



WOMEN IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CHICAGO

Now and Always, WP+D Stands for Racial Equity

Dear Members, Alumnae, and Friends of Women in Planning + Development,

Our hearts are heavy from the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, to name only a few of the most recent and high-profile examples of anti-Black brutality. While such violence is not new, the response here and around the world has been amplified by the backdrop of an unprecedented global pandemic that has caused general anxiety about the future and that has disproportionately impacted Black Americans, including here in Chicago.

To compound this trauma, we also witnessed the channeling of righteous rage and hopelessness among the disenfranchised into the destruction of businesses in neighborhoods already fragile from generations of disinvestment. No urban planning student in the U.S. can be oblivious to the lasting impact on our cities of the violence and destruction of the late 1960s in the wake of high-profile murders including that of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Some of us witnessed this firsthand, heard stories from our families and friends who were there, or saw the lots left empty for decades throughout the West and South Sides of Chicago. The events of the 1960s themselves were just a chapter in a 400 years-long history of systemic racism in which this country was forged.

We are practitioners of urban planning, a field in which it is not only inaccurate but irresponsible to treat our country's heritage of systemic racism as a historical footnote. The modern American city would not exist without racism. Our profession has complicitly perpetuated racism and division through redlining, uneven investment, and problematic policing in neighborhoods. Despite hard-won victories, including successful efforts by activists in Chicago that led to nation-wide policy changes, the events of the past week bring to mind the saying: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

Women in Planning + Development - our Board of Directors, members, alumnae, guest speakers and friends - includes Black women and women of color whose lived experience is

deeper than a textbook-level understanding of racism and its impact on our cities. This is an especially painful time for members of our community, and we the WP+D Board of Directors extend our heartfelt support to you. More importantly, **we stand in solidarity with you.**

Over the next month, **WP+D is renewing our commitment to racial equity** and will use our platform, which brings together hundreds of women planners throughout the region and beyond, to provide a space for discussion, to amplify anti-racist voices, and to share resources to leverage this historic moment and make a positive, lasting impact through action rather than just a statement. Stay tuned for the announcement of our next online gathering, in June.

WP+D is also re-committing to examining our own practices to ensure that they align with our commitment to racial equity and that we intentionally cultivate opportunities for and amplify the voices of those who have been historically silenced and marginalized.

In solidarity,

The Women in Planning + Development Board of Directors

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