	Wallingford Historic District/Preservation Housing Affordable/Affordability
McNichols, Joshua. “Wallingford Fought Developers Decades Before It Was Hip.” <i>KUOW</i> . October 24, 2018.	Wallingford Affordable/Affordability Housing Historic District/Preservation
Morales, Margaret. “Returning Seattle to Its Roots in Diverse Housing Types,” <i>Sightline Institute</i> . March 1, 2017.	Wallingford Affordable/Affordability Housing Historic District/Preservation
Trumm, Doug. “Wallingford Historic District Gets State Nod.” <i>The Urbanist</i> . October 19, 2022.	Wallingford Historic District/Preservation Housing Affordable/Affordability

Notes: Rows highlighted in orange are articles which directly cover the nomination. Articles not highlighted were results of the searches unrelated to the nomination itself but which cover similar or related events or issues.

Table 3.3. *Public comment letters posted by the Washington ACHP*

	Number of Letters
Letters in Support	34
Letters in Opposition	23
Student Letters	9

Source: Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, “Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.”

<https://dahp.wa.gov/historic-registers/washington-state-advisory-council-on-historic-preservation>

Notes: Some letters were signed by multiple people or an organization but only count as one letter here.

Table 3.4 *Other sources of perspectives on the nomination*

	Position
Washington ACHP - Board Comment in Public Meeting accessed via Zoom call recording	Support
Wallingford For All - Frequently Asked Questions webpage	Opposition
Historic Wallingford - “Wallingford Historic District - North” webpage	Support

Each press report, public comment, board comment, or statement was reviewed to identify motivations behind support for or opposition to the historic district and references to housing density, housing affordability, and historic preservation and/or place history, identity, or character were recorded in a spreadsheet. References are not limited to use of those specific terms. Broadly, references to historic preservation include any comment about maintaining place history, memory, and identity through the built environment. References to density include any comment about diverse housing typologies and development to accommodate population growth. References to affordability include any comment about the cost of housing and access to rental and homeownership opportunities at a variety of income levels.

Key points of conflict between perspectives expressed in press reports, public comment, board comment, and statements are identified based on this analysis. Common goals between supporters and opponents of the historic district are highlighted as potential grounds for future policymaking.

4. Case Study: Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District

The historical development of Wallingford has resulted in many of the qualities of streetcar suburbs as described in the literature. However, as in other examples of streetcar suburbs, exclusivity and affordability are in conflict with historic patterns. To understand how the historic district fits into this narrative, I first outline relevant morphological, sociological, and historical characteristics of the historic district and neighborhood. Although historical accounts of the neighborhood describe its middle-class character, current housing options are more restricted. To characterize the current affordability landscape in the historic district and neighborhood, I review historical accounts of housing access, trace selected parcels' typology and value over time, and note current listings and housing prices in the historic district. Housing affordability is a citywide issue, causing the City of Seattle to convene the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) in 2014 and implement its recommendations. The central events of this case study are the City's implementation of HALA and the National Register Historic District designation in Wallingford. Tensions between the goals of HALA and the implications of the National Register historic district are identified from press reports, public comment, and organizations' statements regarding the historic district nomination. Tensions are categorized as policy intent versus impact; experiences of affordability: accessible versus exclusionary; sense of place: aesthetic versus historic; neighborhood form versus function; and demolition: destruction versus growth.

4.1 Understanding the Historic District

A closer understanding of the Wallingford historic district contextualizes the events of this case study. This understanding is developed through the morphological characteristics of its

buildings, boundaries, and streets; neighborhood demographics; and historical patterns of development. These three aspects together provide a general understanding. Whereas morphology can be narrowed to the scale of the historic district, the demography and history in this case study apply to the Wallingford neighborhood more broadly. Figure 3 shows the historic district location relative to the Wallingford neighborhood and Seattle.

Case Study Location

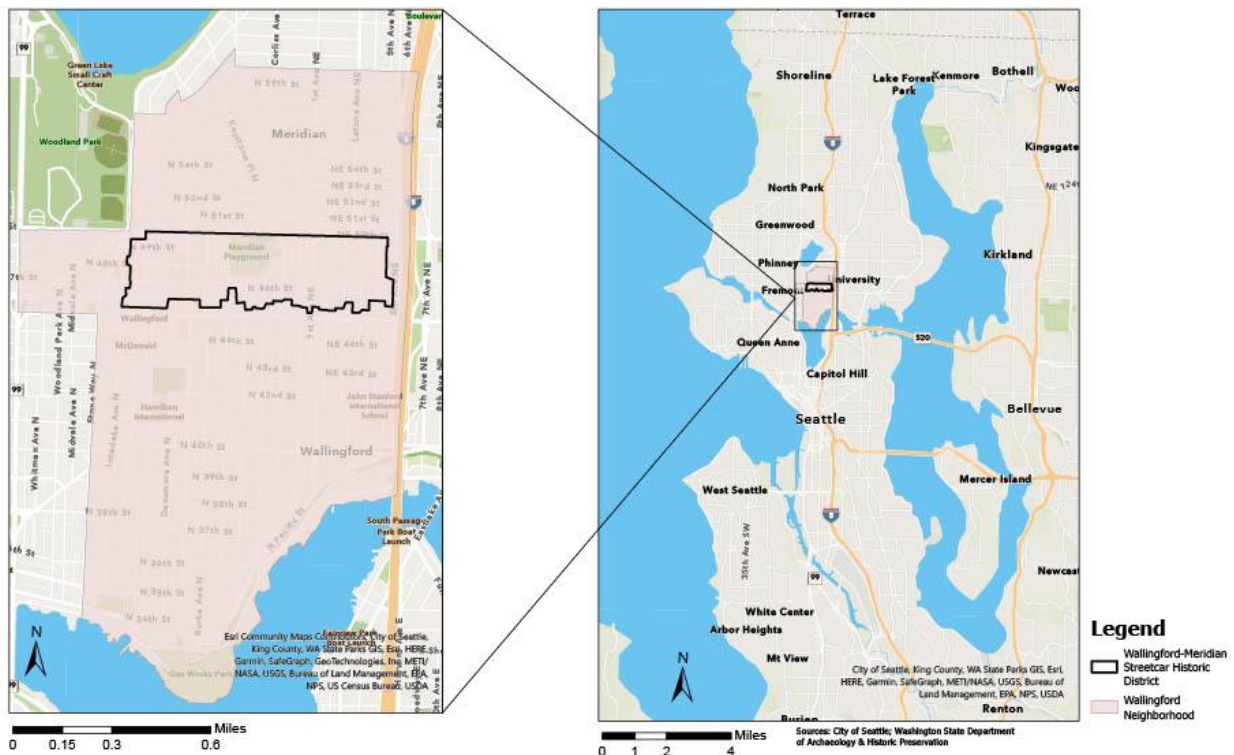


Figure 3. The case study location, the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District, is outlined in black in the context of the Wallingford neighborhood (in light pink) and the city of Seattle (right). Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022); Seattle City Clerk’s Office.

4.1.1 Morphology

The historic district comprises 929 buildings: 643 primary buildings and 286 secondary buildings which are mostly garages (table 4.1). About 92% of primary buildings within the

district were constructed during the period of significance from 1901 to 1941 (table 4.2). Presently the historic district is almost entirely residential uses, and the residences are dominantly single-family detached dwellings (fig. 4). In addition to residential uses, there is one commercial building, five religious facility buildings, and one former religious facility operated by a non-profit (table 4.3). This creates visual alignment along the streetscape, as most of the residences are 1 ½ stories in height, the architectural style is predominantly Craftsman (table 4.4), and buildings are laid out on a gridded pattern of residential streets (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 3-4). The collection of properties in Craftsman and Craftsman-interpretation styles lend a concentration of distinctive characteristics from early 20th century Pacific Northwest architecture. These styles are noted for being simple, artistic, and harmonious at the district scale (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 279).

Table 4.1. *Inventory of buildings in the historic district*

Status	Number of Primary Buildings	Number of Secondary Buildings	Totals
Contributing	484	159	643
Non-contributing	159	127	286
Totals	643	286	929
NRHP Listed	1 - Not included in resource count (Home of the Good Shepherd)		

Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022, 3).

Table 4.2. *Primary buildings in the historic district by decade of construction*

Construction Date	Number of Primary Buildings
1901-1909	119
1910-1919	282

1920-1929	185
1930-1939	6
1940-1949	5
1950-1959	5
1960-1969	6
1970-1979	4
1980-1989	3
1990-1999	2
2000-2009	13
2010-2021	13
Total	643

Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022, 3).

Notes: Buildings in the first four rows and some in the fifth row were constructed during the historic district's period of significance.

Table 4.3. *Primary buildings in the historic district by present use classification*

Classification	Number of Buildings
Commercial	1
Domestic - Multifamily	32
Domestic - Single-family	570
Domestic - Single-family converted to multifamily	34
Religious Facility	5
Other (former religious facility operated by non-profit)	1

Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022, 4).

Present Use: Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District

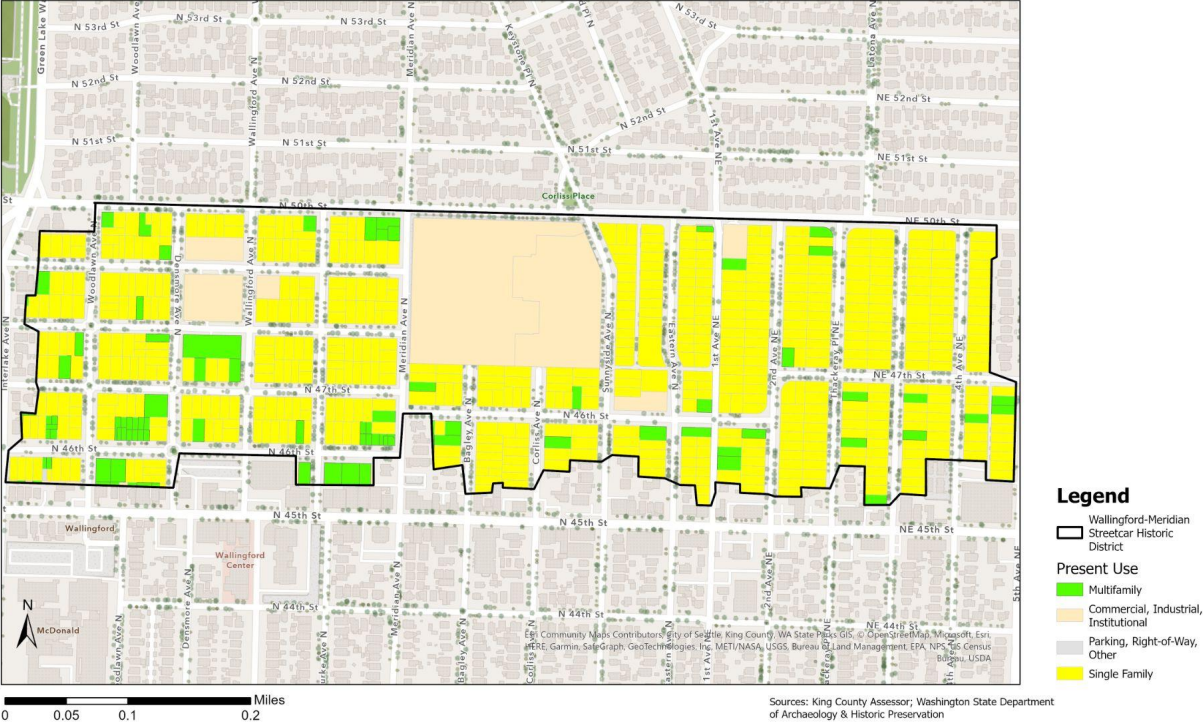


Figure 4. Present use categories in the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District. Sources: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022); King County Assessor.

Table 4.4. Number of buildings in the historic district by architectural style

Style	Number of Buildings
Arts and Crafts	2
Classical Revival	94
Collegiate Gothic	1
Colonial Revival	68
Craftsman	315
Dutch Colonial Revival	26
Mission Revival	1
Neo-classical	1
Queen Anne - Free Classic	4

Prairie	4
Swiss Chalet	2
Tudor Revival and Tudor Composite	24

Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (2022, 4).

Notes: Buildings included in this table were all built within the period of significance.

Streets have concrete sidewalks and curbs, planting strips with trees, and some alleys (fig. 5) in the eastern portion of the district (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 9). Gridded streets in the historic district are primarily neighborhood residential streets (fig. 6). There are arterials to the north, south and west of the district’s boundaries. Arterials on Meridian Ave N, Thackeray Pl NE, and Latona Ave NE run north-south through the district (fig. 7). The district’s morphology resembles the harmonious visual characteristics of historic residential suburbs as described in the literature.



Figure 5. An alley in the historic district off of Sunnyside Ave N. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 6. A neighborhood access street in the historic district with trees in the planting strip and cars parked on both sides. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 7. Meridian Ave N is an arterial with bus service which runs north-south through the historic district. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

The historical significance of the district is in part due to its intactness as an example of a Seattle streetcar suburb from the early 20th century (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 279). *A Field Guide to American Houses* characterizes streetcar suburbs as:

- Linear neighborhoods developed along streetcar lines
- Houses generally detached with narrow end toward street
- Narrow lots, generally thirty to fifty feet wide
- Shallow side yards
- Front-yard setbacks and front porches are typical
- Paved sidewalks
- Locations closest to streetcar line preferred
- Garages typically detached, if present (McAlester et al. 2013, 67).

The *Field Guide* summarizes how these characteristics developed as new forms of transportation allowed residential development further from the urban core. This development pattern comprised lot sizes large enough for individual yards but narrow enough to facilitate short walking distances to the streetcar, some diversity of housing types but primarily detached single-family housing after 1900, and a strong association with middle class households (McAlester et al. 2013, 67). In a 1967 article in *Traffic Quarterly*, George Smerk outlines how the electric streetcar allowed urban expansion to about five miles outside the city core, while retaining acceptable commute times of about 30 minutes. Although typically housing was patterned two to four blocks on either side of the streetcar line, lot sizes and housing typologies varied by neighborhood and city (Smerk 1967).

The Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District was nominated to the National Register under the multi property listing *Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States*. The narrative highlights development patterns which align with streetcar service. This includes the distinguishing characteristics of the platting as a result of real estate speculation around transit: about half of the historic district is characterized by blocks without alleyways, which creates

more closely located houses (fig. 8). Many lots are narrow but some residences span two lots. Buildings located on this grid create regular building frontage throughout the neighborhood, with the exceptions being the large open space on the sites of the Good Shepherd building (fig. 9) and St. Benedict School. Although businesses along N 45th Street transitioned to more automobile-oriented forms over time, the street grid and lot sizes in residential areas remain at a scale that facilitates walkability (fig. 10; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 6).



Figure 8. Closely located houses with narrow lots along Densmore Ave N in the historic district. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 9. The primary open space in the historic district is on the site of the Good Shepherd building. Photos above and below show two boundaries between residences in the historic district and the open space. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

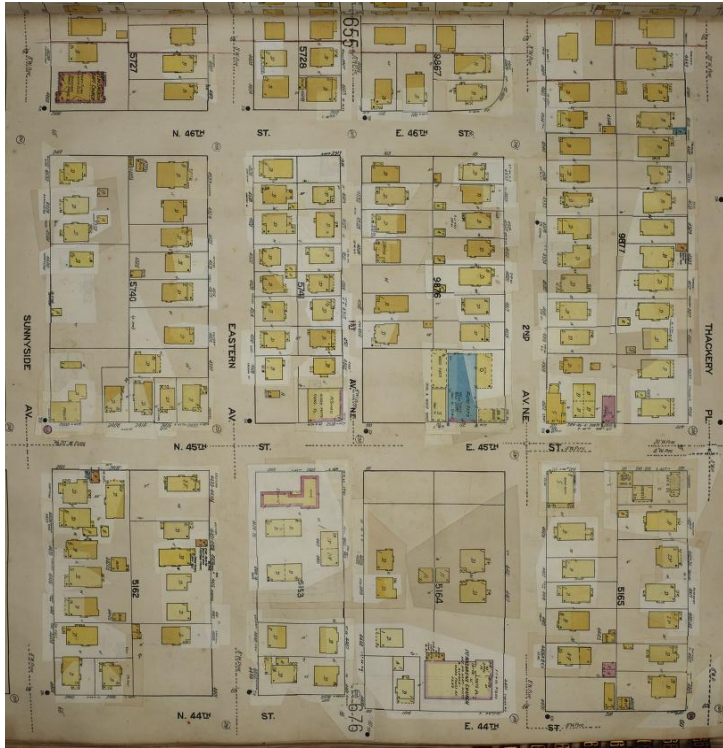


Figure 10. One section of the historic district between N 44th, N 46th, Thackery Place, and Sunnyside Avenue, represented in the Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1950 (above) shows the block, lot, and street patterns. The same patterns remain in an aerial map from 2023 (below). Sources: Library of Congress; OpenStreetMaps.

The boundaries of the historic district roughly follow N and NE 50th Street to the north, 5th Avenue NE to the east, NE 45th Street and N 46th Street to the south, and Interlake Avenue N to the west (fig. 4). The east edge along 5th Avenue is directly adjacent to Interstate 5 (I-5). The south and west boundaries separate the residential uses in the historic district from commercial areas along N and NE 45th St to the south and Stone Way N to the west. Historic streetcar lines on N 45th St and Interlake Avenue both fall close to but outside of the historic district boundaries (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 1-5). Northwest Vernacular's feasibility study for a Wallingford historic district suggests that preliminary boundaries were drawn based on significance, development patterns, and integrity. Integrity was informed by the number of properties within the potential district, the ratio of contributing to noncontributing properties, the number of properties built during the period of significance, and the platting. The boundary avoids commercial properties on N 45th Street which were considered to be non-contributing (fig. 11). After the feasibility study, boundaries were later refined based on closer analysis of properties which should be included and excluded, resulting in the boundaries of the district as they appear in the Nomination Form (2019, 15-16).

The edge conditions where the historic district meets areas outside its boundaries include arterial roads to the south, north, and west as well as commercial and multifamily areas along many stretches of those streets. I-5 is a strong, linear physical barrier to the east (fig. 12). Several newer buildings, such as townhomes, have been built close to N 45th St (fig. 13). These buildings, which would be non-contributing, have been removed from the historic district resulting in the irregular boundary line to the south. By contrast, the boundary to the north runs flat along N 50th Street. Although there are some commercial uses on N 50th Street (fig. 14), across it from the historic district the patterns of single-family residential development continue

with great similarity to those within the district (fig. 15). The edge conditions inform an understanding of the historic district as separated from its surroundings by arterial streets, I-5, new construction, and multifamily and commercial uses while at the same time indistinguishable from many areas directly outside of its boundaries.



Figure 11. Residential uses meet commercial uses on N 45th St at the edge of the historic district. In this photo a strong tree barrier separates a business' parking lot from a residence. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 12. Residential uses meet I-5 at the edge of the historic district. In this photo I-5 is on the other side of the fence and greenery to the left. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 13. The detached house in the right side of the photo was built in 1914 but is non-contributing in the historic district (although the secondary building on the parcel, not pictured, is contributing). The townhouses in the left side of the image are not within historic district boundaries. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 14. The transition between residential to commercial uses on the north boundary of the historic district. In the far right, N 50th St serves as the northern edge of the district. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.



Figure 15. N 50th St serves as the northern edge of the historic district. Across the boundary, residential uses continue in a similar pattern to that of the historic district. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

4.1.2 Sociology

The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018 neighborhood snapshot compares demographics of the Wallingford neighborhood to citywide statistics (table 4.5). The snapshot draws on data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS) for Wallingford, which extends far beyond the historic district boundaries (refer to figure 3 for a comparison) but provides a general idea of neighborhood demographics including the historic district. This is especially relevant for data such as renter households which may differ within the neighborhood between areas with more and less multifamily housing. In Wallingford, renter households make up 56.2% of residents compared to 53% citywide. Wallingford has a lower percentage of people under 18 years of age (12.8) than citywide (15), but also a lower percentage of people age 65 and older than citywide (8.5 and 11, respectively) (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018). Some similar measures were included in the 1940 Census, where three tracts cover the historic

district and surrounding areas (table 4.6). In the 1940 Census, tracts around the historic district contained a similar percentage of people age 19 and under to the city as a whole (25.1 and 25.8, respectively) and of people age 65 and older (9.4 and 9.6, respectively) (Social Explorer 2023c).

In the 2018 snapshot Wallingford is whiter than Seattle as a whole with 20.9% people of color compared to 33% citywide (neighborhoods). A full breakdown of race and ethnicity in the neighborhood is provided in figure 16. In the 1940 Census, race was divided by white and non-white. The Census tracts around the historic district were 0.3% non-white compared to 0.5% in the city as a whole (Social Explorer 2023c). In Wallingford 11.9% of households speak languages other than English at home compared to 22% citywide. Wallingford has higher percentages of residents with high school education or higher and Bachelor's degree or higher compared to citywide (neighborhoods). Similarly, 49.3% of the population aged 25 or older had a high school education or more and 9.6% had four years of college or more in the 1940 Census tracts around the historic district. This is higher than citywide measures at 22.8% for high school and 2.3% for college (Social Explorer 2023c). Median household income in Wallingford is \$68,430 in the 2018 snapshot, which is \$3,153 higher than the citywide median. Lastly, the unemployment rate is 2.8% in Wallingford and 7% citywide (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018). In the 1940 Census the unemployment rate was 7.9% around the historic district and 12.2% citywide (Social Explorer 2023c). This demographic analysis conducted by the Department of Neighborhoods characterizes Wallingford as comparatively middle-aged, whiter, more educated, more English-speaking, and higher paid in the context of Seattle. Wallingford also has a higher percentage of renters compared to the city as whole; additional information on renter households is provided in table 4.12 (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018). Comparatively, Wallingford was similar to citywide measures for age and

whiteness in the 1940 Census, but had higher education levels and lower unemployment compared to the city as a whole (Social Explorer 2023c). This analysis contributes to a general understanding of the historic district as one subset of the neighborhood.

Table 4.5. *Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018 Wallingford snapshot*

	Wallingford	Citywide
Renter households (%)	56.2	53
People under 18 years of age (%)	12.8	15
People age 65 and older (%)	8.5	11
Persons of color (%)	20.9	33
Languages other than English spoken at home (%)	11.9	22
High school or higher (%)	98.6	93
Bachelor’s degree or higher (%)	78.2	57
Median household income (\$)	68,430	65,277
Unemployed (%)	2.8	7

Source: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. 2018. “Wallingford.” <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/Districts/Neighborhood%20Snapshots/Wallingford-Snapshot.pdf>

Table 4.6. *1940 Census data from the historic district and Seattle citywide*

	Historic District Census Tracts	Citywide
People age 19 and younger (%)	25.1	25.8
People age 65 and older (%)	9.4	9.6
Nonwhite (%)	0.3	0.5
High school or more (%) for population aged 25 or older	49.3	22.8
College 4 years or more (%) for population aged 25 or older	9.6	2.3

Unemployed (%) for population aged 14 or older	7.9	12.2
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Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 1940 Census Tract Only, Digitally transcribed by Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Edited, verified by Michael Haines. Compiled, edited, verified and additional data entered by Social Explorer.
<https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/C1940TractDS/R13378340>

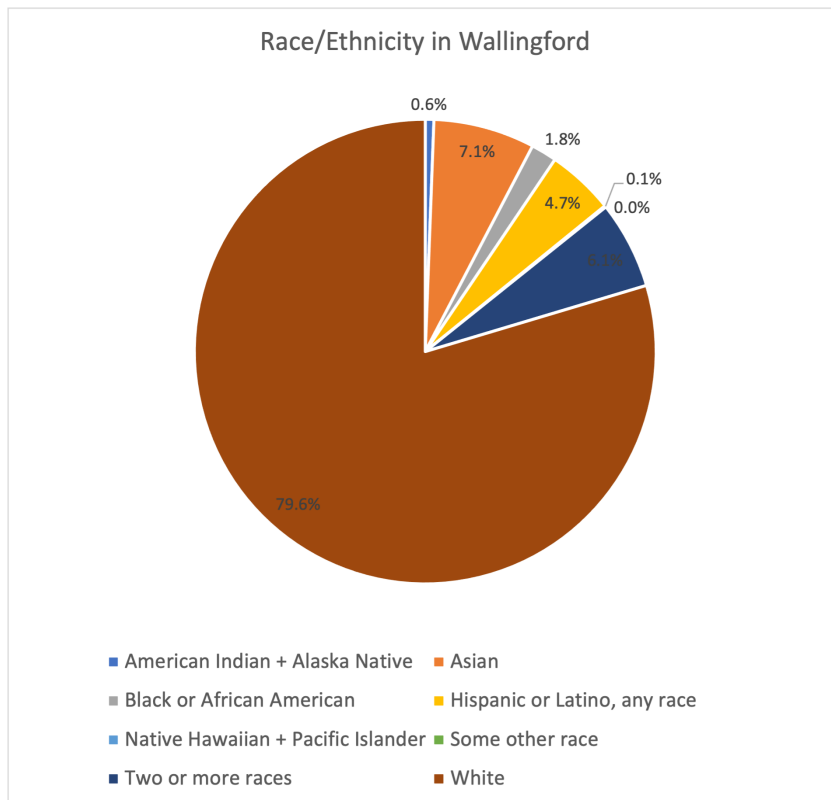


Figure 16. Race and Ethnicity data for the Wallingford neighborhood. Source: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2018.

4.1.3 History

An historical perspective of Wallingford’s built environment contributes to an understanding of how Wallingford developed its characteristics and the significance represented by the historic district. The historic district, which was nominated as an historic residential suburb and references its connection to streetcar history in its name, falls into a larger history of the influence of this mode of transportation on American cities. Some authors have specifically

focused on streetcar suburb neighborhoods in Seattle; these examples are covered next. Finally, I review three sources to identify where their descriptions of the neighborhood align with streetcar suburb development patterns. Together, histories at the national, local, and neighborhood level build an understanding of the streetcar suburb development patterns represented in the historic district.

Sam Bass Warner's book *Streetcar Suburbs* traces the growth of Boston's railway suburbs. Warner describes how neighborhoods developed alongside streetcar lines and stations with characteristic gridded streets, narrow lots, and a range of architecture from mansions to stacked triplexes denser than the automobile suburbs which would come after. Neighborhood form was defined by streetcar service: more frequent service resulted in more intense development and lots extended as far as walking distance from the station. Residential development included a variety of typologies. Warner traces data from 1870 to 1900 in Boston, when three streetcar suburb neighborhoods combined saw the construction of 12,000 single-family detached homes, 6,000 two-family homes, 4,000 three-family homes, and 500 larger residential buildings. Lower middle class residents who fit more units on the same sized parcels of land were the original residents of the small multifamily dwellings. Many of these buildings imitated expensive architectural styles of the time but would fall into the category of vernacular architecture (Warner 1962, 57-60). Over time neighborhoods changed through infill development, commercial buildings with apartments above, and conversions of buildings from single- to multifamily (Warner 1962, 74) Warner argues that middle class ideals and reactions to urban growth, immigration, and industrialization drove this desire to move outside of the city center, which in turn opened up less expensive land for the middle class, expanded urban

boundaries, created social and political geographical stratification and separation, and set the precedent for commuting downtown for work (Warner 1962, 11).

In Seattle the streetcar drove suburban growth from the early 1880s to the early 1940s. Many well-known neighborhood centers were established at the terminus of a streetcar line, including Green Lake, Ravenna, Golden Gardens, Madrona, Madison Park, Admiral, Alki, and Rainier Valley (Bergman 2021). Many authors focus on the architectural standouts, including parks, residences, and institutional buildings in neighborhoods like First Hill, North Capitol Hill, Mount Baker, Queen Anne, and Ravenna. Parks are particularly relevant, as some streetcar suburb neighborhoods are linked by the Olmsted boulevard system (Rosenberg 1989). Although more focus is placed on the upper-class architecture of these neighborhoods, their original affordability varies. Whereas Mount Baker took care to maintain a polished look with architect-designed homes, Ravenna had many catalog homes that were more affordable to middle class and first-time home buyers. Today many of Seattle's streetcar suburb neighborhoods are desirable for their historic homes and proximity to downtown (Kreisman 2011). In Seattle authors identify some similar characteristics to the literature on streetcar suburbs in other cities, including the middle-class housing typologies, densities and street grid facilitating walkability to transit, and active neighborhood commercial areas (Bergman 2021, 72).

The historical context of Wallingford, as portrayed in three preservation-oriented sources: Thomas Veith's 2005 context statement, a 1975 neighborhood inventory led by Folke Nyberg and Victor Steinbrueck, and the National Register nomination for the Wallingford-Meridian National Register Historic District (2022) written by Northwest Vernacular on behalf of Historic Wallingford, points to the central role of the streetcar in the residential and commercial development of the neighborhood. Early railroad expansion resulted in sparse development

driven more by industry than commuters. The first platting of Wallingford began in 1889 and the area was annexed by Seattle in 1891. The rail line did not reach what is now the Wallingford-Meridian historic district until 1889, when the Seattle Electric Railway and Power Company added a connection between Fremont and Green Lake along N 45th Street just south and then just west of the historic district (Veith 2005, 20-25). In 1907 and 1908, respectively, the Wallingford Ave and Meridian Lines connected the city core with the northern suburbs via N 45th Street directly south of the historic district and in the case of the Meridian Line, bisecting the district along Meridian Avenue. For a time the Wallingford Line terminated at N 45th Street and Latona Avenue, just outside the historic district, before later extending to reach the University District. Figure 17, submitted by Northwest Vernacular with the National Register Nomination, maps the historic streetcar lines relative to the boundaries of the historic district. The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition increased traffic along the Wallingford Line in 1909, and home construction accelerated in the neighborhood between 1906 and 1915. The presence of industry, smoke, and pollution in the area discouraged settlement by wealthier residents, and commercial areas primarily comprised small neighborhood stores along the streetcar line with greater concentrations on Wallingford Avenue and Woodland Park Avenue (Veith 2005, 42-45).

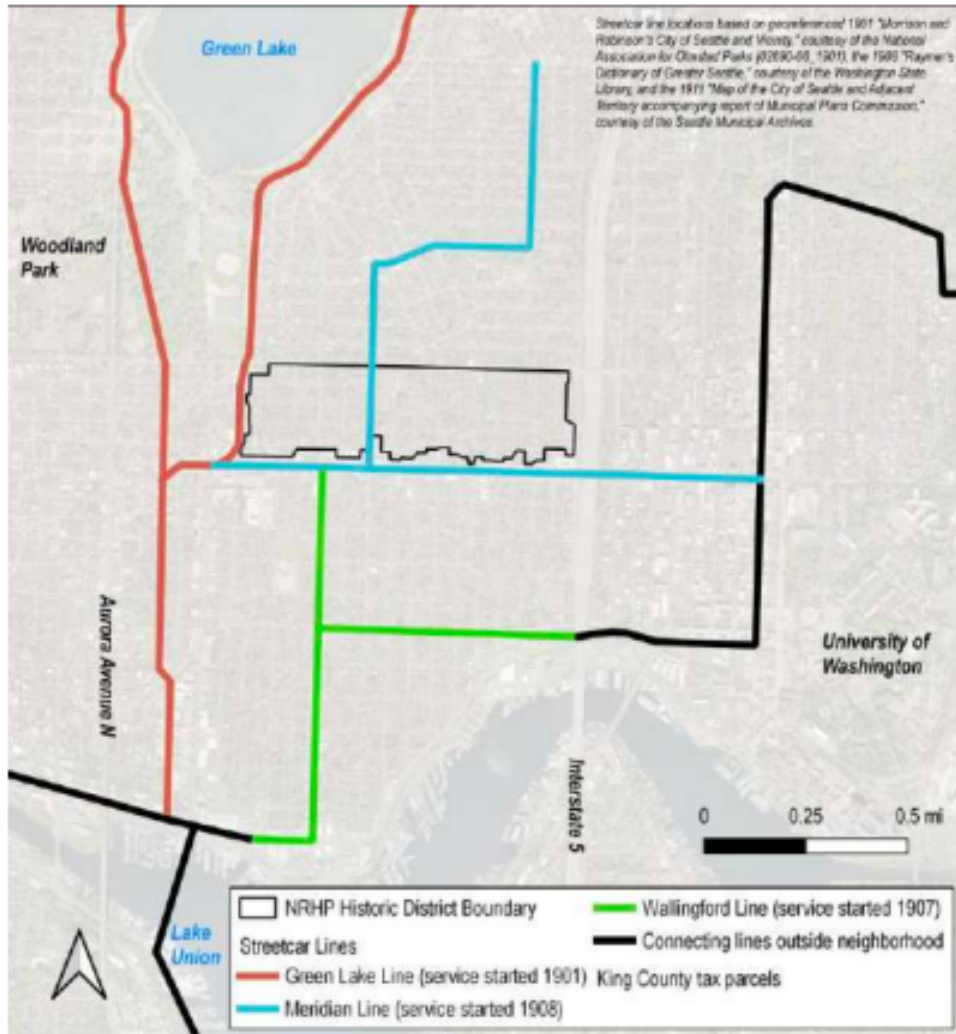


Figure 17. Historic streetcar lines (shown in color) which reached the historic district (outlined in black). Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 284.

Despite the area's growth, plats were still sparsely settled with many vacant lots until World War I. N 45th Street would not have significant commercial use until the same time (Veith 2005, 48-49). Industries connected to war efforts spurred growth in north Seattle, which led to substantial residential development and home buying beginning in 1925. At the same time, commercial development flourished in the four-block core of the Wallingford commercial district along N 45th Street between Densmore Avenue and Bagley Avenue and masonry apartment buildings were constructed near to the commercial stretch (Veith 2005, 54-68). The masonry

apartment buildings are contributing structures in the historic district, although the commercial area does not fall within the boundaries.

Housing conditions declined during the Great Depression, but areas in the south of Wallingford closer to industry felt worse impacts than the northern section where the historic district is located. The use of buses and private automobiles as the primary mode of transportation began in the 1920s and 1930s and was solidified during and after World War II, culminating in widespread streetcar track removal around the city in 1943 (fig. 18; Veith 2005, 82-87). Post-war, the business district along N 45th Street flourished but with alterations to the previously pedestrian-oriented patterns to make space for the automobile, including by national chains like Safeway and drive-throughs like Dick's Drive-In Restaurant (fig. 19). Space for cars and larger commercial buildings was facilitated by the demolition and relocation of homes built in 1903 (Veith 2005, 91-96). Even more extremely, the construction of sections of I-5 from 1957 to its opening in 1962 segmented Wallingford apart from the University of Washington and University District. Suburban housing and commercial amenities, such as the Northgate Mall, became much more accessible by freeway and drew young families away from Wallingford (Veith 2005, 108-109).



Property of Museum of History & Industry, Seattle

Figure 18. The Wallingford Streetcar on its final run in 1940. Source: Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, Museum of History & Industry, PI27180.



Property of Museum of History & Industry, Seattle

Figure 19. Dick's Drive-In Restaurant circa 1955. Source: Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, Museum of History & Industry, 2000.107.185.19.02.

In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the opening of Gas Works Park, the conversion of a former rail line to the Burke-Gilman Trail, the origins of the Wallingford Community Council, and the preservation, reuse, and transfer of the Good Shepherd Center (fig. 20) to the Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority marked the rise of neighborhood activism after some years of declining population (Veith 2005, 114-124). These neighborhood amenities, landmarks, and organizations are celebrated today. The same efforts rallied neighbors to successfully advocate for a rezone of some multifamily areas to exclusively single-family residential uses (Veith 2005, 128; McNichols 2018). Writing in 2005, Veith recognized Wallingford for its history, bungalows, amenities, and proximity to downtown and crosstown transit routes (Veith 2005, 131-132).



Figure 20. A photograph of the Good Shepherd building by Asahel Curtis in 1919. Source: University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, CUR1388.

Veith's 2005 context statement asserts that the neighborhood maintained its sense of place despite population decline and the rise of the automobile after World War II. This decline is contrasted by the neighborhood's advocacy for historic preservation and community amenities in the 1970s, which then carried forward into neighborhood planning efforts in the 1990s aimed at maintaining Wallingford's distinct identity and the feeling of a small town in a big city. In this narrative, development and growth pose challenges for the neighborhood to overcome to maintain what it has "to offer as an alternative to life in metropolitan Seattle's more auto-oriented suburban communities" (Veith 2005, 130).

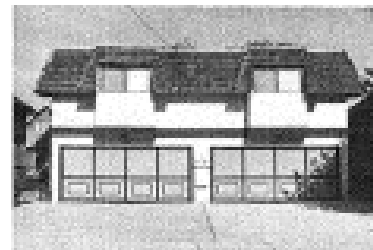
One project of the "Wallingford Renaissance" of neighborhood advocacy was Nyberg and Steinbrueck's 1975 inventory, an effort supported by neighborhood volunteers. Like Veith, their descriptions suggest that new development is viewed as a threat to the neighborhood. In their urban design analysis they note that character-defining landmarks include "recent or on-going public works," such as Gas Works, the Burke-Gilman trail, the Good Shepherd Center, the Wallingford Playfield and Lower Woodland Park, as well as storefronts and signage on N 45th Street. However, elements similar to what is present in the historic district are also included: "the flatter areas to the north of 45th are characterized by groups of similar builder's houses." Figure 21 shows examples of vernacular architecture which were included in the inventory along with more prominent landmarks like the Good Shepherd Center (Nyberg and Steinbrueck 1975).



Figure 21. Vernacular architecture, both commercial and residential, is inventoried in the 1975 report by Nyberg and Steinbruek. Image captions read, left: “Neighborhood Store: Unpretentious owner-operated corner groceries of various architectural styles add color and serve as foci for neighborhood identity.” Center: “Commercial Strip Storefronts: Storefronts along North 45th Street provide a suitable backdrop for individualistic signs, window displays, and pedestrian-scaled elements.” Right: “House Group: Groups of similarly scaled and harmoniously styled houses are important in establishing local residential character. The era of pre-World War I was a significant growth period.”

As Veith noted in 2005, the central location of the neighborhood with easy access to the University District, downtown, bus routes, large parks, and neighborhood schools is of importance to residents. However, this ease of access is balanced in the 1975 inventory’s description by “the intimate character of quiet streets with small single-family bungalows, street trees, occasional backyard alleyways, and the abundance of rewarding views” which creates “a humane setting for community life.” Not only does the homogenous and large stock of single-family housing create this character, but the Craftsman movement itself espoused virtues of outdoor life and the importance of home. This attracted residents who were looking for a more suburban environment and connection to nature but still accessible to a middle class family (Nyberg and Steinbrueck 1975). The high volume in a few styles, primarily Craftsman, creates a distinct visual characteristic in the district (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 9). In 1975, the inventory recorded that this character was threatened by through-traffic inhibiting the pedestrian experience on N 45th Street, new duplexes with garage

fronts that disrupt the continuity of the attractive streetscape (fig. 22), and a need for renovation, maintenance, trees, and undergrounding wires (Nyberg and Steinbrueck 1975).



NEW APARTMENT c.1970-
Inappropriate architectural styling, disruptive scale, and barren front-yard parking combine to cause an intrusion in an established residential area.

Figure 22. A duplex in the neighborhood today (left) and one recorded in the 1975 inventory (right) by Nyberg and Steinbrueck. Image caption reads, “New Apartment c.1970- Inappropriate architectural styling, disruptive scale, and barren front-yard parking combine to cause an intrusion in an established residential area.” Photo on left by Charlotte Hevly.

Despite describing changes to the neighborhood over time, all three accounts assert that there is a piece of history intact in the built environment and imply or state that new development poses a threat to this history. In this way, the historical accounts underscore the tension between older residential neighborhoods and new development. The threat is to the small town feel and middle-class housing which is associated with the streetcar suburb form. Additionally, the accounts of neighborhood activism in the 1970s set up a conflict between residents who have historically fought to protect neighborhood assets and their mistrust of the City and developers as a result.

Today, new development frequently seeks to add housing units to Wallingford and similar neighborhoods, which are desirable and where housing is in demand. In her analysis of

neighborhood conservation districts, Lemar (2015) argues that many streetcar suburb neighborhoods face this pressure:

It should be no surprise that developers are attracted to these neighborhoods, which are close to universities, downtown areas, and other job centers. In addition, because these are older neighborhoods close to downtown urban areas, they are walkable and well served—relative to the broader regions in which they are located—by public transit (1563).

Wallingford maintains those qualities, markers of the neighborhood's original orientation around walkability to streetcar stations. Walk Score, which analyzes walking distance to amenities and qualities of pedestrian friendliness, rates Wallingford an 85 out of 100. This is higher than the city as a whole (74), lower than core downtown areas (92-98), and similar to other streetcar suburb neighborhoods such as Columbia City, Greenwood, and Madison Valley. Within Wallingford, areas of darker green in figure 23 show higher Walk Scores. Based on this map the historic district between N 50th St and N 45th St is one of the more walkable areas in the neighborhood. Walk Score also gives Wallingford a 64 Transit Score. Like walkability, this rating is higher than Seattle as a whole (60), lower than the downtown core (85-100), and similar to other streetcar suburb neighborhoods such as Ravenna, Mount Baker, and Columbia City. This similarity is especially notable for Mount Baker and Columbia City, which are served by Link Light Rail. The analysis by Walk Score confirms close access (within 30 minutes of travel by transit) to the downtown core, as well as urban centers in the University District and Northgate (Walk Score n.d.; fig. 24). These qualities make Wallingford a desirable and well-connected place to live. However, the histories of residential development in the neighborhood suggest ways in which housing growth has been limited in the area over time.

Walk Score 85 Wallingford is Very Walkable
 Most errands can be accomplished on foot.

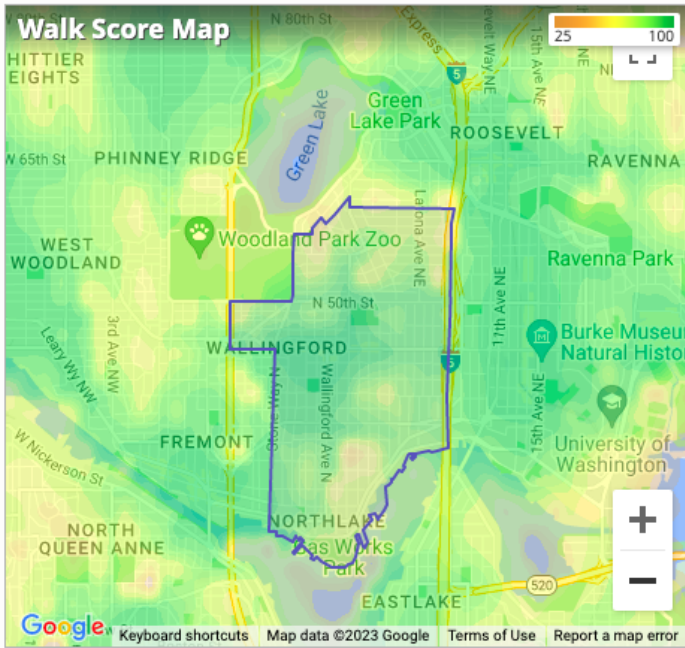
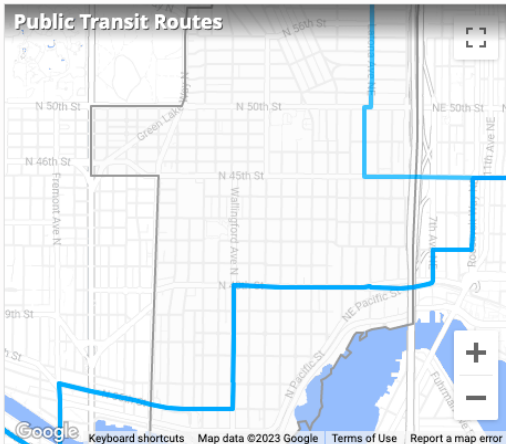
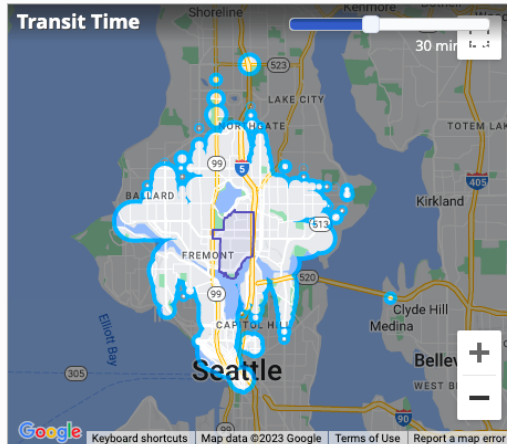


Figure 23. Walk Score’s analysis of aggregated walkability in Wallingford and surrounding areas. Wallingford as a whole scores 85, but within the neighborhood areas of darker green are determined to be more walkable.

Transit Score 64 Wallingford has Good Transit
 Many nearby public transportation options. [Find Wallingford Seattle apartments for rent on Redfin.](#)



Wallingford has good public transportation and about 3 bus lines passing through it.



The map above shows how far you can travel in 30 minutes from Wallingford on public transit.

Figure 24. Walk Score’s analysis of aggregated transportation options in Wallingford and surrounding areas. Wallingford scores 65. The map on the right shows areas which can be reached within 30 minutes from Wallingford on public transit. Areas include the University District, Northgate, and Downtown.

4.2 Wallingford's Affordability Landscape

The second research question is: what is the housing affordability landscape in this neighborhood and historic district? Affordability is understood through the presence of diverse housing typologies and the historic demographics of housing consumers; the value of selected parcels over time; the presence of potential affordability in older, smaller housing today; and a brief review of the cost of consuming housing (through rental or homeownership) for a newcomer to Wallingford in 2023.

4.2.1 Historical Perspectives on Housing

The predominant use within the historic district is residential and the primary complaint against the designation is its impact on housing affordability. Folke and Nyberg, Veith, and the National Register nomination cover housing extensively, but with regards to affordability do not include much detail other than to characterize the neighborhood and its buildings as middle class. Residential exclusion is not mentioned in the Urban Design Inventory (1975) or the neighborhood context statement (2005) but the National Register nomination (2022) includes some description of the role of residential exclusion in Wallingford. The nomination notes the practice of redlining and restrictions on access to homeownership in the history of Wallingford, and states that “although there is no evidence that there were any formal restrictive covenants in the historic district, it is clear that de facto segregation was at play in Seattle and Wallingford” (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 287).

The nomination describes the strong visual characteristic and integrity of feeling created by maintaining primarily residential areas in similar styles and from a single period of significance: 1901-1941, when the streetcar lines provided service to the neighborhood. The

development patterns and housing styles are a physical record of Seattle's growth at the time of construction. Because many homes had the same builder and many were based on mass-produced plans or mail-order kits, development was rapid and the buildings were constructed close together in time. This concentration resulted in the visual cohesion of residential buildings in the district (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 279). Although single-family detached homes dominate the district, the nomination includes multifamily (fig. 25) and converted multifamily properties as contributing resources (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 4).



Figure 25. One example of an historic apartment building in the historic district at 1903 N 46th St. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

The memory of these buildings is as accessible to middle-class owners and renters, including some recent immigrants primarily from European countries. At the time of

construction the style of homes were adapted for middle-income homebuyers (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 6). Additionally, the location outside of the city center made land more affordable (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 283). Bungalows were popular for their small size and straightforward construction which made them relatively inexpensive. Nyberg and Steinbrueck characterized Wallingford residents similarly in 1975, as “a mixture of middle class residents – students, young families, and the elderly” (Nyberg and Steinbrueck 1975).

The nomination documents key policy changes relevant to Wallingford’s land use over time. Ordinance 45382 first established single-family zoning in Seattle in 1923. What is now the Wallingford-Meridian historic district was zoned “First Residence” or single-family, although multifamily buildings existed and continued to be built adjacent to the N 45th Street commercial strip, and property values in the neighborhood rose in the 1920s (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 285). Ordinance 86300 in 1957 created three zoning types which applied within the district: RS 5000 (single family residence high density zone), RD 5000 (duplex residence high density zone), and RM (multiple residence low density zone). The same ordinance added off-street parking requirements and allowed less flexibility in property use than the 1923 Ordinance (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 289-290). As a result, out of 636 residential buildings in the historic district, 570 are single family (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 4). As noted previously, the boundary of the historic district runs just north of commercial uses along N 45th Street.

The historic district includes multifamily housing: mid-scale multifamily buildings, multifamily conversions from single-family dwellings, and apartment buildings on blocks closer to the former streetcar line (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 283).

For example, cottage court-style attached housing built in 1929 and designed by Harry B. McKnight has two buildings and 16 units on one half block on N 48th Street (King County Department of Assessments 2022). In the 1930 Census apartment building tenants included couples, households with children, older people, and multi-generational households (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 118). Historic mid-scale housing remains in the district as well. This is in part due to conversions from single-family to multifamily dwellings as early as the 1910s. For example, the triplex at 4533 Eastern Ave was built around 1906 (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 14) and 4608-4610 N Meridian Ave is a Dutch Colonial-style duplex built around 1911 which was converted from a single-family dwelling (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 235). Although historic multifamily housing remains from early neighborhood construction and conversions, duplex conversions were prohibited after becoming more popular in the 1960s as an option for University of Washington student and staff housing (McNichols 2018). Despite restrictions on denser typologies, de facto racial segregation in housing, and the largely homogeneous single-family land use in the historic district, preservation-oriented sources broadly characterize housing stock as accessible to the middle class.

4.2.2 Value of Selected Parcels Over Time

Tracing histories of specific parcels over time shows how in many cases typologies and land use has remained the same within the historic district while land value has increased. Land value data is included about every decade (as available) from 1938 within the period of significance to today. The following parcels range from a multifamily apartment building, a duplex (converted from single-family prior to 1962), a triplex (converted from single-family prior to 1940), to a single-family detached dwelling. The buildings on the selected parcels,

ranging in construction date from 1906 to 1926 and all contributing to the historic district, remain largely the same with the exception of conversions from single- to multifamily and the addition of a detached garage, and the total taxable value of the property has gone up.

The U.S. Census from 1940 and American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates from 2017-2021 both measure median home value for Seattle owner-occupied units. For comparison, the median value of homes in current dollars for Seattle was \$3,331 in the 1940 Census and \$767,500 in the ACS five-year estimate for 2017-2021 (Social Explorer 2023a; United States Census Bureau 2021). All selected parcels in this analysis, with the exception of the apartment building, in 1938 fell below the median home value for Seattle in the 1940 Census but in 2022 were above the median home value from the ACS 2017-2021 five-year estimate.

Triplex at 4533 Eastern Ave

The triplex at 4533 Eastern Avenue N was built around 1906 and had been converted to a multifamily dwelling by the 1940 Census (fig. 26; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 14). The secondary building on the property, a detached garage, may have been updated or replaced between the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map and today. The secondary building is not contributing to the historic district. The primary building is contributing to the historic district and is built in the classical revival style (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 38). The building is represented on the 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the same footprints are shown on the Sanborn map from 1950, and the same primary building footprint is shown on OpenStreetMaps today with a different footprint for the secondary building, which is still in the same location as previously shown (fig. 27).

In 1938, the value of this parcel was \$1,160 compared to the median value of homes in current dollars for Seattle at \$3,331 in the 1940 Census (Social Explorer 2023a). In 2022, the value of this parcel was \$1,436,000 compared to the median of \$767,500 in the ACS five-year estimate for 2017-2021 (table 4.7; United States Census Bureau 2021). The rate of inflation for the assessed value of this property is 8.8%, compared to a rate of inflation of 6.9% for the median home value measure from 1940 to 2022. The general rate of inflation over this time period for the cost of a dozen eggs is 3%. If the value of 4533 Eastern had risen at this same rate, it would be assessed at \$13,893 today.



Figure 26. The front (above) and back (below) of the triplex at 4533 Eastern Ave. Photos by Charlotte Hevly.

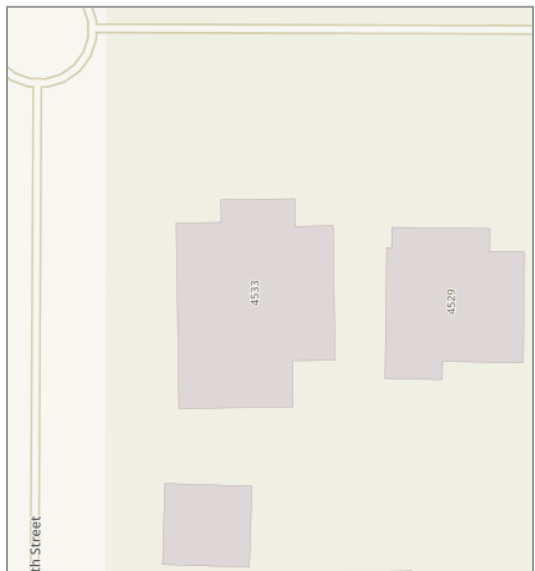
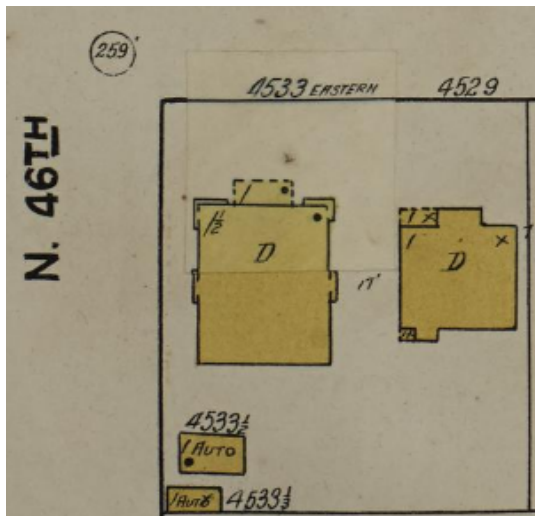
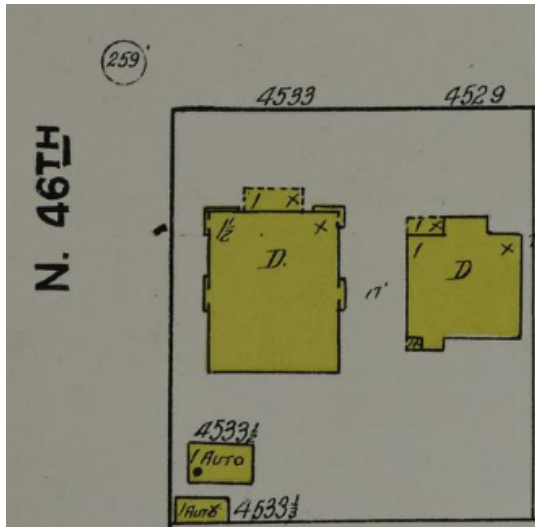


Figure 27. Building footprints at 4533 Eastern in 1919 (top), 1950 (middle) and 2023 (bottom). Sources: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1919; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1950; OpenStreetMaps.

Table 4.7. Taxable value of 4533 Eastern from about every decade on record

Year	Taxable Value	Year	Taxable Value
1938	\$1,160	1992	\$218,300
1947	\$2,060	2002	\$472,000
1963	\$2,550	2012	\$720,000
1972	\$11,990	2022	\$1,436,000
1982	\$109,300		

Sources: King County Assessor Real Property Record Card, <https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/36ab7f4f-ae41-4e5a-847e-3b382b7e22cd>; King County Department of Assessments Parcel Data, 051000-1230.

Duplex at 4608-4610 N Meridian Ave

The duplex at 4608-4610 N Meridian Avenue was built around 1906 and had been converted to a multifamily dwelling by the 1962 tax valuation. The primary building is contributing to the historic district and is built in the Dutch Colonial revival style (fig. 28; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 38). The building is represented on the 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the same footprint is shown on the Sanborn map from 1950, and the same primary building footprint is shown on OpenStreetMaps today (fig. 29). In 1938 the value of this parcel was \$510 compared to the median value of homes in current dollars for Seattle at \$3,331 in the 1940 Census (Social Explorer 2023a). In 2022, the value of this parcel was \$1,240,000 compared to the median of \$767,500 in the ACS five-year estimate for 2017-2021 (table 4.8; United States Census Bureau 2021). The rate of inflation for the assessed value of this property is 9.7% compared to a rate of inflation of 6.9% for the median home value in Seattle. The general rate of inflation over this time period for the cost of a dozen eggs is 3%. If the value of 4608 Meridian had risen at this same rate, it would be assessed at \$6,108 today.



Figure 28. 4608-4610 N Meridian Ave is a Dutch Colonial-style single-family home, built around 1911, that has been converted to a duplex (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 235). Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

Table 4.8. *Taxable value of 4608 Meridian from about every decade on record*

Year	Taxable Value	Year	Taxable Value
1938	\$510	1992	\$182,500
1953	\$1,120	2002	\$353,000
1963	\$1,750	2012	\$499,000
1972	\$9,940	2022	\$1,240,000
1982	\$83,500		

Sources: King County Assessor Real Property Record Card
<https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/9c5896e1-9000-4f68-8f24-ffa96eabb883>;
 King County Department of Assessments Parcel Data, 051000-0605.

Apartment Building at 1603 N 46th St

The Woodlawn Crest Apartments at 1603 N 46th Street were constructed in 1926 in the Tudor Revival style (fig. 30). Both the primary and secondary buildings are contributing to the historic district (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 23). The building had not yet been built at the time of the 1919 Sanborn map but has the same footprint in the 1950 Sanborn map as on OpenStreetMaps today, including the outbuildings at the rear of the lot (fig. 31). The value of the apartment building over time has been significantly higher than the median for an owner-occupied home. This building was assessed at \$9,400 in 1938 and \$3,169,000 in 2022 (table 4.9). The rate of inflation for the assessed value of this property is 7.2%. The general rate of inflation over this time period for the cost of a dozen eggs is 3%. If the value of 1603 N 46th St had risen at this same rate, it would be assessed at \$112,578 today.



Figure 30. The Woodlawn Crest Apartments at 1603 N 46th Street. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

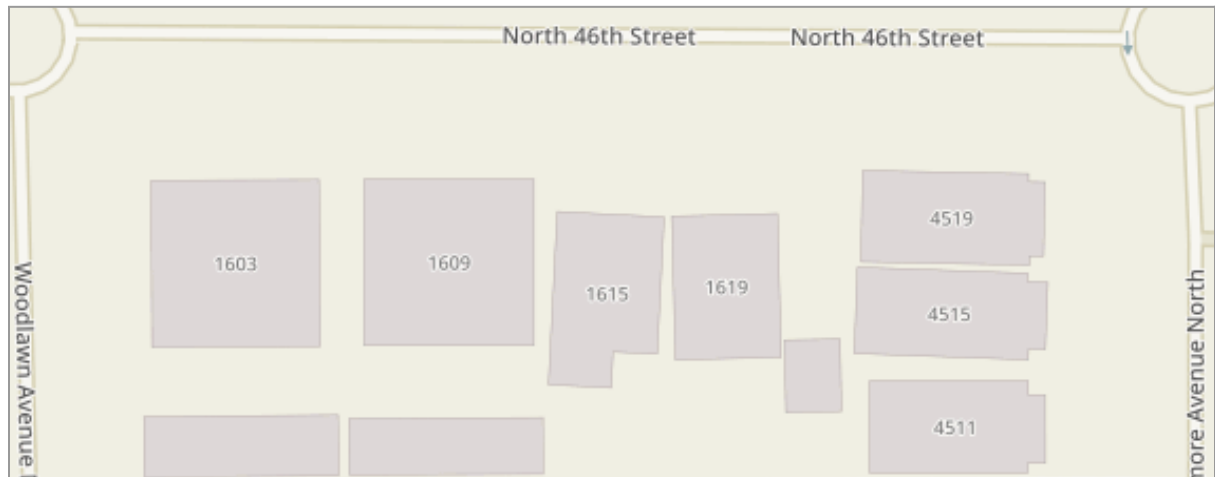
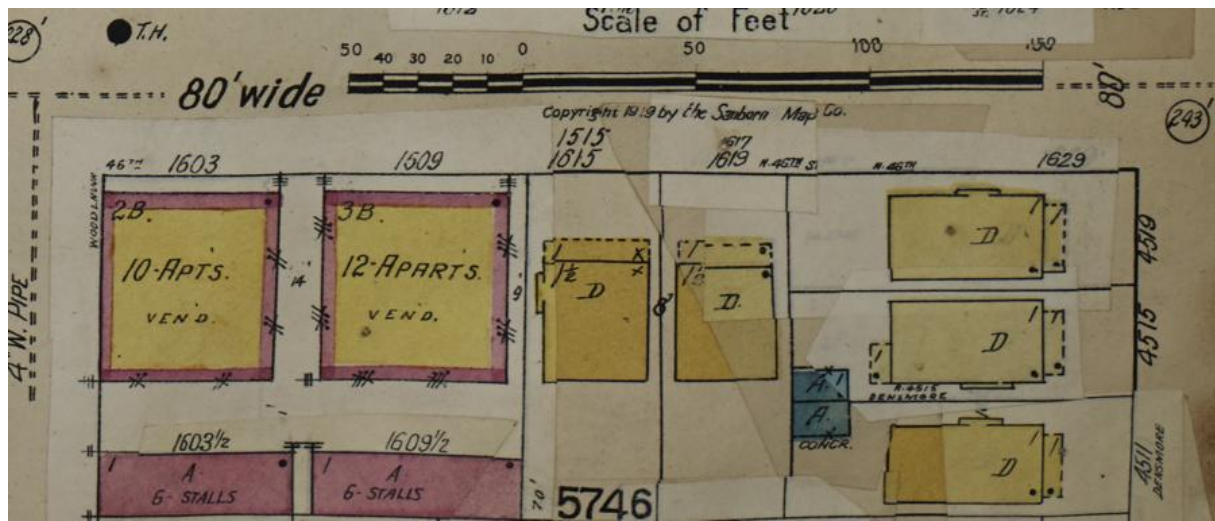
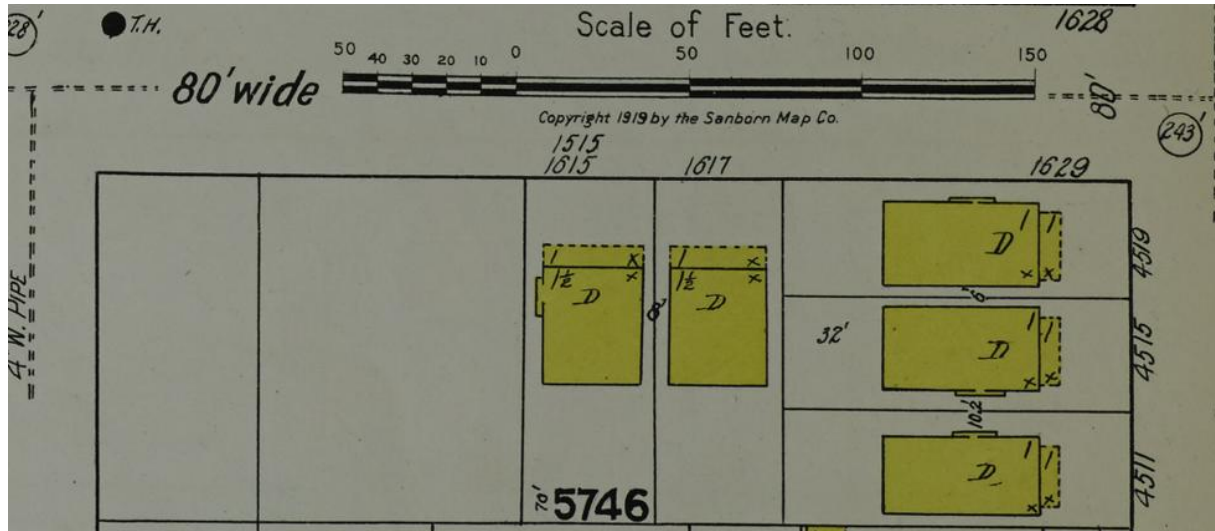


Figure 31. Building footprints at 1603 N 46th St and 4519 Densmore Ave in 1919 (top), 1950 (middle) and 2023 (bottom). Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1919; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1950; OpenStreetMaps.

Table 4.9. *Taxable value of 1603 46th St from about every decade on record*

Year	Taxable Value	Year	Taxable Value
1938	\$9,400	1992	\$400,000
1954	\$12,850	2002	\$749,000
1964	\$13,800	2012	\$1,151,000
1972	\$45,310	2022	\$3,169,000
1982	\$237,500		

Sources: King County Assessor Real Property Record Card
<https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/f8c47446-801f-4d0c-8c66-66698f093d78>;
 King County Department of Assessments Parcel Data, 408380-3125.

Single-Family Dwelling at 4519 Densmore Avenue

The single-family house at 4519 Densmore Avenue N sits on the same block as the Woodlawn Crest Apartments. The small lot sits close to two similarly narrow lots directly to the south. The house is in the Craftsman style and was built in 1916 (fig. 32; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 37). The footprint appears the same in the 1919 and 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps as it does today on OpenStreetMaps (fig. 31). In 1938, the value of this parcel was \$550 compared to the median value of homes in current dollars for Seattle at \$3,331 in the 1940 Census (Social Explorer 2023a). In 2022, the value of this parcel was \$945,000 compared to the median of \$767,500 in the ACS five-year estimate for 2017-2021 (table 4.10; United States Census Bureau 2021). The rate of inflation for the assessed value of this property is 9.3% compared to a rate of inflation of 6.9% for the median home value in Seattle. The general rate of inflation over this time period for the cost of a dozen eggs is 3%. If the value of 4519 Densmore had risen at this same rate, it would be assessed at \$6,587 today.



Figure 32. The detached house at 4519 Densmore Ave. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

Table 4.10. *Taxable value of 4519 Densmore from about every decade on record*

Year	Taxable Value	Year	Taxable Value
1938	\$550	1992	\$154,900
1954	\$1,250	2002	\$288,000
1963	\$1,760	2012	\$414,000
1972	\$6,790	2022	\$945,000
1982	\$72,300		

Sources: King County Assessor Real Property Record Card
<https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/216e7423-a96d-4ca1-91a6-06073c7d2a84>;
 King County Department of Assessments Parcel Data, 408380-3030.

Affordability of Selected Parcels

The parcels selected for this analysis show a high inflation rate for property values in what is now the Wallingford historic district from 1938 to 2022, ranging from a 7.2% rate of inflation for the apartment building to a 9.7% rate of inflation for the duplex. These values are high both compared to the rate of inflation for a dozen eggs from 1938 to 2022 (3%) and for median home value in Seattle from 1940 to 2022 (6.9%). Additionally, changes in income have not kept up. Median household income in Seattle has a rate of inflation of 4.4% across a similar time period, from \$3,107 in the 1950 Census to \$105,391 based on five-year estimates from 2017 to 2021 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1951; United States Census Bureau 2021). The inflation of the value of selected parcels in the Wallingford historic district outpaces median income inflation in Seattle and home values citywide, suggesting that housing in this area has increasingly only been affordable to wealthier buyers.

4.2.3 Current Affordability

Current affordability is assessed through two avenues: the presence of or potential for a diversity of housing typologies in the historic district based on zoning, land use, and housing growth; and home prices as listed in spring 2023 in comparison with zip code level and citywide averages.

Zoning, Land Use, and Housing Growth

Today, 76% of land use in the neighborhood is single-family detached dwellings (fig. 33; King County 2012). In the historic district, single-family detached dwellings comprise 89% of the present land use and multifamily comprise 10% (fig. 34; National Register of Historic Places

Nomination Form 2022). Wallingford as a whole hosts 19% multifamily uses, with concentrations along N 45th Street and in the southern section of the neighborhood (fig. 35; King County 2012). Although multifamily housing exists throughout the neighborhood, only the west side of the historic district is currently zoned to allow that use. The west side of the district is zoned Lowrise 1 (M1), a Lowrise Multifamily zone with design standards, design review for projects greater than 8,000 square feet, and MHA requirements. Seattle defines Lowrise 1 as “Areas characterized by low-density, small-scale multifamily housing types, which are similar in character to neighborhood residential zones. Most appropriate outside of Growth Areas” (Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections 2023). The west side of the historic district is within the residential urban village boundary, which is a Growth Area.

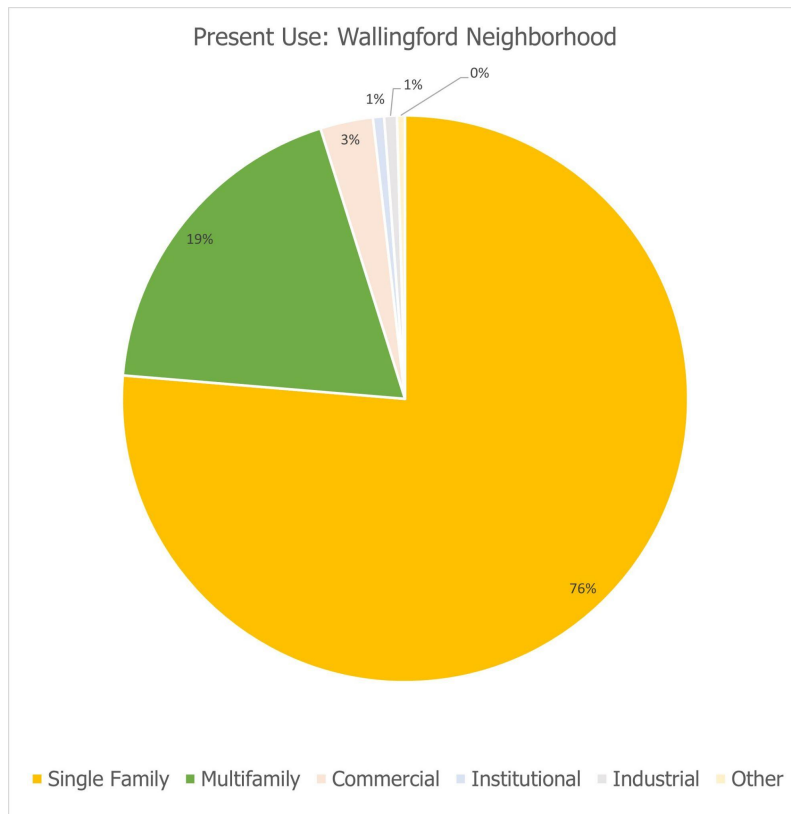


Figure 33. Percentage breakdown of present land use categories in Wallingford. Source: King County 2012.

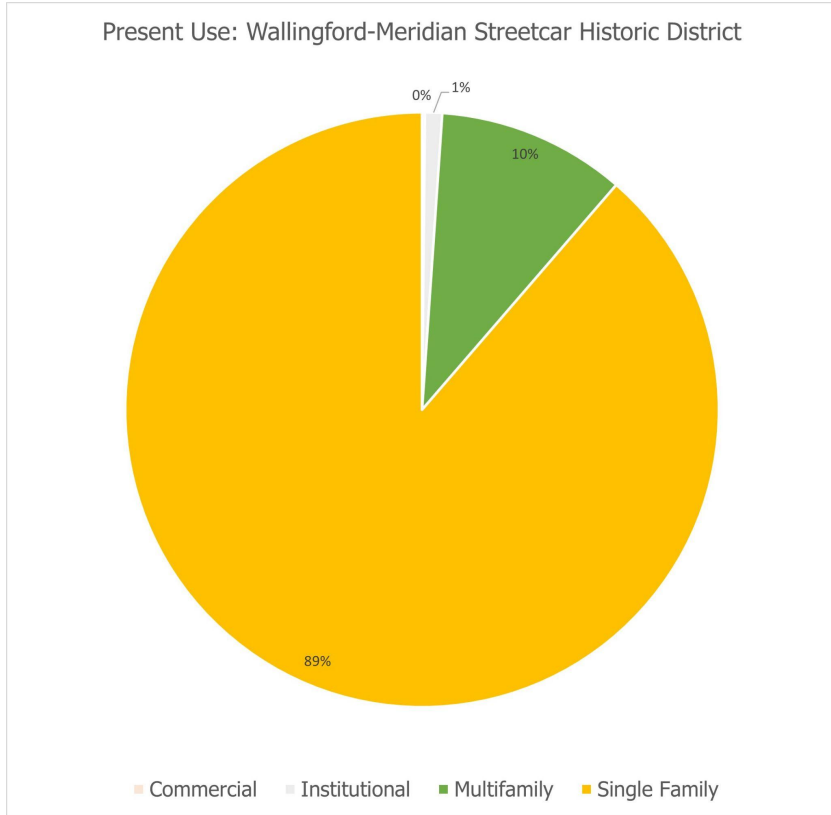


Figure 34. Percentage breakdown of present land use categories in the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District. Source: King County 2012.

A map of the Wallingford Urban Village and Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District in figure 36 shows where these geographies overlap. The east side of the historic district is zoned Neighborhood Residential 3, for small-lot residential, and currently only allows single-family residential use (Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections 2022). The high percentage of single-family use and low-density zoning suggest a limited diversity of housing options within the historic district.

In the *Seattle 2035 Growth and Equity Analysis* the Wallingford Residential Urban Village is determined to have low displacement risk and high access to opportunity, making it a suitable location for growth (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2016, 22). At the same time within the City's growth strategy, policy GS 3.9 is to "Preserve characteristics that contribute to communities' general identity, such as block and lot patterns and areas of historic, architectural, or social significance" (City of Seattle 2020, 34). As a residential urban village, Wallingford is an area of residential development generally at a lower density than urban centers or hub urban villages and a source of goods and services for residents and surrounding communities (City of Seattle 2020, 23). The Wallingford urban village had a 44% housing growth rate between 1999 and 2015 and has a 30% expected housing growth rate, which is the percentage growth above the actual number of housing units or jobs in 2015, except as limited by zoning capacity (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2016, 26; City of Seattle 2020, 419). The Wallingford urban village's development capacity is 1,803 housing units (SDCI Permit Data Warehouse 2023), and the estimated growth between 2015 and 2035 is 1,000 housing units (City of Seattle 2020, 419). Between 2016 and 2022, the Wallingford urban village already gained 518 housing units: 568 units built and 50 units demolished (table 4.11).

Residential building permit activity in the Wallingford urban village shows that the majority of units gained are from multifamily and mixed use construction. Although there has been an increase in demolitions over time, demolition of multifamily and mixed-use buildings have been trending downward whereas demolition of single-family residences has been increasing (table 4.11; Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2022, 41). From 1990 through the end of the most recent quarter, Seattle’s Residential Building Permit data shows no finalized and issued demolition permits within the historic district but outside of the residential urban village. Although there is limited Accessory Dwelling Unit construction in the residential urban village, in the east side of the historic district outside of the urban village boundary residential permit activity is primarily for the construction of ADUs (Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections 2023a). Growth analyses and permit data suggest that expanded options for housing in the historic district are more likely to be built in the west half that falls within the urban village, whereas in the east half ADUs are the primary source of new, more diverse housing typologies and are being built at much slower rates.

Table 4.11. *Permit data for new and demolished units by housing type and by decade for the Wallingford Residential Urban Village*

Housing Type	1996-2005		2006-2015		2016-2022	
	New	Demo	New	Demo	New	Demo
Single Family	8	5	24	25	32	32
Accessory Dwelling	3	0	7	0	9	0
Detached-Accessory	<i>Not permitted</i>		1	0	2	0
Multifamily	140	26	129	14	233	18

Mixed Use	397	6	419	12	292	0
Institution/Industrial/ Other			0	0	0	0
Congregate Residence Sleeping Rooms	<i>Sleeping rooms in congregate residences were not reported</i>				0	
Total	548	37	580	51	568	50

Source: Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2022, 41.

Housing Prices

The cost of housing in Wallingford and surrounding areas is high. Prices in the zip code 98103 which covers Wallingford as well as sections of Fremont, Phinney Ridge, and Greenwood (fig. 37), are consistently higher than for Seattle as a whole (table 4.12). Current housing options on the market within the historic district are listed for even higher than the median and average for the 98103 zip code. The two listings within the district in March 2023 were priced at \$1,599,888 and \$1,095,000, both of which are higher than the median home sale price and average home value for the zip code. Recent sales within the district range from a \$2.15 million 6-bedroom home sold in August 2020 (a non-contributing building in the historic district) to a \$625,000 3-bedroom home sold in November 2022 (a contributing building to the historic district) (Zillow 2023a).

ZIP Code 98103



Figure 37. Geographic area covered by zip code 98103 compared to the historic district boundaries. Source: ESRI; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022.

Table 4.12. *Home price comparison for 98103 and Seattle*

	Measure	Zip Code 98103	Seattle
Redfin	Median home sale price in February 2023	\$839,000	\$750,000
Rocket Homes	Median home sale price between February 2022 - February 2023	\$871,701	\$850,044
Zillow	Average home value in February 2023	\$899,468	\$834,356

Sources: Redfin 2023; Rocket Homes 2023; Zillow 2023a.

For renters, a 4-bedroom single-family detached home (a contributing building to the historic district) was listed for \$4,999 per month not including utilities which the tenant pays (Zillow 2023b). This option could be affordable to someone making below Area Median Income (AMI) if split between four single-person households, but not to one household making below AMI. The Verah Apartments built in 1929, a contributing building to the historic district, had 19 units at the time of construction. As of the 1930 Census this building housed younger and older households with and without children and including multigenerational households. Tenants recorded at that time include a range of traditionally working- and middle-class professions (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 117). Today, a 1-bedroom unit in the Verah Apartments is on the market for \$1,695 and another for \$1,795 per month. The lower-priced unit comes to \$1,830 per month including utilities. Someone making 80% AMI and paying this rent would be cost-burdened. The unit is advertised to take advantage of the historic building and the neighborhood amenities and location:

This elegant 1920's corner apartment affords beauty and convenience in an iconic old-Wallingford location. Just one block from the Wallingford Center Shopping Mall,

steps from restaurants, pubs, cafes, grocery stores, and other necessities, you're right in the heart of it all. With a walk score of 96, it's all at your fingertips. ... With antique hardwood floors, coved ceilings, and arched doorways, and an eat-in kitchen with a genuine working period exhaust port, this space is steeped in classic old-world charm. ... Easy access to I-5 or 99 via car or bus makes this prime location just a quick jaunt to downtown and only minutes away from Greenlake, Ballard, Fremont, and the University District (Zillow 2023c).

It is common for renters to be cost burdened in Wallingford. ACS 2017-2021 five-year estimates show that 47% of renters in the three Census tracts which cover and extend beyond the historic district (fig. 38) are cost burdened (table 4.13; Social Explorer 2023b). The high cost of both renting and homeownership in Wallingford today characterizes the affordability landscape as restricted and out of reach to households at below area median income levels. This unaffordability is brought up in many of the discussions around the impacts of the designation of a federal historic district in Wallingford.

Table 4.13. *Numbers and percentages of owners, renters, and cost burdened renters in the area of the historic district*

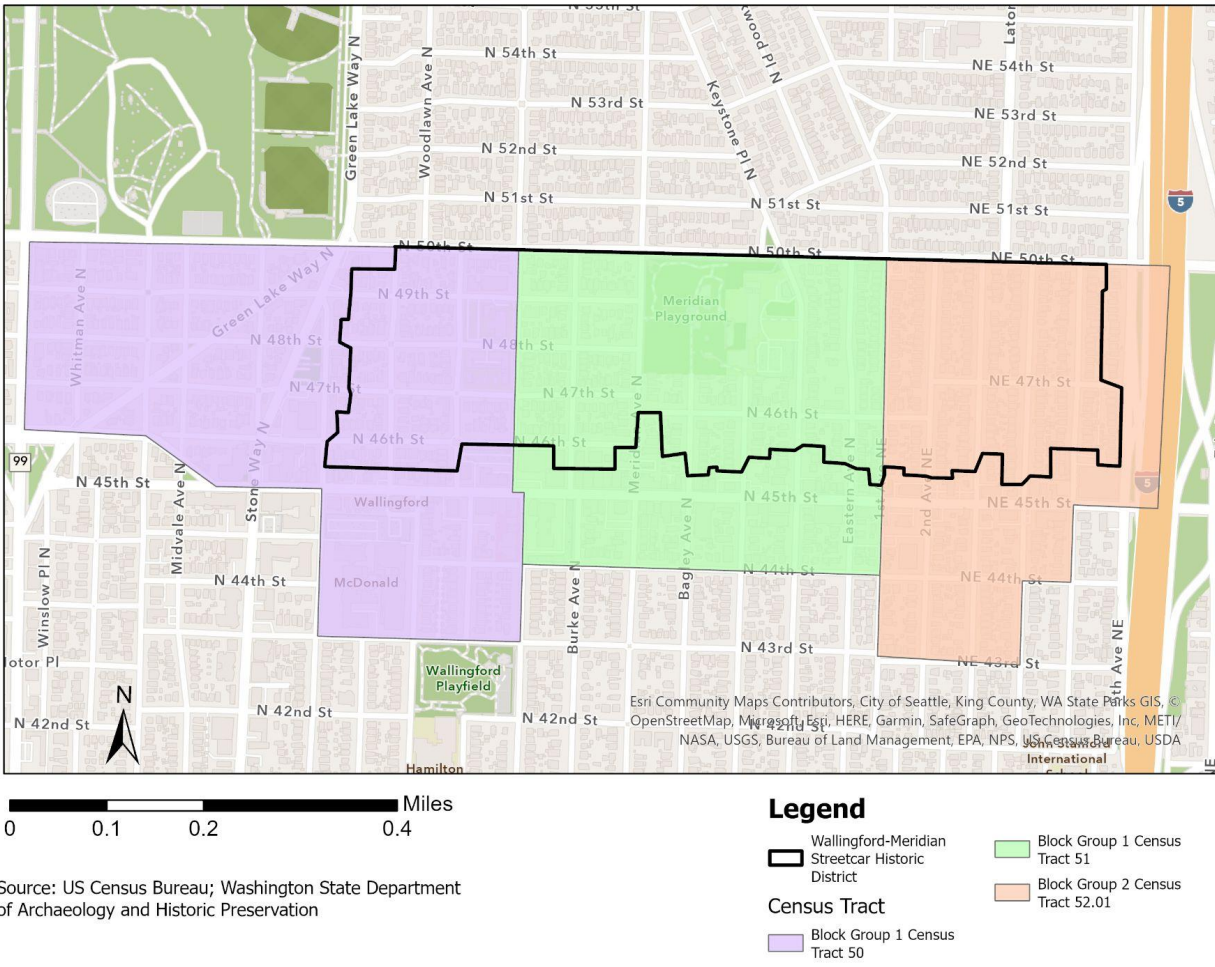
	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Renters cost burdened
Block Group 1, Census Tract 50	295	433	144
Block Group 1, Census Tract 51	317	390	194
Block Group 2, Census Tract 52.01	253	185	138
Total	865 (46% of units)	1,008 (54% of units)	476 (47% of renters)

Source: Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2021 (5-Year Estimates)(SE), ACS 2021 (5-Year Estimates), Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed 2023b.

https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/ACS2021_5yr/R13376272

Notes: Cost burdened renters are renters whose rent was 30% or more of their gross income in the past 12 months.

Historic District Census Block Groups



Source: US Census Bureau; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Figure 38. Data on renters, owners, and cost burden in the area is from three Census tracts which cover the district: Block Group 1 Census Tract 50; Block Group 1 Census Tract 51; and Block Group 2 Census Tract 52.01. Sources: US Census Bureau; National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022.

4.3 National Register Nomination

Recent housing affordability and historic preservation policy decisions in Seattle illustrate some connections and conflicts between the two. This carried over to residents’ perspectives around the nomination of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. I provide a timeline of the events around these policy decisions to contextualize the press reports and public comment about the nomination. Concerns

about affordability and density may be the root of many arguments for and against the historic district, but the content of these perspectives ranges broadly and connects to environmental and aesthetic concerns as well. Tensions which arise between these perspectives are laid out in the latter half of this section.

4.3.1 Timeline of Events

Wallingford's history of middle-income residents and community protection of neighborhood assets sets up the motivations of the Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. However, there is also a strong neighborhood contingent that embraces development and neighborhood change. Both perspectives on the historic district are in part reactions to Seattle's recent housing and land use policy.

In September 2014, Seattle's Mayor and City Council convened the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Advisory Committee to address the rising cost of housing in the city. In 2015, the HALA committee published recommendations and the City held conversations across Seattle about how to create and preserve units and affordable units. The resulting committee recommendations, known as HALA, were approved by the Mayor and Council. The process continued into Fall 2016 and through Summer 2017, collecting community input on one key facet of HALA, Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA), and the associated draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Council approved MHA in Fall 2016, issued the Final EIS (FEIS) in 2017 and rezoned urban centers in the University District, the Central Area, Downtown and South Lake Union, Chinatown-International District, and Uptown (Local Housing Solutions, n.d.)

Following an appeal from a collection of neighborhood groups including from Wallingford, the City of Seattle Hearing Examiner affirmed the adequacy of the FEIS for citywide MHA in 2018 with the exception of the analysis of historic resources. An addendum to the FEIS addressed remanded points from that hearing as well as additional analysis of impacts on historic resources beyond what was remanded by the Hearing Examiner (Office of Planning & Community Development 2019, 3). The legal challenges delayed the implementation of citywide rezones and MHA until March 2019, when Council passed affordable housing requirements and rezones in 27 designated Urban Villages including for 6% of Seattle's previously single-family zoned land (Local Housing Solutions n.d.)

Passage of citywide MHA included an amendment to "Remove areas within the Mount Baker Park Historic District from the North Rainier Urban Village expansion area, maintain existing zone designations, and do not apply MHA" (Seattle City Council n.d.). Two months prior to the March 2019 rezones, the Ravenna-Cowen National Register Historic District was designated (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2019). In February 2019, the MHA boundaries were amended to "Remove areas from the proposal and do not apply MHA where the Ravenna-Cowen North Historic District overlaps with the existing or proposed Roosevelt Urban Village boundary." This amendment passed unanimously due to the precedent of avoiding historic districts like Mount Baker, despite Ravenna-Cowen's close proximity to the Roosevelt Light Rail station. In the same process, Council rejected an amendment to alter a boundary based on the presence of homes potentially eligible for landmarking but not yet designated under federal or local programs (Schofield 2019).

Historic Wallingford, a neighborhood organization, was launched in 2018 and in May 2019 announced their feasibility study for an historic district in the neighborhood. News reports

portray the historic district proposal as a direct response to City upzones and MHA following the path set by neighborhoods such as Ravenna (Bowman 2019). The results of the feasibility study were presented in a public meeting in October 2019. Wallingford for All, another neighborhood organization, formed not long after Historic Wallingford in response to the proposed historic district. The Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) hearing, the final step to send the nomination to the Keeper of the National Register for approval, was on October 14, 2022. The National Register listed the historic district on December 9, 2022 (Historic Wallingford 2022).

Historic Wallingford was the primary advocate for the historic district (fig. 39). Historic Wallingford funded the feasibility study and National Register nomination and organized letter-writing to the Washington ACHP in support of the district (Historic Wallingford 2022). Wallingford for All organized letter-writing in opposition and submitted an open letter with over 350 signatures. Additionally, representatives from the organization gave a presentation to Lincoln High School students, some of whom also submitted letters in opposition (Wallingford for All n.d.; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022b). Although these two neighborhood groups represent differing opinions on the historic district, within the groups there is a diversity of opinions on how preservation, affordability, and density will and should shape the future of the neighborhood.



Figure 39. A house in the historic district with a yard sign reading “Celebrate Historic Wallingford.”
Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

4.3.2 Perspectives from Press Reports and Public Comment

An overview of press reports and public comment on the historic district designation and related events show the following points of tension. In many cases, these opposing perspectives are mutually exclusive. However, some shared values between stakeholders suggest common ground to inform policy making and communication around these issues. Stakeholders commenting on the nomination range from historic district and Wallingford residents (both renters and homeowners), residents of neighboring areas, planning and historic preservation professionals and organizations, to Wallingford business owners.

Policy Intent versus Impact

One tension between perspectives in this case stems from opposing beliefs on the actual impacts of policies of rezoning, MHA, and historic district designation. The central events of this case study are the City's implementation of HALA and the National Register Historic District designation. Reporting and public comment show disagreements over the intended and unintended impacts of both actions. The stated goals of the National Register nomination are community pride and encouraging rehabilitation. Some proponents claim that it will not impact housing affordability. Although they recognize the potential impact of the district on future MHA boundaries, some commenters state that rezoning and MHA will not increase affordability, will result in teardowns of existing unsubsidized affordable housing, will cause displacement from Wallingford, and will only benefit developers (Beekman 2016; McNichols 2018; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 16).

Preservation opponents believe the opposite, that the nomination intentionally stands in the way of density and more affordable housing options. One public comment argues that the designation "is abusing the system to build a case to prevent change by challenging development at the local level" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 2). Many who oppose the historic district support rezones, greater density, and MHA and believe that these actions will increase housing supply and affordability. Statements from both sides claim to support affordability and in some cases believe that new development and historic fabric can coexist (Groover 2022; McKernan 2020; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 27; 29). One comment reads:

I think the charm and history of the area is undeniable, but I also recognize that we're faced with a significant housing shortage and affordability crisis. History and change are not mutually exclusive, however, and I look forward to the development of templates that allow the city to evolve while also taking care of our past. The Historic District is part of

that, and should be seen as a piece of the puzzle in moving us forward as a region (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 12).

Another explicitly states, “I am not opposed to additional housing and density in the proposed district and believe it’s important and doesn’t conflict with the goals of the application” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 16). However, a key tension arises when stakeholders have opposite beliefs about the impacts historic designation, MHA, and rezoning will have on affordability.

Experiences of Affordability: Accessible versus Exclusionary

A second tension arises between stakeholders with different experiences of housing access in Wallingford. Different understandings of how to achieve affordability may stem from tenure in the neighborhood. Residents shared in their letters how they view their community as historically and currently middle class and diverse (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 9; 24; 27; 30). For example, one public comment stated: “many of [the homes] were inhabited by blue collar workers who played a part in making Seattle what it is today” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 7). As a result, the characterization of Wallingford as a wealthy enclave doesn’t align with their perception or experiences. The nomination supports this perspective by emphasizing the middle-class qualities of the homes and their residents. However, letters in opposition written by renters displaced from the neighborhood by rising prices or people unable to buy a house in Wallingford today have a different experience. Several signers of the open letter from Wallingford for All identified themselves as displaced from Wallingford or as someone who would like to live in Wallingford (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 2; 9-20).

Press reports review how over time zoning changes such as downzoning, setback requirements, and height restrictions have limited access to housing and have been championed by a small subset of the neighborhood, mostly homeowners (Eliason 2018; McNichols 2018). This subset is portrayed as a dominant group also responsible for nominating the historic district. As one student letter requested, “do not choose to simply cater to the loudest and most domineering of the district’s residents” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022b, 11). This tension arises from opposing experiences: one group who has experienced the neighborhood as accessible and affordable and one group who has historically or currently experienced the neighborhood as exclusionary and unaffordable.

Further tension between homeowners and other community members stems from the National Register nomination process. Not only does the process only formally count homeowner objections, but the designation could result in an increase in the value of their property whereas for renters or future Wallingford homeowners it signifies rising prices (Groover 2022; McNichols 2022a). As one supporter of the district stated in their comment, “a lot of people love the old-style houses, like mine, as reflected in price appreciation over the decades I’ve lived here” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 10). On the opposite site, Wallingford For All’s open letter argues that the historic district’s impact on property values is “adding fuel to the fire of skyrocketing housing costs” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 4). Public comment on MHA was generally split between younger, renter populations in favor of increased density and pathways to homeownership as a form of wealth-building and older populations who already own property opposed to new development (Beekman 2016; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 50). Wallingford’s history of resisting

development, from activism to preserve the Good Shepherd Center to preventing the construction of duplexes for University of Washington students, has led to distrust of new development by long-time residents. At the same time, it makes opponents of the historic district suspicious of long-time residents' and Historic Wallingford's motivations (McNichols 2018).

Comments from both sides show an understanding of the importance of accommodating growth and addressing the housing shortage in Seattle (Chapman 2021). However, the tension lies in whether they feel that Wallingford, and in particular primarily single-family swathes of north Wallingford, is an appropriate place to add housing units. Some historic district proponents support growth and density elsewhere but advocate for preserving this slice of history as well. One comment states, "please leave a part of the neighborhood as it is, so succeeding generations will know how the neighborhood grew" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 27). However, those opposed to the district question why neighborhoods such as Wallingford, Ravenna, and Mount Baker should be exempt from rezoning when these same areas are high in opportunity and low in displacement risk (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2016, 22). Letters and press reports voiced fear of setting a dangerous precedent that neighborhoods can misuse historic districts to evade rezones and restrict the City's efforts to support affordability (Bowman 2019; McNichols 2022a; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 38). This division between perspectives on affordability illustrates the difference between considering housing affordability at the neighborhood scale compared to citywide. In this case, the citywide perspective was much stronger within opposition to the historic district and a much higher percentage of public comment letters from outside of Wallingford were in opposition to the district than in support (table 4.14).

Table 4.14 *Public commenters who identified place of residence*

	Support	Opposition	Total
Wallingford, in Historic District	9 (30%)	21 (5%)	30 (7%)
Wallingford, not in Historic District	19 (63%)	106 (25%)	125 (28%)
North Seattle	0	12 (3%)	12 (3%)
Seattle	0	279 (66%)	279 (61%)
Washington, other City	2 (7%)	5 (1%)	7 (1%)
Total	30	423	453

Source: Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2022.

Notes: Counts are estimated based on how public commenters identified their place of residence. Only public comments which identified place of residence are included in the totals. Two different signatures or commenters from the same residence were counted as individuals.

Sense of Place: Aesthetic versus Historic

Perspectives on histories of affordability and exclusion tie into a tension between those who believe the single-family dwellings along a former streetcar line are a source of community pride and historic value and those who believe they represent histories of classism, racism, and exclusion which should not be celebrated (Chapman 2021; Groover 2022; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022b, 1; 37). The nomination does seek to recognize the harm of redlining and other practices in the neighborhood, but opponents of the historic district see preserving the dominantly single-family area as perpetuating that harm. One Lincoln High School student writes, “If a historic district is passed it will become nearly impossible because there will be no ability to build affordable housing in this area and will be reminiscent of a modern day form of redlining” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022b, 7). Additionally, some public comment in support of the district explicitly opposes the development of new multifamily housing (Washington State Department

of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 10; 25). One comment states that new construction is largely “non-family friendly buildings,” which may also be referring to multifamily housing (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 17). Opposition to multifamily housing can relate to its size and scale, but in the literature on development opposition is often also associated with classist and racist objections to lower income households or people of color, who are assumed to be the types of people who reside in multifamily housing (Whittemore and Todd BenDor 2019, 437-438; Snyder and Thomas 2020).



Figure 40. Photo of Seattle bungalows in Wallingford taken by Meredith Clausen in 1998. Source: University of Washington Digital Collections, Cities and Buildings Database, MLC2284.

Some residents value single-family patterns for the cohesive and historic sense of place it lends to the neighborhood (fig. 40; McNichols 2022a). This neighborhood character is made up of a series of patterns in the urban fabric, including block and lot arrangement, house position and massing, open space, building facades (porches, eaves, and overhangs), materials, and

feeling (McKernan 2020, 50). Proponents of the historic district seek to recognize this cohesion of the streetscape and the work of local builders. Opponents argue that this is an aesthetic rather than historic preference, and reflects only one view of the neighborhood's history. This singular image would crystallize the area in one period of significance rather than recognizing that middle housing types and neighborhood stores are also a part of its history (Eliason 2018; Morales 2017). This becomes especially relevant to the argument that building housing at single-family densities is not enough to meet the affordability crisis (Chapman 2021). To balance new and historic housing, aesthetics or design of new construction are a top priority for some supporters of the historic district who want new construction to fit well with existing architecture (fig. 41; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 30). As one commenter stated:

The most recent trend is to tear down these historic homes and replace them with multi-family condominiums or apartment houses. If I'm being polite, I would say the new construction is architecturally indifferent. To be honest, a lot of these buildings are eyesores, built cheaply and out of character with the neighborhood (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 10).

However, the federal district recognition brings no demolition or design review (Groover 2022). Additionally, design review regulations already exist in the Wallingford Urban Village and in the west side of the historic district some new multifamily projects have undergone design review (Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections n.d.b).



Figure 41. On the edge of the historic district, materials, rooflines, and alignment of front steps in new construction aim for compatibility with an older home. Photo by Charlotte Hevly.

Statements in opposition to the historic district argue that the landmark historic buildings in the neighborhood have already been preserved and represent Wallingford’s history without exclusionary impacts. From their perspectives “kit home” bungalows do not rise to the level of local designated Seattle Landmarks including the Good Shepherd Center, Lincoln High School, and the Wallingford Center (formerly the Interlake School). One comment urges: “Designate actual historic elements, like the Good Shepherd building, not the whole neighborhood” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 47). Because the Craftsman bungalows in the district were mass-produced they are not seen by some as unique or having historic value (Groover 2022; Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c). One comment states, “Homes in this style can be found all across Seattle and in other cities like Cleveland” (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 24). In their view, not only can similar houses be found elsewhere in Seattle and other cities, older housing should not be seen as inherently more valuable than new

construction when both are mass-produced (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, Kodé 2023).

Neighborhood Form versus Function

At the neighborhood scale, tensions around which histories should be preserved and how raise the question of whether preserving the function of a neighborhood is more important than preserving the form. In the case of a streetcar suburb, one function that Wallingford has historically performed is an entry point into homeownership and wealth-building for some middle- and working-class families. Additionally, the National Register nomination states that the district's building typologies "convey the pattern of development and density associated with a period of intense growth in the city of Seattle" (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 14). However, preserving the physical form of these buildings no longer serves those same functions in the current period of growth. In the eyes of some historic district opponents the district has an impact that is antithetical to the neighborhood's historic functions (Trumm 2022). As one comment states, "there is a higher good here - not preservation of property, but preservation of the quality of life for all - not just those who lucked into buying a home in the neighborhood when the neighborhood was more affordable" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 32).

From some perspectives the most valuable historic qualities of the neighborhood are the walkability along a navigable street grid to neighborhood businesses and amenities and the transit connections with easy access to urban centers. One public comment in support of the district wrote, "We love this neighborhood, for its architecture, walk-ability, trees and easy access to services and transportation" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and

Historic Preservation 2022d, 6). If these are the aspects of the neighborhood the district aims to preserve, then the broader neighborhood patterns may be more important than the specific housing typologies.

Demolition: Destruction versus Growth

Demolition is ultimately the fear expressed by many proponents of the historic district, including that over time demolitions will result in piecemeal redevelopment until the neighborhood's cohesion, or even all the single-family homes, are gone (Groover 2022). One public comment in support of the district stated, "With rapid development and incentives to put more units on small lots developers are demolishing even well maintained homes that instead could be renovated" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 25). Proponents of rezoning argue that with or without zoning changes demolitions will continue in the neighborhood but will just be replaced with larger single-family houses (Chapman 2021). Additionally, areas of Wallingford such as the west half of the historic district which are zoned for multifamily uses still contain historic single-family dwellings.

Letters in support of and opposition to the nomination both claim their intent is environmental responsibility but have different ideas of the environmental impact of the historic district. For example, one letter argued that preservation "communicates the community values of stewardship, re-use, and reduction in waste" (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 20). On the opposite side, letters advocated for increased growth and density in urban areas to protect farms and forests, decrease car dependence, and support climate action (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 1; 13; 39; 48). However, demolition may not always be a requirement for growth. Some

common ground exists in strategies that increase density in the neighborhood while maintaining existing structures or building materials through infill, ADUs, relocation, architectural salvage, or conversion from single-family to multifamily dwellings through additions or renovation.

5. Discussion

The previous section categorized the tensions between goals of preservation, density, and affordability which arose from the nomination of the Wallingford historic district. The identification of these tensions was informed by literature on historic districts, housing affordability and access, development opposition, and collaborations between preservation and housing affordability. The review of public comment is based in an understanding of the historic district's current and historic visually harmonious morphology, sociology, and options for housing affordability. This section discusses the implications of these tensions for policies promoting preservation, density, and affordability. Seattle, King County, and other jurisdictions already engage or have engaged in work reconciling density, affordability, and historic preservation. Based on the implications of the tensions in Wallingford and examples from other jurisdictions, I draw conclusions about how this case study can inform preservation and planning practice.

5.1 Implications of the Key Tensions

The Wallingford-Meridian historic district case study illustrates some of the tensions which arise between historic preservation to maintain place history, memory, and identity in the built environment; greater density residential development for more environmentally sustainable growth and diverse housing options; and broader access to well-located and resourced neighborhoods through subsidized and unsubsidized rental and homeownership opportunities for people at a variety of income levels. These three policy goals of preservation, density, and affordability are closely interrelated and at times in conflict. Despite this, shared values expressed by proponents and opponents of the historic district imply opportunities for

coordination and potential sources of progress towards goals of preservation, density, and affordability. The previous section categorized the tensions between these goals. This section discusses the implications of those tensions for planning and preservation.

Historic Preservation: maintaining place history, memory, and identity in the built environment

Supporters of and the Nomination Form for the Wallingford historic district generally ascribe it the dominant ideology of a middle class Craftsman neighborhood in which new development threatens character. This is the case in other analyses of residential historic districts and development opposition in the United States as well (Snyder and Thomas 2020; Avrami et al. 2018). This ideological basis creates three implications for planners and preservationists to consider: conflation of the historic identity of a neighborhood with single-family zoning; recognition that the intactness of the historic district has been supported by exclusionary practices; and a definition of neighborhood character based on only one moment in time.

The conflict around the nomination often contains arguments for or against maintaining single-family zoning in connection with the historic district. Single-family zoning would not have been in place until the latter half of the period of significance, currently only half of the district is zoned single-family, and several contributing properties are multifamily buildings. However, out of 636 residential buildings in the historic district, 570 are single family (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022, 4). The predominance of this form led some community members to tie their arguments against the historic district to issues of exclusionary zoning and housing affordability. Community members who drew this connection were informed by amendments to citywide MHA meant to mitigate the impacts of rezoning on federal historic districts in Mount Baker and Ravenna (Seattle City Council, n.d.) These tensions are illustrated

in the conflicts which arise when community members experience housing affordability differently and ascribe different values to the neighborhood's sense of place. However, single-family zoning is not the historic identity of the neighborhood and does not need to be its future identity. Future decisions considering land use in federal historic districts could incorporate how a broader range of multifamily typologies fit with the patterns and scale of the historic fabric. Furthermore, common ground exists where communities consider which important elements of neighborhood history and identity can be sustained in the built environment without single-family zoning.

Although the National Register nomination includes a description of how discriminatory housing practices impacted the neighborhood, the intactness of the district represents the results of those practices. Recognition in the nomination serves as an important record, but when development opposition is justified by the historic district the legacy of those practices is perpetuated in the built environment. That the historic district needs to maintain integrity for listing on the National Register becomes problematic when that integrity has been perpetuated through exclusionary practices. The Washington ACHP, which heard this critique in public comment, nevertheless recommended the district to the National Register because their responsibility is to determine whether the nomination met the criteria outlined by that process, including the integrity of the resource (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022a). A review and reform of the National Register nomination criteria is one approach to better align historic preservation with goals of inclusion; this is explored further in the discussion of implications for affordability.

More broadly, policies which resolve tensions between preservation and other planning goals require shifting away from the hierarchy which centers a static idea of the preservation of

buildings representing dominant ideologies and identities and towards more creative and flexible approaches to historic preservation. Perspectives from both sides of the discussion around the Wallingford historic district reveal a narrow perception of preservation goals and tools, which also differs depending on whether they view preservation as an element of history or an aesthetic preference. Several public comments argued against the historic value of houses in Wallingford because they are kit homes that can be found across the country and suggested that preservation work in Wallingford is already complete because landmarks such as the Good Shepherd Center are protected locally (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022c, 2; 23-25; 47). However, dismissing the role that vernacular buildings play in creating Wallingford's sense of place can minimize the connections community members form to their environment. This also devalues manufactured homes and vernacular architecture in comparison to more monumental structures.

Future work should identify and promote creative and flexible approaches that recognize how place history and identity can be preserved, including through vernacular architecture, while other elements of the built environment change. This is particularly relevant to the tension between preserving neighborhood forms and preserving neighborhood functions, as one historic function of the area has been to adapt to change. This attempts to reconcile the conflict by focusing on adding units in compatible ways to increase housing supply while also maintaining important historic characteristics. One potential approach is Neighborhood Conservation Districts. Although this approach shows how with design review compatible forms of growth can be accommodated (McKernan 2020), it does not address the ideological issues of upholding hierarchies of history, integrity, aesthetics, and typologies or include proactive strategies for housing affordability. Greater flexibility requires shifting the goal from a single-family

neighborhood telling one history to a diversity of building typologies and ages which are visually interesting and can tell multiple histories, including those of development over time. The Wallingford case study highlights groups which have interest in historic preservation, members with resources, and a voice in local policy. How can they use this to advance creative preservation work and housing affordability in their neighborhood and in other areas of the city?

Density: diverse housing options and environmentally sustainable growth

Press reports and public comment on the Wallingford historic district frequently mention divided opinions on allowing higher residential densities in areas currently zoned for single-family residential uses. The honorific federal historic district does not limit density, rather, City zoning decisions with respect to federal historic districts direct housing density and growth within the parameters of the market. The current historic district covers over 600 primary buildings (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022) but its impacts on housing supply are not limited to that area. Not only can restricting supply raise housing prices, but also shift growth and development into areas of the city with more renters and a higher risk of displacement (Glaeser 2010; Lemar 2015). One conflict which arose between perspectives on affordability and the historic district was between public comments which solely focus on Wallingford and comments which take the broader view of the role of the historic district in Seattle's housing market. These citywide impacts of historic districts require a comprehensive strategy which clarifies the conditions under which local land use policy decisions should consider federal historic districts. In this case, the City completed analysis for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for citywide MHA in 2017 to inform policymakers. One potential mitigation measure outlined by the historic resources addendum to the FEIS is to

remove areas within federal historic districts from proposed rezones. However, it also outlines alternative mitigation measures including funding for a citywide survey and inventory to inform city-initiated nominations to the local Landmark program, which has more protections than the National Register (Office of Planning & Community Development 2017, 34-35).

Future citywide efforts might also address neighborhood fears around rezoning, identify key buildings for federal or local landmarking, and prioritize preservation initiatives which support density and affordability goals. Rather than excluding federal historic districts from upzoning, the City could mitigate the impacts of that decision through initiatives such as incentives or support for building conversions from single- to multifamily, partnerships with mission-driven property owners committed to preservation and rent-restricted housing, or a performance-based standard for urban villages. In a performance-based approach, when one section of the neighborhood (such as an historic district) is removed from an area zoned for greater densities, other adjacent parts of the urban village are rezoned for additional dwelling units to accommodate the same potential number of units as if the historic district had been upzoned (Staley and Kofoed 2006). The aim is that the impact of limiting density in one historic district is shared by the same neighborhood rather than shifted elsewhere in the city.

Minneapolis' 2020 legalization of middle housing types citywide, an implementation of the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan, was the first in the country. With primary motivations to encourage equitable development and reverse historic discriminatory practices, this policy had strong support from neighborhoods but also had major detractors. However, the sentiment in favor of the policy change was enough for the City Council to support it. The divide parallels public sentiment around HALA and the historic district in Wallingford. The zoning change was made while retaining allowances around building scale, allowing duplexes and triplexes within

the existing allowable building envelope. Conversions and additions of ADUs by existing homeowners were predicted to be the likely result of this policy change compared to widespread demolition and new construction, which may not pencil for developers in many cases.

Minneapolis hopes this will provide opportunities for small scale landlords who occupy a unit in the property. Minneapolis passed Minneapolis 2040 with a suite of other housing measures, including funding for preserving NOAH through tax reductions for property owners who keep their units affordable (McCormick 2020). Legalizing historic development patterns such as small multifamily housing across the jurisdiction without local exceptions takes away the ability of some neighborhoods to limit growth through federal historic districts or other measures, pushing others to take the impacts of new development and limits to housing supply. Additionally, strategies such as conversions and ADUs add housing units without demolition, which is a source of tension in this case study. However, broad zoning changes might also require a citywide strategy to understand the impacts of that policy change on historic properties. The impact of Minneapolis' zoning change on federal historic districts could provide a source of examples for Seattle moving forward.

Although density was a divisive issue in this case study, environmental sustainability is a stated goal of both proponents and opponents of the historic district. Sustainability is connected to increased density in urban areas as a way to prevent sprawl and loss of natural resource areas and decrease fossil fuel emissions from vehicle travel (Bay and Lehmann 2017). This perspective poses demolition as a necessary activity to move forward with more sustainable development patterns. However, letters in support of the district view accelerated building demolition as a waste of resources (Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2022d, 20). Additionally, conserving older buildings and adapting them when needed can

prevent the carbon emissions from new construction and retrofitting older buildings limits the emissions from building operations. This is significant, as building construction and operations combined make up more than a third of total carbon emissions annually (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2021, 10). Common ground around environmental sustainability can be found in preventing demolitions by incentivizing adaptive reuse and conversions of single-family to multifamily buildings, retrofitting older buildings for better energy efficiency, salvage and reuse of building materials, lot subdivisions and infill, and tree retention or replacement.

Los Angeles and California have employed an adaptive reuse ordinance and historic building code to prevent demolitions and incentivize reuse of historic buildings for housing (Fine 2017). Seattle and Washington have their own incentives and adaptive reuse projects, including for housing, have already been completed in Wallingford's larger buildings like the Wallingford Center and Good Shepherd Center. There may not be more opportunities available in Wallingford, as there is greater potential in adaptive reuse projects for housing in larger buildings such as hotels, malls, and office buildings. Although these building types are not abundant in neighborhoods like Wallingford, a similar approach could be taken to incentivize conversion of single- to multifamily buildings. Additionally, adaptive reuse of existing buildings can be a strategy to add multifamily housing without zoning changes in single-family neighborhoods, as in the conversion of a substation in Queen Anne to 15 condominiums (Historic Seattle 2022b).

Visualizing what diverse building types could look like might address fears of a loss of open spaces. In figures 42 and 43, Seattle Planning Commissioner and architect Matt Hutchins laid out some of those tradeoffs on Seattle lots, including how allowing multifamily buildings can condense the lot coverage to retain open yard space compared to a principal residence and ADUs or full lot coverage by townhomes (Hutchins 2022). In Los Angeles the Mayor's Office

and partners held “Low-Rise: Housing Ideas for Los Angeles,” a design challenge for ideas and visualizations of low-scale, mid-density housing. A submission from Bestor Architecture, SALT, and ARUP in the Fourplex category demonstrates how multiple units can be sited on a lot while retaining the existing house (Low-Rise n.d.; fig. 44).

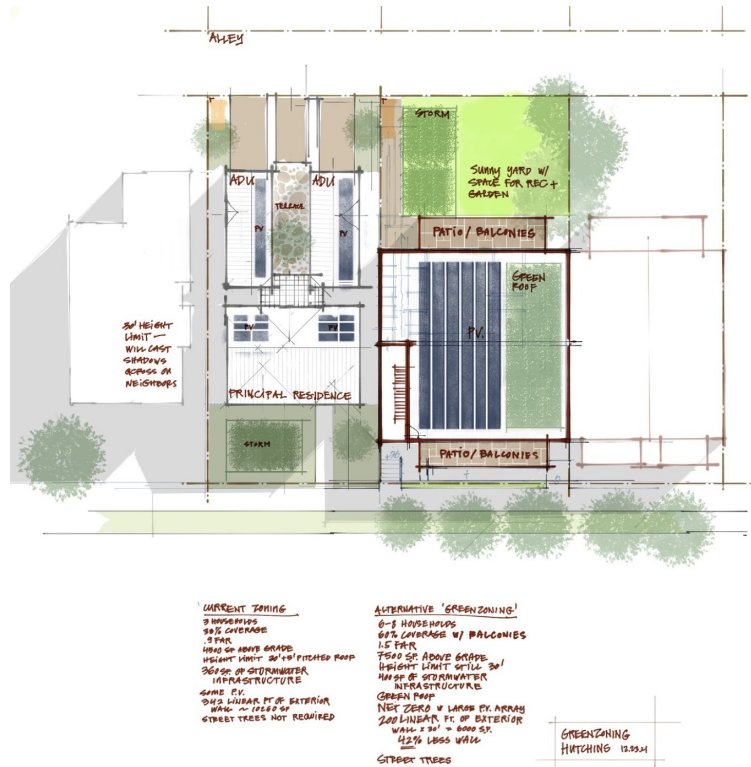


Figure 42. Matt Hutchins’ sketch comparing lot coverage between a primary dwelling and two ADUs and a small multifamily building. Source: *Sightline Institute* 2022.

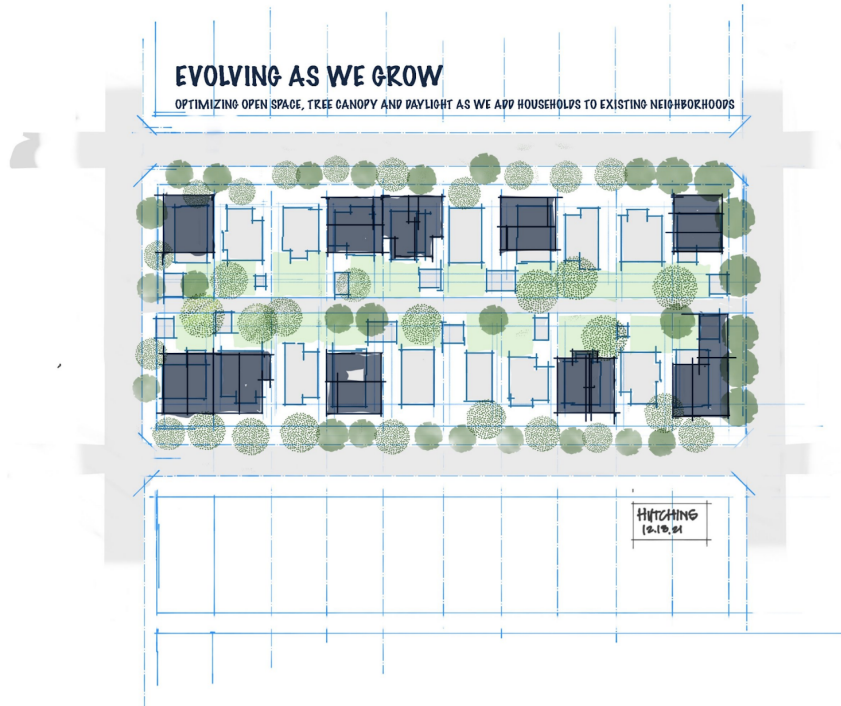


Figure 43. Matt Hutchins' sketch of additional units on the block scale while maintaining open space, tree canopy, and daylight. Source: *Sightline Institute* 2022.



Figure 44. A submission to the Low-Rise design competition in Los Angeles shows a fourplex on half of a lot, maintaining the existing structure. Source: Bestor Architecture, SALT, and ARUP.

Affordability: access to rental and homeownership opportunities at a variety of income levels

Wallingford was at times in its history affordable to young families, middle- and working-class households, seniors and multigenerational households, and students (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 2022; Veith 2005; Folke and Nyberg 1975). However, options for these groups and others are now limited even though Wallingford, with high opportunity and low risk of displacement, is suitable for adding more market-rate and subsidized housing (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development 2016, 22). This sets up the primary tension between differing experiences of affordability. Future efforts for affordability in the neighborhood should also focus on access for groups which have historically been excluded from residing in Wallingford.

One example of how exclusion in the built environment reflects exclusion in policy and process is the prioritization of homeowner voices. The National Register designation process only formally counts objections from homeowners within the district. Homeowners stand to gain from increased property values, while other stakeholders such as renters, business owners, future residents, and displaced residents who might be negatively impacted by rising housing costs are not counted in the case of a formal vote to prevent the district (Lemar 2015; National Park Service 2021). The divide between homeowners and other community members is perpetuated when federal historic district boundaries designated through this process direct local land use decisions. A reform of National Register criteria as well as district designation process is one potential pathway to reconciling preservation with housing affordability goals.

Some supporters of the historic district stated how federal recognition does not prevent conversions from single- to multifamily buildings, construction of ADUs, and subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing. These actions also do not require the demolition of existing

buildings. Rather than merely not preventing these actions, preservation should be mobilizing to support them. The organization and public involvement around the Wallingford historic district reveals a large number of community members willing to mobilize around these issues. In particular, public comments on both sides of the issue recognize housing affordability as a crisis in Seattle but disagree on how policies such as MHA, rezoning, and the historic district impact affordability. These same individuals could proactively support affordability in historic buildings. The tensions in this case often show a generational or neighborhood tenure divide. If preservationists demonstrate how affordability can be promoted through historic buildings, newer or younger residents may shift their viewpoints.

Identification and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing, particularly multifamily, aligns the interest in demolition prevention and demonstrates affordability in older buildings in cities such as Chicago and Boston (Podgers 2018; Powers 2012). Cities such as Boston and Chicago where the character-defining housing form is mid-size multifamily buildings which in many locations are at risk of demolition represents a different context than Wallingford's dominantly single-family typologies. However, their efforts to preserve vernacular housing as affordable units suggest potential partnerships for supporting housing that is both historic and affordable. Both Boston and Chicago targeted homes that are vacant or in disrepair. Although there may not be many opportunities for this type of approach in Wallingford, it suggests tools for other neighborhoods in the region and potential partnerships with energy and housing finance organizations. These tools could be particularly useful in gentrifying neighborhoods facing increased pressure from development or for middle-income property owners without the resources to upkeep or rehabilitate an historic home.

Additionally, the model of expanding financing options for historic housing could extend to multifamily buildings or conversions to multifamily housing including pilot programs to model how conversions and infill can work in historic neighborhoods. Lastly, strategies for preservation of affordable housing first require data collection to locate if and where those units exist. This is particularly true in the case of unsubsidized affordable housing, which can be harder to track than publicly subsidized units (HUD 2013). An historic preservation strategy focused on vernacular multifamily housing types would benefit from a survey and inventory to assess existing properties. Housing and historic preservation also have common ground in the acquisition of existing housing by a subsidized housing provider or land trust. This work is already ongoing in Seattle and King County (Historic Seattle n.d.a; Historic Seattle n.d.b; Homestead Community Land Trust n.d.) Public comment on the Wallingford historic district and HALA revealed that some community members believe that upzoning and MHA will not increase affordable housing options in their neighborhood. To support affordability in existing historic buildings, community members might advocate for acquisition by a mission-driven property owner such as a housing authority, land trust, or preservation organization and identify potential buildings, such as apartment buildings, triplexes, or conversion or reuse projects and support acquisition by a mission-driven organization. Although acquisition of housing by a land trust or housing authority is one option to include deeper levels of affordability in the neighborhood, it may not be a cost-effective option in a neighborhood like Wallingford where land and housing prices are high.

5.2 Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Work

The Wallingford-Meridian Streetcar Historic District case study illustrates ongoing tensions between historic preservation, housing density, and housing affordability: policy intent versus impact; experiences of affordability as accessible versus exclusionary; sense of place as aesthetic versus historic; neighborhood form versus function; and demolition as destruction versus growth. Despite conflicts between goals, community members' perspectives reflected in press reports and public comment also contain common ground which can inform planning and preservation practice. For preservation, a deeper examination of the underlying ideologies expressed by landmark designation processes can prevent further harm caused as a result of historic preservation efforts. Additionally, preservation organizations can focus on flexible and inclusive narratives including those of development over time. To reconcile preservation with greater residential densities, the City should reevaluate their precedent of removing federal historic district areas from rezoned areas which allows better-resourced and organized neighborhoods to use National Register listing to impact local land use policy.

This decision might require mitigation of the impacts of land use decisions on historic resources. To better understand those impacts and mitigation options, the ongoing results of Minneapolis' citywide rezone and the flexibility of conservation district regulations can provide models. Incentives or regulatory changes to support conversion from single-family to multi-family housing can increase housing supply within existing buildings. Although increased density is divisive, strategies which center environmental sustainability are ripe for coordination, especially when they provide alternatives to demolition. Efforts towards demolition prevention and energy efficiency upgrades in Boston and Chicago and Los Angeles' adaptive reuse strategies provide examples of incentives and partnerships. Programs in Boston and Chicago also

provide examples of coordination between historic preservation and preservation of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH). One role of shared values is to inform how influential neighborhood organizations like those in Wallingford might contribute to climate action and housing affordability goals through preservation work.

This is only one of many strategies for preservationists to model how affordability can be supported in historic buildings. Local housing authorities, land trusts, and preservation organizations' ongoing efforts in this area can be supported, coordinated, and expanded. These efforts might include identifying NOAH and preserving it as affordable or converting historic housing to be subsidized. A crucial component of affordability is access. Creating access to housing options and also to the process of National Register designation can support more equitable engagement around these issues. These diverse strategies share a common focus on actively supporting housing affordability using historic buildings. This is a departure from strategies which merely suggest how the two can coexist or utilize preservation protections to prevent efforts towards affordability.

For a clearer view of the relationships illustrated in this case study, future work can define the impact of lower-density zoning in federal historic districts in Seattle on housing supply and affordability. This research is limited in that it does not attempt to define causal relationships between density, affordability, and preservation. The focus on public perceptions is part of the reason this research does not address causality. Although informed by the literature review, this research centers strategies suggested by public perceptions expressed in press reports and public comment, which could be incorrect. In addition to gaining a clearer understanding of the relationships to inform policy, these findings can be incorporated into community engagement and communication strategies as they speak to many of the fears and goals of

current Seattle residents. This case study approach identifies tensions and strategies relevant to Wallingford and Seattle, but future work can test the applicability in other contexts.

Despite this research's focus on tensions, it aims to identify policy approaches in areas of common ground. In some cases these approaches will require incentives or more flexible regulations to be successful. However, the scope of the findings are limited to approaches which exist in the common ground. In many cases, the tensions between density, affordability, and preservation cannot be fully resolved and a jurisdiction must prioritize some goals over others. Although the strategies identified in this research balance preservation, density, and affordability it is important to recognize that these strategies occupy one narrow space within the broad range of efforts to meet today's housing crisis, for which both historic resources and new development are required. Evolution and change to meet current needs is a function of cities, just as development of Wallingford as a streetcar suburb met the needs of that era.

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