

Building the Neighborhood Land Use Plan



Claiming Our Future for a Just

and Thriving Brighton

Abstract

The Brighton Land Use Strategy is a community-driven approach to acquiring and controlling land in Southeast Seattle before displacement pressures escalate—prioritizing local ownership, mixed-use development, and long-term affordability through zoning leverage and Black-led partnerships. Centered around the Rainier and Holly corridor and extending to Graham, Hillman City, and Othello, the strategy blends generational and community wealth models to transform land into a vehicle for power, equity, and self-determined growth.

Brighton Land Use Strategy

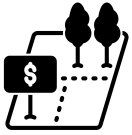
The Brighton Land Use Strategy outlines a bold, community-driven approach to reversing displacement and building long-term neighborhood power through land acquisition, zoning leverage, and equitable development. Anchored at the Rainier and Holly intersection in Southeast Seattle, Brighton represents a rare case where residents, nonprofits, and Black-led developers have secured significant land holdings before speculative market forces take over.

This strategy prioritizes rapid land acquisition—acquiring over 30 parcels across low-rise multifamily (LR3-M), commercial (NC3-55M), and neighborhood residential (NR3) zones—before pursuing phased development. The approach blends generational wealth-building and community ownership models to ensure both family equity and long-term affordability. Projects include mixed-use apartments, homeownership townhomes, cultural centers, and workforce housing.

Brighton’s land use vision is enhanced by partnerships with BIPOC architects, contractors, and engineers. Local zoning and infrastructure improvements are used strategically to unlock value, with active engagement in upzoning, TOD overlays, and re-parceling efforts around the upcoming Graham Street Station. Adjacent areas like Hillman City and Othello are also integrated into the strategy as part of a broader anti-displacement corridor.

Through careful design, covenant-based development, and public-private-philanthropic capital stacks, Brighton Communities is transforming land into leverage—making ownership not only possible, but powerful. This is not just a land use plan; it’s a blueprint for a just, self-determined future.

1. Land as the First Battle



- Purpose: From displacement defense to proactive neighborhood transformation
- Overview of Brighton Communities' land acquisition is an ownership-first philosophy: Buying the Neighborhood
- Key geographies: Brighton, Graham Street Station area, Hillman City, Othello

2. The Landscape of Displacement and Opportunity



- There is a history of redlining in South Seattle
- How zoning, planning, and speculative investment fuel displacement
- Map: Current zoning designations in focus areas (NC3, LR3, NR3, etc.)
- Vulnerability vs. Opportunity Index by block (tie into transit, schools, and commercial corridors)

3. Brighton: Anchoring Ownership in Land Use



- Ownership models: Blending generational wealth and community wealth
- Development pipeline: Mixed-use, homeownership, senior housing, cultural spaces
- Zoning overlays used: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), Opportunity Zones, NC3-55M
- Highlight: The Arches, Rainier/Holly cluster, Urban Family JV, Alpha Sharp partnerships

4. Graham Street Station: Transit Node to Community Gateway



- Land use implications of the Graham Street infill station
- Community feedback summary: safety, access, anti displacement priorities

- Opportunities:
 1. Upzoning and TOD alignment (TOD overlay opportunity)
 2. Mixed-use commercial corridor redevelopment
 3. Land banking around the station for community stewardship
- Risks:
 1. Displacement from speculative land purchases
 2. Increased commercial rents and cultural erasure

5. Hillman City: A Living Laboratory for Equity

- Current land use mix: Historic commercial buildings, emerging multi-family zones
- Cultural preservation vs. redevelopment pressures
- Potential: Micro-retail, co-op commercial spaces, affordable upper-story housing
- Current gaps:
 1. Lack of publicly owned or community-anchored real estate
 2. Weak pedestrian infrastructure for station connection



6. Othello: Transit-Rich, But lacking Ownership

- Existing TOD pressures around the Othello Station
- Challenge: New development not centered around existing residents
- Opportunity:
 1. Community-driven zoning updates to cap displacement
 2. Potential for land trust overlay across key parcels
 3. Stronger linkage to Brighton's ownership model via collaborative ownership strategies



7. Tools for Land Use Justice



- Community ownership tools: Land trusts, limited-equity co-ops, community covenants
- Planning advocacy: Leveraging the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and rezone processes
- City partnerships and capital stack coordination
- Data tools and mapping for acquisition strategy and pressure monitoring

8. The Role of Black Developers, Architects, and Engineers



- Highlight Alpha Sharp and other Black-led firms working in the area
- Need for design sovereignty: local firms shaping buildings with cultural and functional intelligence
- Structural barriers: permitting timelines, upfront capital needs, bonding limits
- Opportunities: fast-track city cohorts, public guarantees, integrated capital access

9. Policy Recommendations



- Graham/Hillman/Othello corridor anti-displacement overlay district
- Streamlined permitting for community-led developments
- Public land priority for BIPOC developers
- Community-driven zoning amendment process
- Value capture tools to fund community acquisitions

10. Conclusion: A Self-Governing Land Strategy



- Brighton as a self-performing mosaic of economic control
- Land as leverage, not liability
- Call to action for funders, policymakers, and residents