

# Increasing Economic Integration in DCPS: A Two-Pronged Approach

Brynna Morgan, Kafilat Oladiran,  
Lindsay Rapkin, Catherine Van Ness

*A response from our group in a class project*

*Brynna Morgan  
Kafilat Oladiran  
Lindsay Rapkin  
Catherine Van Ness*



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# Roadmap

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- Economic Segregation in DCPS
- Magnet Schools
- Housing Segregation in DC
- Potential Unintended Consequences



# Current Economic Segregation in DCPS

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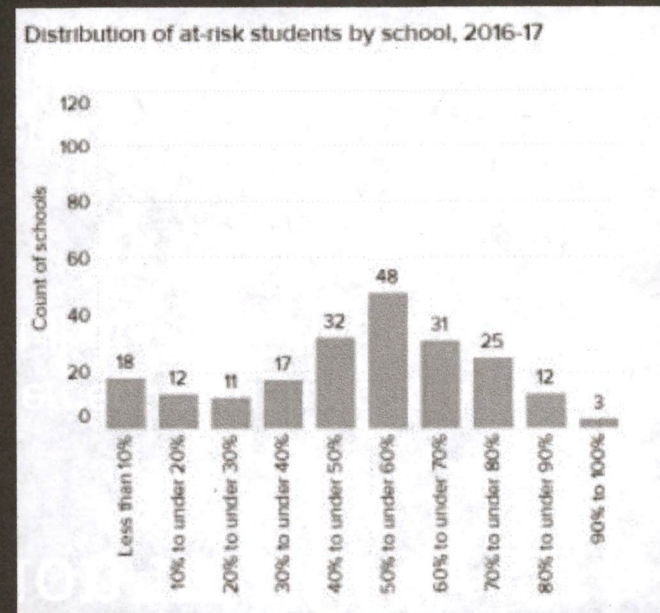
- The median economic diversity score is 34 percent compared to a potential median of 47 percent if all students were distributed at schools as they are in the overall student body.
- This means that half of schools have a student body with a concentration of students that is no more than 66 percent at-risk or not at-risk.
- The most economically diverse schools tend to have student bodies that are mostly at-risk.



# Economic Trends in DCPS

Students considered at-risk is slowly decreasing across DCPS.

Schools that are becoming more economically diverse are concentrated in Wards 7 and 8. More than half of schools in these Wards are becoming more economically diverse, which generally means that schools are serving a lower proportion of at-risk students.



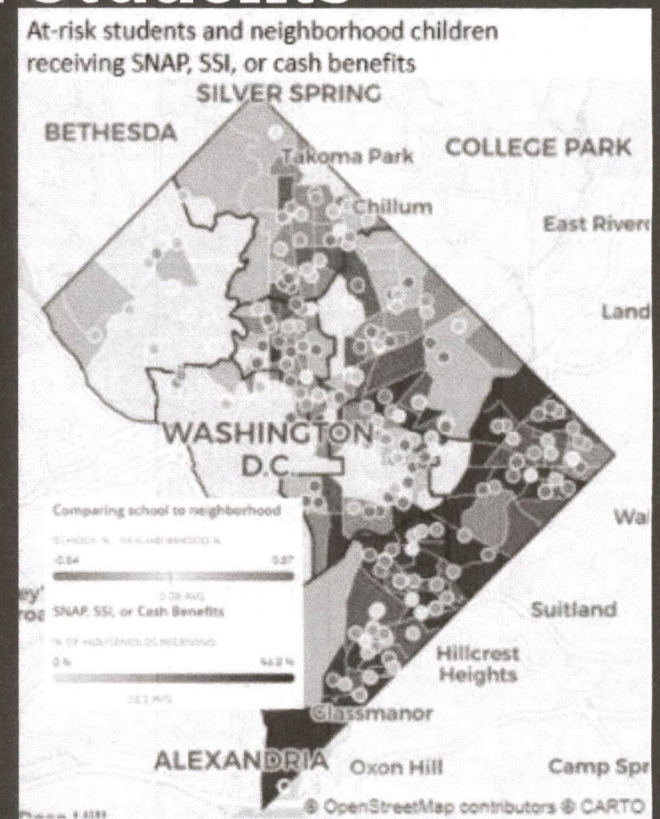
Source: D.C. Policy Center



# Current Distribution of At-Risk Students

While we expect to see higher levels of SNAP, SSP, or cash benefit recipients in the neighborhoods of Wards 7 and 8, the schools in those neighborhoods are starting to reflect a more average proportion of at-risk students.

Wards 2 and 3 have the fewest schools contributing to economic diversity (the red dots in wealthier neighborhoods).



Source: D.C. Policy Center



# Expand & Enhance Magnet Schools

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“Magnet schools are based on the premise that all students do not learn in the same ways, that if we find a unifying theme or a different organizational structure for students of similar interest, those students will learn more in all areas. In other words, if a magnet school voluntarily attracts students and teachers, it will succeed because, more than for any other reason, those in attendance want to be there. They will have chosen that school.” (Magnet.edu)

## History

- Started in response to Brown v. Board and white flight
- Provided an incentive for white suburban families to bring their kids into more racially segregated schools.
- Also referred to as voluntary desegregation

## Stats

- 3.7% of public school are magnets
- They serve 6.7% of nation's students
- 55% in urban areas



# Modern Issues with Magnet Schools

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## **Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1 (2007)**

- Made it much more difficult for districts to consider race when assigning students to schools if they are no longer under a court order to desegregate. Most schools not under court ordered desegregation anymore.

## **More school choice: charter schools, vouchers**

- Expansion of charter schools has increased competition for both students and funding.

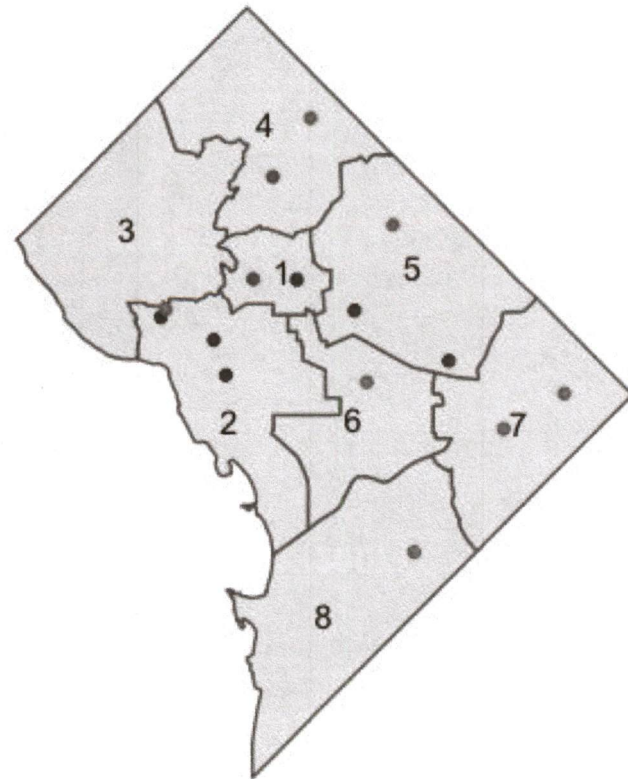
## **Changing Demographics**

- White students make up less than 50% of all school-aged Americans



Where are DC  
Magnet Schools  
located?

Location of DCPS Selective Magnet Schools





# Elementary Schools

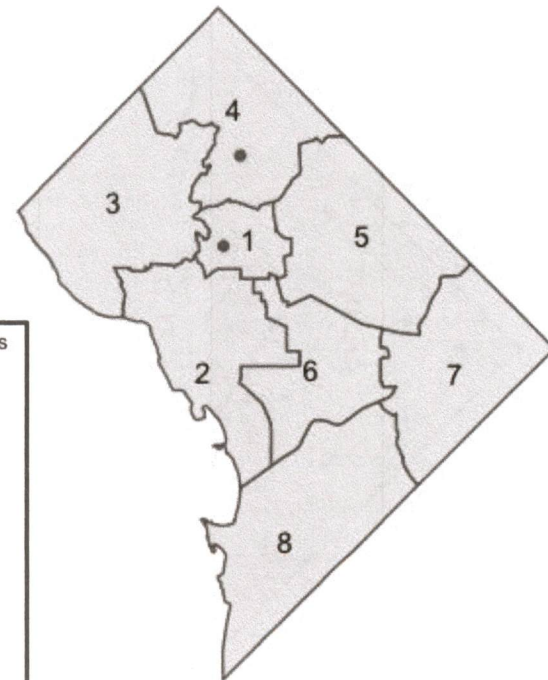
2 gifted/talented elementary schools

- 1 in ward 1
- 1 in ward 2

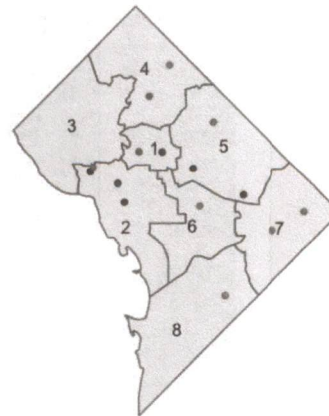
Median Income

- Ward 1: \$99,358
- Ward 2: \$108,670

Location of DCPS Gifted Elementary Schools



Location of DCPS Selective Magnet Schools





# Middle Schools

7 gifted/talented middle schools

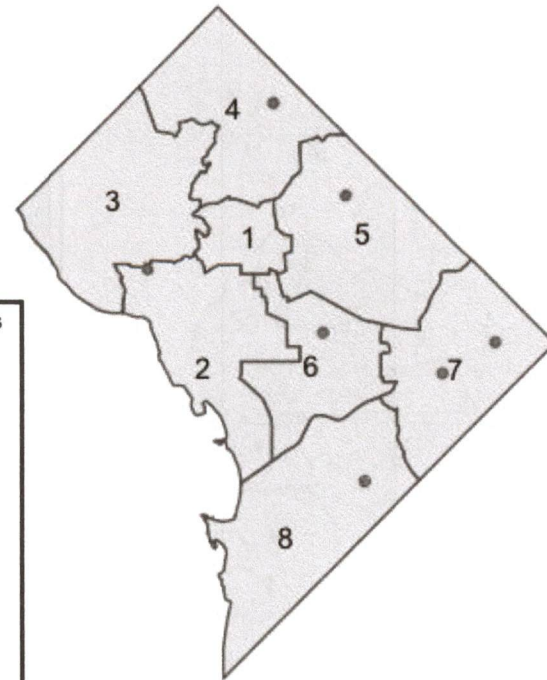
- 1 in Wards 5, 2, 4, 8, 6
- 2 in Wards 7

Median Incomes

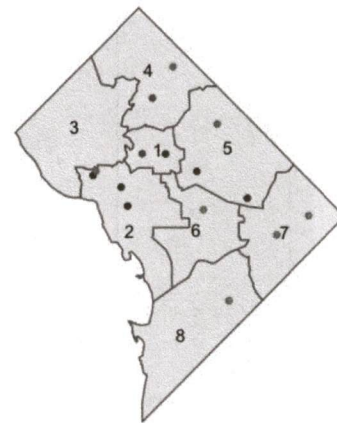
- Ward 7: \$41,438
- Ward 8: \$34,034
- Ward 6: \$108,967

ACS 2018 5-year

Location of DCPS Gifted Middle Schools



Location of DCPS Selective Magnet Schools





# High Schools

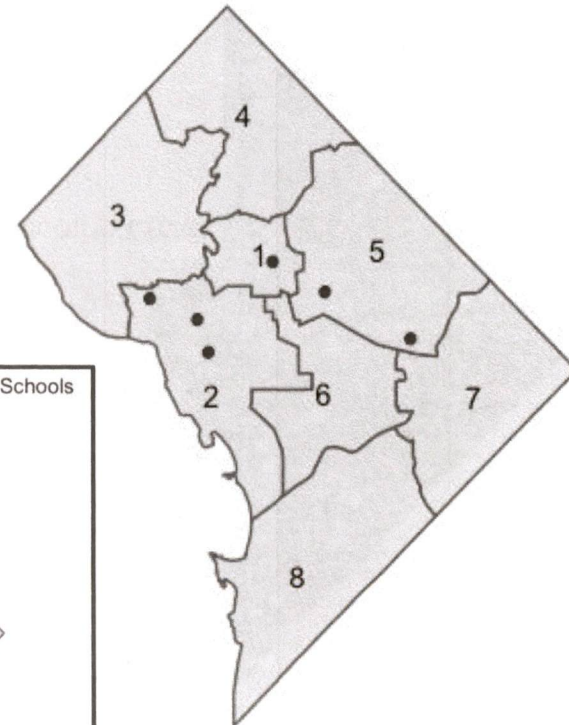
## 6 "Selective High Schools"

- 2 in Ward 1
- 2 in Ward 2
- 2 in Ward 5

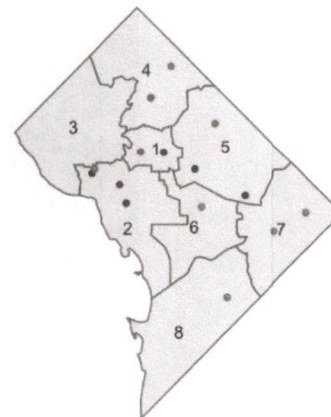
## Median Incomes

- Ward 1: \$99,358
- Ward 2: \$108,670
- Ward 5: \$68,375

Location of DCPS Selective High Schools



Location of DCPS Selective Magnet Schools

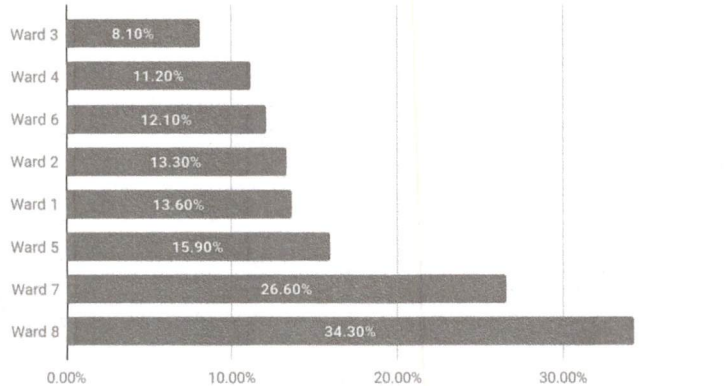




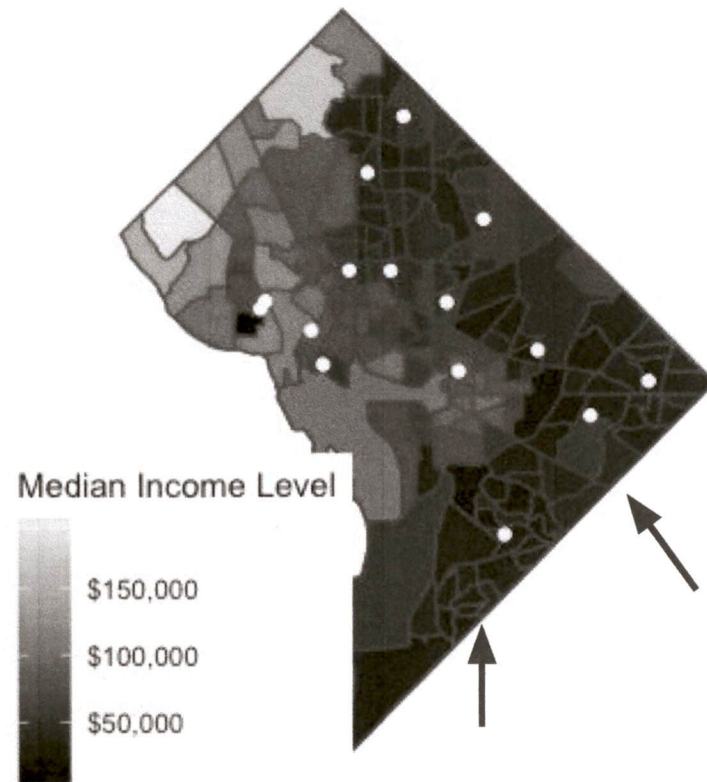
# Magnet Schools Proposal

Add magnet programs into wards 7 and 8 so kids from NW will have schools of interest to attend in those areas to increase within-school integration

Poverty Rates by Ward



Location of DCPS Schools by Ward and Median Income





# Do magnet schools reduce segregation?

Evidence is mixed

Seems to partly depend on the **state or district laws** surrounding how the schools operate.

Eg. Connecticut law states 25% of slots at magnet schools must be reserved for White or Asian. And, selective schools that have tests can isolate students from high poverty schools

Overall, magnet schools are **less impoverished** than traditional public schools in same district by approx 5 percentage points (Brookings) .

2014 study: racial composition of magnet schools is **not statistically different** from regular public schools; however, magnet schools are **more heterogeneous at the classroom level**, but only with respect to White/Hispanic racial composition. In particular, honors classes in magnet schools are significantly more diverse than honors classes in regular public schools, but only with regard to White/Hispanic diversity (Davis).



# Do Magnet schools improve achievement?

Evidence is mixed

Below from 2018 research synthesis. Note: This is from the Journal of School Choice.

## Random assignment using lottery (7 studies)

- *No study* showed a negative relationship between magnet schools and achievement.
- 5 studies showed statistically significant, positive impact of magnet schools on *math achievement*.
  - 2009 study in CT: found magnet schools to have positive effects on math & reading achievement for high schoolers and positive effects on reading achievement for middle schoolers (Bifulco et al).
  - Crain et al. (1992) found sporadic positive effects that varied by subgroup: magnet school attendees classified as below average readers were twice as likely to pass advanced standardized math test than nonmagnet peers. No difference in reading achievement between magnet and traditional students for below average readers.
- Remaining 2 studies found *no significant differences* on standardized test scores between magnet and traditional school students.
  - Cullen et al. (2003) found little evidence that attending magnet schools resulted in improved standardized test scores, attendance rates, course taking, or credit accumulation.
  - Kemple and Snipes (2000)



# Do Magnet schools improve achievement?

Evidence is mixed

Below from 2018 research synthesis. Note: This is from the Journal of School Choice.

## Nonexperimental studies using student demographic and prior achievement as controls (6 studies)

- 2 studies examined magnet school effects at the national level.
  - Gamoran (1996) found magnet schools to be more effective than traditional public schools at improving achievement of 10th-grade students in reading and social studies (no statistical difference for math or science).
  - Betts et al. (2015) observed greater achievement gains in ELA (but not math) for students attending converted magnet schools as compared with other district schools. However, the researchers were unable to conclude that these gains were related to the schools' conversions from traditional to magnet.
- 4 studies looked a traditional v. magnet at local/state level. 2 found mixed results.



# Do Magnet schools improve achievement?

Evidence is mixed

Below from 2018 research synthesis. Note: This is from the Journal of School Choice.

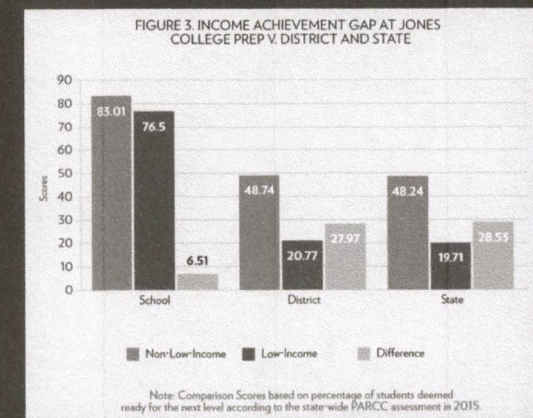
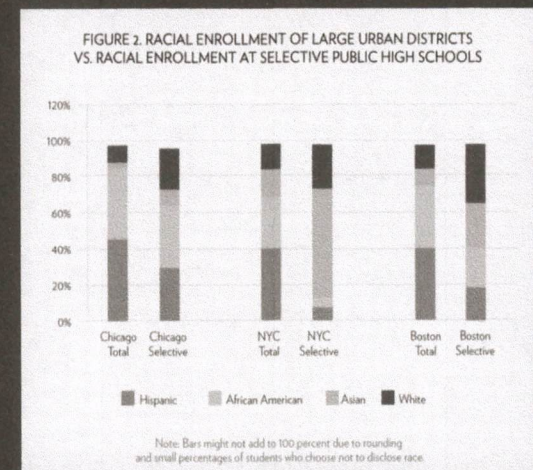
## Other nonexperimental studies (6 studies)

- This group of achievement studies did not include prior achievement or student demographics as controls. All were on the state or local level.
- 5 found positive results
  - Dohrmann et al. (2007) observed that students who had previously attended magnet Montessori elementary schools had higher achievement on standardized math and science tests in Milwaukee high schools.
- 2 looked at magnet school impact on graduation rates
  - A student attending a magnet school had a 0.29 higher probability of passing the language arts part of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and a 0.36 higher probability of passing the math CAHSEE. (Goldschmidt and Martinez-Fernandez, 2004).
  - Students enrolled in magnet middle schools (68% vs. 51%) and magnet high schools (73% vs. 45%) were substantially more likely to graduate on time than their peers who attended traditional schools. (Silver and colleagues, 2008).



# What Other Cities Are Doing

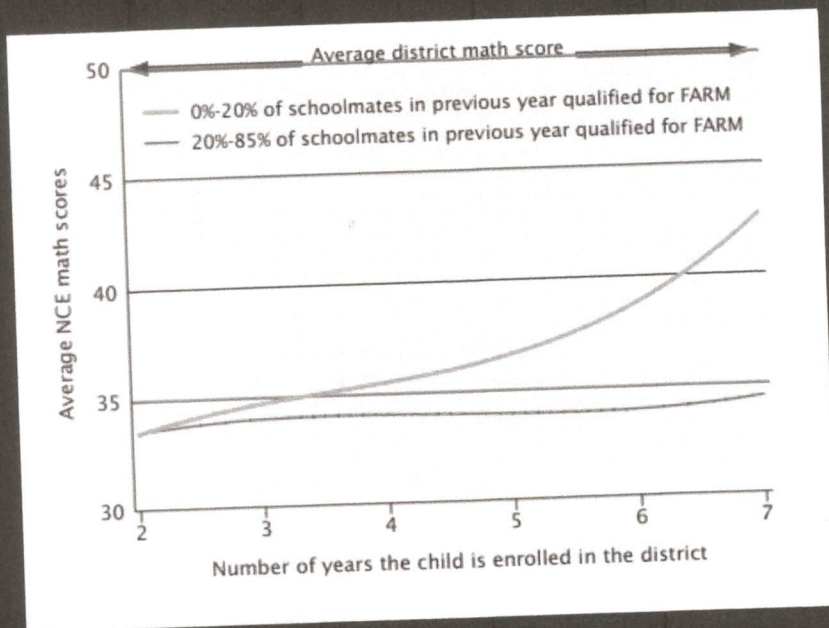
- *Chicago Public Schools (CPS)*
- City demographics: 32% white, 33% black, 29% hispanic, 5.5% asian, and 22.7% live under the poverty line
  - CPS: <10 % white, 39% black, 46% hispanic, 80.74% are eligible for federal meal programs
  - CPS Magnet Schools/ Selective Enrollment Schools: In the 2013–2014 academic year, about 22% white; nearly 30% were Hispanic, 35% black, and almost 9% Asian.
- Enrollment Process:
  - CPS uses several SES factors that relate to the census tract as a critical component for admissions. Schools also factor in siblings, proximity, and/or lottery/test scores.
  - For selective enrollment schools 30% of available seats are filled solely using testing/academic criteria from a city-wide pool. The remaining available seats—70 percent—shall be filled in rank order from the lists that rank applicants within each of the four SES tiers.





# How Economic Segregation in Schools is Related to Economic Segregation in Housing

- Widespread inequities in school finances when funding is tied to local taxes and wealth
- Inclusionary zoning is proven to be a successful way to expose low-income students to low-poverty settings
  - Students in public housing who go to school with less than 20% poverty close the achievement gap by half

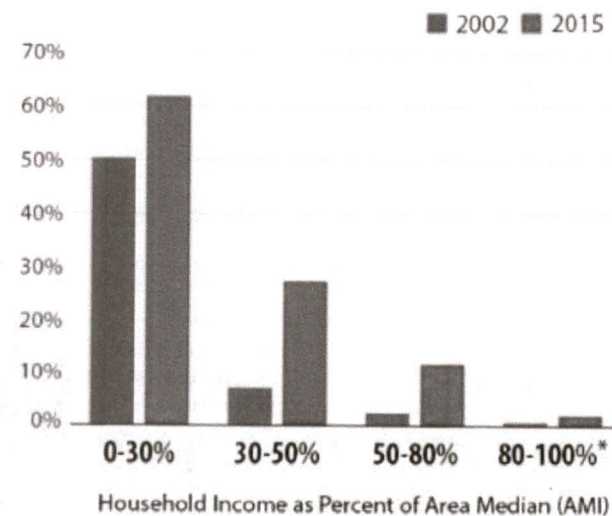




# Challenges Only Growing

- Since 1985, D.C. has lost 38% of its rent-controlled units
  - 80,000 units
- 60% of the D.C. population rents
- Growing cost of rent has displaced longtime residents at some of the highest rates in the country

## Larger Shares of DC Renters are Severely Cost Burdened

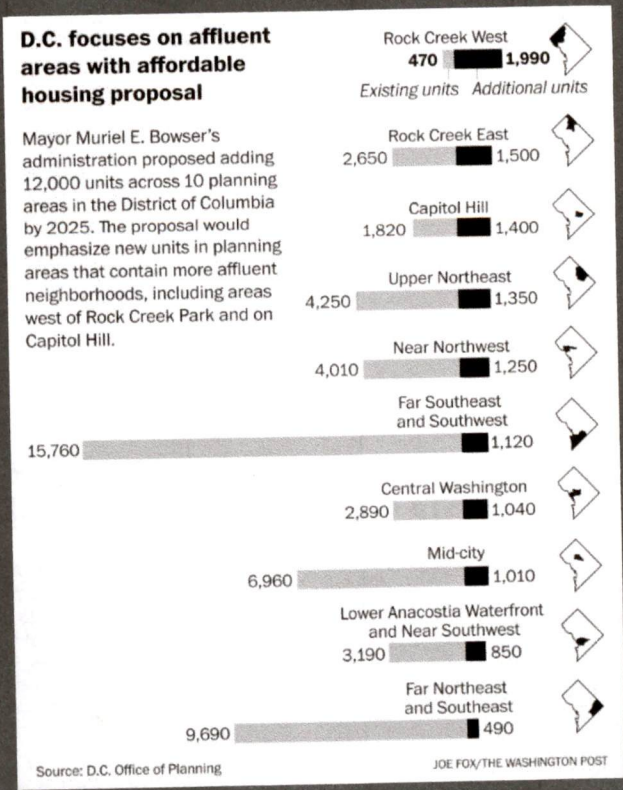


Note: \* indicates statistically insignificant change for income group.  
Source: DCFPI analysis of American Community Survey 1-year estimates.



# Current DC Housing Policy Landscape

- Existing affordable housing units are clustered in Wards 7 & 8, increasing economic segregation
- Mayor has proposal to place many new affordable housing units in high-income wards of D.C.
  - Tenleytown, Chevy Chase, Capitol Hill
- Add limited number of new affordable housing units in low-income wards
  - Anacostia, Southeast





# Court Cases Related to DC Affordable Housing

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- D.C. Attorney General Racine has brought suits against landlords deemed “slumlords” for not providing safe, habitable housing conditions
- Neighborhood Legal Services Program of D.C. filed suit alleging that rental management companies are charging higher rents for residents that use housing vouchers.
- Potential for SCOTUS to take up case against inclusionary zone housing given recent shifts in Justices.
  - Pacific Legal Foundation, a conservative law firm based in California, argues that the policy violates a provision of the Fifth Amendment that says private property cannot be taken without just compensation.



# What Other Cities Are Doing

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- Partner with technology companies to build affordable housing units
  - In Seattle and San Francisco, Microsoft and Facebook launched \$500 million affordable housing initiatives to give loans and grants to developers
  - Could work with Amazon to help build affordable housing units in Washington D.C.
- Establish affordable housing policy which increases the number of units and builds diverse types of houses in different neighborhoods across the city
  - Montgomery County housing policy



# DC Affordable Housing Recommendations

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- Work with existing coalitions to expand rent control in the District
  - Units subject to rent control after 15 years
  - Eliminate extra two percent of increased rental price allowed under current law
- Support current legislation to build equitable affordable housing units across all neighborhoods and wards
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# Potential Unintended Consequences

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- Increasing affordable housing units in wealthier areas of the city could bring down surrounding property values and cause property tax revenue to decrease
- Adding magnet schools to Wards 7 & 8 to attract wealthier students means that fewer kids in those areas would benefit from specialized programming.
- Successful magnet schools in low income areas could lead to gentrification.
- Rent control efforts could hurt long-term affordability/increase housing shortages because there is limited space in D.C. to build new buildings/build up.