

**From:** [Rebecca Messinger](#)  
**To:** [Oliver Orjiako](#); [Sonja Wiser](#)  
**Subject:** FW: The Racial Wealth Gap Is the Housing Gap  
**Date:** Monday, January 16, 2023 12:52:23 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)

---

Hello,

Please see the below comments. Thank you!



**Rebecca Messinger**  
Clerk to the Council  
COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE

564-397-4305



---

**From:** Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 11:19 AM  
**To:** Tina Redline <Tina.Redline@clark.wa.gov>; Rebecca Messinger <Rebecca.Messinger@clark.wa.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: The Racial Wealth Gap Is the Housing Gap



**Kathleen Otto**  
County Manager

564.397.2458



---

**From:** Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <[cccuinc@yahoo.com](mailto:cccuinc@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 15, 2023 11:33 PM  
**To:** Karen Bowerman <[Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov)>; Gary Medvigy

<[Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov)>; Michelle Belkot <[Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov)>; Glen Yung <[Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov)>; Sue Marshall <[Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov)>; Kathleen Otto <[Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov)>

**Subject:** The Racial Wealth Gap Is the Housing Gap

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of Clark County. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Clark County Council  
2023  
P.O.Box 5000  
Vancouver, Washington 98666

January 15,

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD and THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Dear Councilors.

Clark County Citizens United Inc. (CCCU) is a 501c4 non-profit organization whose goal is to assure rural people are treated fairly and equitably, whenever land use policies are proposed or adopted. CCCU wonders if parents of the graduating class of 2023, ever imagined that if their child wanted to own a home, they would have to pay half a million dollars. Rest assured, all Clark County citizens are aware of the critical housing shortage, but just what do policy makers consider "housing"? CCCU believes the county and the citizens are on opposite sides in this regard. Just what do people want for housing, and how will the county enable them to have the "American Dream"?

CCCU has been handed two property rights cases that would seem independent of each other, but in reality the plight of these folks dovetails with each other. The Clark County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is supposed to reflect what the citizens want in their county, according to the Growth Management Act. They assume the Councilors will be their voice and will attempt to create what the population wants. What they don't know is that it is staff who controls the land use policy strings, and no matter who comes and goes on the council, the same old 1994 high density, loss of home ownership, land use agenda continues to move forward, unabated. The Comprehensive Plan has been highjacked. This results in no growth and homelessness in the rural area, and severe growth and homelessness in the urban area.

With this type of planning, we all come out as losers. I have copied a portion of a report from a state agency, at the end of this testimony. The author tries to explain the importance of home ownership, reduced housing regulations and equity. The stories of the two landowners who have come to CCCU for help are noted below.

**Example #1** - involves an elderly man and his son. He owns a triangular 1.5 acre parcel near Cedar Creek in North Clark County. He wanted to build a retirement home on the land and allow his son to live on the same parcel, to enable the son to help him. The father applied for a building permit for the home, and discovered the county would only allow him to build a home on a small dictated portion of his land

called a "building envelope." County staff claimed the very corner of his land has a fish bearing stream on it, with a 200 foot buffer. GIS critical land overlay demonstrates that almost all of his land was taken by that regulatory requirement. The overlay also demonstrates that the whole surrounding area, of many parcels, contain that same overlay over most or all of the land.

Recent storms have shown how sensitive standing trees are to extreme winds. Personally, we had five trees go over our driveway, and a large healthy Douglas Fir broke off about five feet up, and fell into the woods. My husband had just had surgery and was confined. Our visiting children, living next door, were stopped by a downed tree on our driveway. After removing that tree, in the dark, another tree went down on the lower part of the drive. Due to its large size, our children had to call siblings to collect their chain saws, tractors and lights, to cut the wood and open the way. It would have been impossible for my husband to remove the trees, or an emergency vehicle to reach my husband, if he had needed one. Our children live next door, on land that was part of our parent property. Trees next to power lines and roads are all hazard trees, and landowners must have the option to cut them down, whenever they can see the danger in allowing them to stand.

When the man cut trees for the homesite, he realized those left standing were now a hazard to his new home. Many of the trees had rot in them, and others were compromised. He decided to cut those trees as well, to assure safety to his home. Code Enforcement is now fining the man. Staff claimed he infringed on a fish bearing stream with the 200 foot buffer, even though they had no proof of any fish. The owner claims only flying fish could be in the stream, because of the topography of the land and surrounding area. He wanted to build a guest house for his son, but no kitchen facilities can be installed in the building. He's not sure what he can do now, but he needs help from his son, his son needs housing, and both need a safe place to live. Clark County regulations allow for none of these. How does this situation relieve a critical housing shortage? Why does Clark County have such complete control of a landowner's trees, even hazard trees?

**Example # 2** - is an elderly couple living in the Meadow Glade LAMRID, which allows 2.5 acre zoning. They have lived on their 10 acres for over 50 years, first in a mobile home and later a home they built, nearby. They rented the mobile home to an elderly woman, until she died. They don't need their large home, but their daughter does. Their son also needed housing. They were able to short plat one 2.5 acre parcel, at great expense, to sell to their son for housing. They intended to replace the old run down mobile home, with a newer modular home, that they could live in. They then would allow their daughter to live in the big home, while they retained ownership of both. Their children would be close by to help them in their elder years, and they could provide housing for them all. This sounds like great family planning, but county staff said no to all of those ideas. Now they don't know what to do. They need housing, their daughter needs housing, and their son wants to be nearby, to help his parents. County regulation allows none of these options. How are county policies relieving the critical housing shortage plaguing the county? All this elderly couple asks is that they and their children be allowed to live on land that they have owned for over 50 years.

The exact details of both of these cases, needs to be more carefully reviewed and analyzed, but it is clear that county regulations have missed the mark toward affordable and available housing. Since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was adopted, the housing crisis has become more and more critical. Such planning does not and has not worked. The county can show no real benefit from all of the zoning, regulations and restrictions they have placed on landowners. It has only resulted in massive financial burdens, homelessness, and loss of property rights. One of the equal 14 goals in the GMA is protection of private property rights. Clark County has not only failed compliance to that goal. they have actively worked to prevent it. That is unfortunate.

Sincerely,

Carol Levanen, Exec. Secretary

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2188  
Battle Ground, Washington 98604

## **The Racial Wealth Gap Is the Housing Gap**

Office of Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Homeownership is the number one net-worth building asset for the average household in the United States. Home equity makes up the largest portion of the net worth of the typical American household (and constitutes more than half the net worth of the typical low-income American household). By serving as a forced savings mechanism, a catalyst for household wealth, and a path out of poverty for many Americans, homeownership becomes a key factor in the building of intergenerational well-being: the children of homeowners are far more likely to become homeowners themselves.*

*Even as owning a home in America has long been a central tenet of the American Dream, certain segments of the American population have been systemically locked out of the chance of homeownership. A history of housing and labor market discrimination has positioned Americans of color—and in particular, Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic Americans—to be long underrepresented in homeownership rates and to be disproportionately impacted by the nation's housing affordability crisis. Unequivocally, inequitable access to housing is the key driver of the racial wealth gap in America today.*

*The adverse impacts of the racial wealth gap do not stop with Americans of color. When a large swathe of our population is kept from homeownership and from full economic participation, the entire economy suffers. Local markets miss out on the economic multiplier that each new house brings; communities lose the new jobs that come as new neighborhoods are created and new families move into the local*

*economy. This has tangible economic implications for communities across America. The racial wealth gap is the housing gap—and both gaps, if left unresolved, will continue to cost the nation trillions of dollars (and will cost Washington State billions of dollars) with each passing year.*

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d70140860791400013fe3ce/t/6154a7aed71b142481211fc2/1632937937212/The+Racial+Wealth+Gap+is+the+Housing+Gap.pdf>