

EQUITY IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING:

FRAMEWORKS, BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

*A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA*

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Jason Reece, Brooklyn August and Mazzie Cheesebrough
City & Regional Planning Section, Knowlton School, The Ohio State University



PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this document is to illuminate the important equity considerations in the implementation of the Regional Sustainability Agenda (RSA) goals and objectives, and provide examples of best practices and data resources to support social equity analysis, programming, and policy development. The RSA vision and principles statement include an emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion, so this guide was developed to inform the sustainability initiatives of regional members and partners.

EQUITY IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainability seeks to balance the three “E’s”: the economy, the environment, and equity. Sustainability should support regional growth and development that fosters economic prosperity, a clean and healthy ecosystem, and equity in our society. Research has found that traditional sustainable development planning often neglected equity concerns, with more emphasis placed on economic and environmental outcomes, and less on engagement or connection to marginalized communities or groups. Practice based research emerging from the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative indicated that utilizing a stronger equity lens and more direct engagement with marginalized communities can produce a more balanced implementation of sustainability. Regional and local planning efforts that emphasize equity in planning and development policies and strategies, can ensure the benefits of sustainable development reach those communities that are most marginalized.

WHAT IS EQUITY?

Equitable development recognizes differences in experiences, environmental conditions, and access to resources facing different populations throughout our society, regions, and cities. Equitable development practices seek to expand opportunities for all residents, mitigate the harms of past discrimination, and ensure healthy environments for all communities.

“Unlike equality, which connotes sameness, equity is responsive to difference; equitable policies actively mitigate the disproportionate harm faced by certain communities. Three cross-cutting issues related to social equity in planning include gentrification, environmental justice, and community engagement and empowerment.”

– American Planning Association¹

¹ American Planning Association. Knowledge Base Collection – Social Equity. Accessible at: <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/equity/>





DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY

Equity issues can manifest in a variety of ways. Addressing equity in sustainable development requires attention to different dimensions of “difference” within society and the community, such as class, race, and geography. Equity could also include dimensions of gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, or other considerations. Equity concerns also should recognize and seek to mitigate historical patterns of discrimination and disinvestment in marginalized communities.

SOCIAL EQUITY	Focus on lower income communities and economic empowerment.
RACIAL EQUITY	Focus on racial and ethnic communities and addressing structural racism.
REGIONAL EQUITY	Focus on the geographic differences in conditions across neighborhoods and communities within a region.
INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY	Assuring future generations inherit a sustainable region.
INTERSECTIONAL EQUITY	Recognition of overlapping identities which can compound equity concerns.

EQUITY & SUSTAINABILITY: DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CENTRAL OHIO COMMUNITY

In the spring of 2021, MORPC surveyed regional stakeholders on the region’s sustainability agenda. The following stakeholder statements illustrate the diversity of perspectives on equity concerns within the Central Ohio region.

RACIAL EQUITY & REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

“It is really important to consider lower income and communities of color when planning new infrastructure. Especially in terms of transportation, these people are most exposed to poor quality as a result of living near highways, etc., and have the least access to reliable public transportation. I would like to see new transportation infrastructure before anything else, because people will benefit from this endeavor the most.”

EQUITY IN ACCESS TO RECYCLING SERVICES

“The City of Columbus, in an effort to reduce municipal solid waste, instituted a recycling program. However, people who live in apartments are not eligible for this city service. Low income people are less likely to own a car and have less ability to haul their own recycling, so many of these people simply do not recycle. The city of Columbus made it easier for the population already more likely to recycle instead of reducing barriers for the marginalized.”

INTERSECTIONAL EQUITY CONCERNS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

“Many of my clients do not feel safe/comfortable using COTA. In the South and West sides were I primarily work, there are often no benches/covering which decrease accessibility at bus stops. Bus routes are not intuitive. Women, LGBTQIA folks, and those that don’t speak English feel vulnerable to violence and harassment at our bus stops. Taking the bus may take 45 minutes to get somewhere that would take 7 minutes by car. This all matters. I would love to see all bus stops have benches, coverings, smart technology for bus routes with multiple translation, express bus lanes to increase speed, and other design implementations to increase public safety.”

REGIONAL EQUITY AND HOUSING IN OUR GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE REGION

“Given our diverse geography (rural, urban, suburban) - this goal ensures the future of the region is mindful of the diverse needs of our diverse communities. Additionally, housing is not just an urban or Columbus problem - it needs to be addressed throughout all our jurisdictions, including those communities that have been exclusive thus far.”

EQUITY ACROSS OUR DIVERSE REGION: EQUITY CONCERNS ACROSS THE URBAN, SUBURBAN, EXURBAN & RURAL LANDSCAPE

Across a diverse regional landscape, the differences in community structure or typology will have a substantial impact on which equity concerns are most pressing in sustainable development.

URBAN AREAS

Equity concerns in planning and development in urban areas are often centered on providing stable affordable housing and counteracting historical discrimination and disinvestment in urban neighborhoods. Issues of concern may include removal of blight or environmental hazards, air pollution, fostering better connections between marginalized communities and economic, transportation and public service resources, and fostering community-based asset building within neighborhoods. Areas experiencing redevelopment, infill development, or gentrification should ensure a sustained inventory of affordable housing options to prevent the displacement of long term and/or lower income residents.

SUBURBAN AREAS

Equity concerns within suburban spaces may be related to supporting greater fair housing access to opportunity-rich communities with well-resourced public services or targeting reinvestment activities into older suburbs that have begun to experience disinvestment. For older suburbs, addressing aging suburban infrastructure and housing stock, walkability, greater transportation options, and a more diverse tax base (particularly fostering commercial tax base) is essential to meeting community needs.

EXURBAN AND RURAL AREAS

Equity issues in the context of exurban and rural areas may include expanding access to essential community services (education, finance, health care) and economic opportunities, expanding transportation access for workers in rural areas to reach regional job centers. Aging rural housing stock and seniors who are aging in place may require housing support programs and investment. Aging septic systems may require resources to support their replacement to avoid environmental degradation and public health risks. In areas experiencing new development, measures to support traditional agricultural activities and mediate land use conflicts may be required through master planning. Expansion of telecommunications and broadband will allow greater flexibility for rural workers and support entrepreneurial and educational activities.

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT: EQUITABLE PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Equitable engagement promotes inclusion for all community members, especially those who have been historically marginalized from traditional public decision-making processes. It is inherent to include marginalized communities, that have been historically excluded, in the decision-making process. To accomplish this, focused community engagement is vital; this requires the development of partnerships between community members and public/nonprofit stakeholders. Equitable engagement practices can include community engagement on a regional scale, as well as the local scale, to promote the needs and representation of marginalized communities within the decision-making process.

Equitable community engagement involves cultivating trust and ownership of planning solutions among community members. The voice of marginalized communities or other underrepresented groups is essential to support authentic equity planning. Equitable engagement requires proactive engagement and openness to listening to the voices of marginalized communities, widespread transparency about motivations, willingness to enact change or input the voice of equity groups, providing participants with respect, and shared decision-making power. Some of the benefits of effective engagement are as follows: legitimate plans are more likely to come to fruition through expanded community support, increased community capacity locally and regionally is cultivated to address equity concerns, and the voice of underrepresented communities will foster more effective policy solutions.

The APA Planning for Equity Policy Guide, which will be discussed in further detail, outlines an “equity in all policies” approach, which is claimed to be the best approach to utilize when proposing new policies/regulations for community engagement. This entails a change in perspective when considering practices, to evaluate whether equity is considered in all policies, and incorporating equity into all policies whenever possible to enhance inclusionary community engagement. This approach should serve as a guide for proposed equity-based policies.

The equity planning capacity builders for the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative have provided strategic guidelines for the advancement of equitable community engagement. These guidelines can support more transformative engagement outcomes that produce tangible benefits. The strategic guidelines are synthesized on the next pages.



STRATEGY 1:

BE PROACTIVE AND FOCUSED

Equitable engagement requires a proactive approach for focused engagement with underrepresented or marginalized communities. This requires developing meaningful relationships with marginalized community members/stakeholders and developing focused engagement efforts, even if this requires additional resources or narrowly-tailored engagement strategies. The importance of targeted meeting strategies is discussed as a key policy in the APA Planning for Equity Policy Guide. This approach includes the consideration and provision of various meeting formats to remove barriers and accommodate a greater number of people to support inclusionary engagement. Pop up engagement activities can also be tailored to utilize highly trafficked public community spaces to engage residents who would not be able to participate in more-traditional planning meetings. Preliminary engagement with marginalized groups can help tailor a targeted engagement process to be more effective in engaging underrepresented voices. Local knowledge from preliminary engagement activities can improve engagement practice as well as identify unique or priority needs, issues, or assets in the community. Informed and targeted engagement strategies can also identify barriers prior to the engagement process. For example, local input in the engagement design could identify and preemptively address barriers to engagement, such as transportation, time constraints, trust concerns, language barriers, or other challenges.

STRATEGY 2:

INVEST AND CONNECT WITH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO BUILD CAPACITY

Investment in community leadership development may be needed as part of engagement efforts. Leadership development activities can help expand the capacity of local community or grassroots leaders to more effectively engage in planning processes. Engagement with leadership development can also build relationships with communities that are underrepresented in traditional sustainability planning efforts. Efforts should align with the region's various leadership development programs and other similar programming. Alumni of programs such as United Way's Neighborhood Leadership Academy or the African American Leadership Academy are potential partners for expanding the reach of engagement activities. Leadership development can also more directly work to support grassroots community leaders at the neighborhood scale. Community Development for All People's South Side Neighborhood Leadership Academy has graduated more than 75 local leaders over a five-year time span. These individuals have become critical and consistent points of contact for engagement activities and planning efforts in the neighborhood.² Capacity building can also include more-focused workshops and educational sessions for community members on issues of sustainability or focused surveys/data collection led by local community organizations to provide a deeper understanding of community needs.

STRATEGY 3:

ENGAGE EARLY AND BUILD TRUST

Engagement practices must engage with marginalized communities from the beginning of the process (and not mid-way through or after the planning process). This helps to foster a sense of trust and authenticity among community members and conveners. Public sector entities must also be transparent in sharing information, details on process, goals, and decision-making approaches to planning initiatives. Conflict must be dealt with in an open and constructive way, promoting collaborative engagement and avoiding adversarial engagement. Additionally, disagreements and conflicts should be discussed openly but with sensitivity to marginalized communities. The APA Planning for Equity Policy Guide recommends the importance of creating safe spaces for engaging conflict and past injustices experienced by community members. This policy creates space for marginalized groups to share their past experiences of injustice in a safe and non-judgmental environment, creating the opportunity to build trust and to identify potential sensitive points of conflict or triggers which may touch upon historical community trauma.

² For more information: <https://www.4allpeople.org/ssnla>

STRATEGY 4:

ENSURE A CULTURALLY COMPETENT ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engagement processes and facilitators should be culturally competent, and engagement processes should foster and ensure mutual respect for an array of different cultural backgrounds. Cultural competency can be supported through diversity and inclusion training activities for engagement staff, and having diversity in facilitators and leaders of engagement processes. Utilizing external facilitators who have expertise in inclusive engagement can supplement these efforts.

STRATEGY 5:

BE ATTENTIVE TO CREATING INCLUSIVE VENUES FOR MEETINGS

It is also extremely important to examine where public meetings are held, as they should be in a centralized area that is easily accessible to stakeholders. The timing and duration of the meetings is critical, as many stakeholders must work around parenting and job duties. Childcare during evening meetings may be recommended. Translation services and multi-lingual resources may be required in some cases. If meetings are held virtually, be sure to offer technological support for stakeholders so that they can access the materials and meeting.

STRATEGY 6:

BE REFLECTIVE AND FLEXIBLE

Space should be reserved for reflection within the engagement process by engagement staff, to allow for changes and modifications to improve the effectiveness of engagement activities as necessary. The process can be monitored by administering regular check-ins for residents and stakeholders to receive feedback.

These guidelines emphasize the need for equity and representation of marginalized communities throughout the entire engagement process. For more information please visit: <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/community-engagement-guide-for-sustainable-communities>





IN PRACTICE: BEST PRACTICE CASE EXAMPLES OF EQUITY IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Sustainability planning can embrace equity, and work to link together different interests, stakeholders, and communities as they shape development policy. The following provide case examples of best or model practices in equity planning to support sustainable development.

CASE: INVESTING IN INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING – BOSTON AND SEATTLE³

As part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) regional sustainability planning program, two grantees, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in Seattle and the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) in the Boston area, were identified by HUD and evaluators as excelling in bringing underrepresented communities table for regional sustainability.

Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) planning process emphasized community engagement near destinations of anticipated transit-oriented development expansion. An equity network (of social equity stakeholders) was developed for the region as part of the planning process. PSRC recognized that investing in partnerships with community-based organizations was the best approach to building relationships with traditionally underrepresented populations. The agency awarded significant sub-contractor grants to community-based organizations to support community engagement. More than a half million dollars in SCl funds were dedicated to these engagement capacity-building support grants, which reached dozens of communities across the region. A total of \$450,000 was awarded in 54 capacity-building grants given to 43 community-based organizations in the region. An additional \$125,000 was given to non-profit organizations that assisted in building the capacity of community-based organizations. Puget Sound utilized small grants to community organizations to bolster grassroots organizing, opening up new relationships while also cultivating new community voices. As described by the regional agency:

“These projects represent a wide variety of compelling stories, (for example) organizing East African immigrant women for the first time to provide them a voice in local planning.”

– PSRC, Final Narrative Report, 2014

³ The following case description is paraphrased and quoting from the following publication: Reece, J., & Gough, M. Z. (2019). Planning for regional sustainability and justice: The role of collective impact. *Community Development*, 50(3), 368-386.

The Boston regional grantee (MAPC) developed an intensive engagement process with the emphasis on inclusive engagement models. The consortium held 362 planning meetings involving 10,000 participants, and 52 training and education sessions, engaging an additional 12,000 stakeholders. Local planning demonstration projects funded by the agency dedicated 30–50% of their planning budgets to community engagement. MAPC's planning experience was described by local stakeholders as creating institutionalized reforms by the agency in regard to transforming the regional agency's approach to inclusive engagement. MAPC emphasized a diversity of formats for engagement activities and investing in support resources (translation services and child care) to foster inclusive engagement. As described by the agency:

“With the support and guidance of the Sustainable Communities Steering Committee, we piloted new approaches to inclusive community engagement and planning techniques. Some of the innovative approaches and best practices included open houses, hybrid meeting designs, and meeting with groups at their standing meeting locations and times. We used music, food, and spoken word to bring people together. . . We used interpreters, translated documents, and provided childcare when needed.”
– Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2014

CASE: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS IN FOSTERING EQUITABLE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDIES FROM ATLANTA, DENVER, AND THE TWIN CITIES

The desire for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) has been rapidly increasing, as environmental concerns continue to rise and the benefits of transit continue to increase the wellbeing of communities. The proximity of housing to transit, however, tends to drive up housing prices and displace low-income families. This article suggests the use of community land trusts (CLTs) to ensure that affordable housing is available and protected around TOD. Atlanta, Denver, and the Twin Cities were all studied in this article, though the case study of Atlanta will be highlighted in what follows.

The city of Atlanta has been attempting to implement their own TOD project called the BeltLine. The BeltLine is 22-miles long, and it includes mixed-use development, mixed-income housing, and a series of parks. The plan is looking to protect 5,600 households to ensure that they are affordable. Currently, the implementation of affordable housing is not looking too promising, as property values rise along the BeltLine. Research suggests that property values will continue to rise as the BeltLine is developed, and low-income families are at risk of being displaced. To mitigate this displacement, the Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ATLC) has set out to preserve widespread affordable housing along the BeltLine, and they have been quite successful. The BeltLine has developed incentives and funding options to support CLTs. The city of Atlanta has also identified partners to support the implementation of CLTs to preserve TOD.

CLTs are a driving force in fostering TOD. The ATLC has developed coalitions to support equitable TOD. The ATLC also helps to create new CLTs to further support TOD. This study has found that CLTs should be utilized before transit lines are even developed, to help decide how the land will be used and to acquire cheap land before land prices rise.

For More Information: lincolnst.edu/publications/working-papers/role-community-land-trusts-fostering-equitable-transit-oriented



CASE: FIRST-AND-LAST MILE SOLUTION VIA BICYCLING TO IMPROVING TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY AND ADVANCING TRANSPORTATION EQUITY (HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO)

This article aims to emphasize the importance of public transportation accessibility, which leads to an increase in social equity. The improvement of access to public transportation also helps to provide greater opportunities and create a more inclusive society, which specifically helps disadvantaged populations. It is imperative to remove the first-and-last mile barrier, to improve transit accessibility. Improving bicycle infrastructure is an integral part of reducing the first-and-last mile barrier, as biking is faster than walking and it can increase the distance of access. Currently, bicycle networks are isolated and unsafe, and thus should be improved upon to increase access to transit. Therefore, this article aims to determine the connection between social equity and transit accessibility by bicycle.

Distributional inequalities have been measured to assess social equity and transportation accessibility, by the utilization of various accessibility indexes. The methodology used for this report includes the calculation of the access distance/average travel speed to transit, specifying the routes utilized within networks, determining bicycle suitability, the combination of travel times for pedestrian and bicycle transit, and the measurement of the dispersion of transit accessibility.

Hamilton County, Ohio, was the chosen area to implement the previously mentioned methodology. The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) is the main mode of public transit within the area, and it is centralized in the urban core. The distribution of the population and jobs were identified in order to determine if the needs of disadvantaged groups are being met. Most low-income families live in urban areas, where minority groups typically live, and a high density of jobs are also located in these urban areas. Travel behaviors were examined and the majority of trips were completed by walking rather than bicycle, though bicycling would greatly increase access distance.

The results of the study concluded that bicycling to transit increases the access distance, due to greater speeds than walking. Bicycling to transit also increases the access to job opportunities, especially for low-income communities. The results also found that low-income residents rely on public transit the most, though these groups of people experience increased lack of access to transit. Lastly, the results found that bicycling to transit helped to increase transit accessibility to all racial groups and all income levels, thus reducing inequality. To conclude, bicycling is the preferred mode of transportation to reduce the first-and-last mile barrier.

For More Information: [sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275119305347](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275119305347)



CASE: THE EFFECTS OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES ON RESIDENTIAL HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

There have been major pushes to electrify the transportation system. Power grid infrastructure is currently able to support electric vehicles (EV) and plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEV), which utilize electricity as their main power source, though a major shift in transportation to support more EVs and PHEVs may overwhelm the grid. Other concerns also include range anxiety, due to the uncertainty of range limitations for EV batteries. Thus, the implementation of public charging stations are examined in this study to decrease potential range anxiety, and the widespread impact of EVs on the local power grid are examined in Indianapolis, Indiana. Local electricity tariffs and the gasoline savings are also studied to determine if local residents will benefit. Lastly, the location of charging stations are examined.

The proposed methodology for this study includes: examination of travel characteristics, development of a residential demand model for energy consumption, a cost-benefit analysis of EV use for households, and the selection of charging stations. The first step in this methodology, the examination of travel characteristics, includes its own 4-step approach: characterization of travel purposes, distribution of trips around the city, the chosen mode of transportation and route, and the simulation of the electricity demand model. The second step in the methodology looks at the residential demand model, which aims to determine the effect that EVs have on a typical household. The third step involves a cost-benefit analysis, based on typical charging patterns and the comparison of EVs to vehicles that run solely on gasoline. The final step evaluated the charging locations based on traffic flow patterns.

The results of this study found that charging EVs at peak hours in the summer months could significantly induce strain on the power grid and raise costs; therefore, this should be taken into account with widespread adoption. Simulations also showed that when charging patterns were adjusted, consumers could save about 34% in electricity costs. The results found that when EVs were used more frequently, they became more attractive due to the future gasoline savings that occurred as a result, though range anxiety should still be taken into account. Incorporating charging stations based on traffic flow would help to significantly decrease range anxiety. Each zone in a city will have different traffic flow, meaning that the selection of locations for charging stations will be different within each zone.

For More Information: [sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301421512005496](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301421512005496)

CASE: PRIORITIZING SUITABLE LOCATIONS FOR GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE BASED ON SOCIAL FACTORS IN PHILADELPHIA

Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) refers to the leveraging of vegetation to mitigate stormwater. The execution of GSI is reliant upon the priorities of community members and municipalities, and the constraints of the environment. This article aims to emphasize the economic, social, and environmental benefits when siting GSI. The four GSI types that are studied in this article based on suitability include: rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, and tree trenches. Soil hydrology, topology, proximity to stormwater inlet, and proximity to institutions are considered in selection models, to choose the optimum GSI to utilize in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The examination for the suitability of GSI sites were managed in four stages: equitable distribution by locating GSI in high priority areas, location of GSI in areas that are not physically constrained, locating GSI to maximize the proximity to social institutions, and conducting site visits to determine feasibility. By determining the suitability of GSI sites, the value of GSI projects would increase, and the environment would benefit as well.

The framework previously outlined helps to maximize economic, social, and environmental benefits, as well as equity considerations. This study emphasizes the importance of installing GSI projects in disadvantaged communities to further social equity. It also suggests that community capacity for maintenance is of importance when prioritizing the location of GSI projects.

CASE: PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CRASH RISK AND EQUITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Crash risk is assessed in this article to determine priority areas, increase safety, and identify the inequities that exist in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This study's crash risk methodology includes: collection of data, crash risk estimations at mid-blocks and intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists, evaluation of equity distribution with respect to crash risk, and implications for street improvement projects. As part of the data collection, police reports were obtained to get a count for all reported bicycle and pedestrian crashes that occurred within a 13-year period. The data showed that crashes were not evenly distributed, and high levels occurred in areas of concentrated poverty. The study also found that road infrastructure is associated with crash risk, thus the crash risk model also took this into account. Finally, after the distribution of crash risk and equity was assessed, crash rates were ranked to determine project prioritization.

The study concluded that crash risks are highest in low-income neighborhoods, especially those with large minority populations. The article suggests that their methodology should be used in other cities, to determine crash risk and prioritize street improvement projects. The crash risk model that was utilized in Minneapolis showed that crashes were unevenly distributed, and a higher concentration of these crashes occurred in low-income neighborhoods.

For More Information: conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/203635





ADDENDUM A

DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY REPRESENTED IN THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The following summary highlights examples of equity considerations reflected in some of the current regional sustainability agenda's goals, objectives and strategies.

GOAL 1



Improve air quality and reduce climate change impacts to protect public health and the environment.

RATIONALE

The following objectives and strategies are essential to ensuring marginalized communities and those at risk of environmental justice concerns benefit from improving air quality, the growth of the sustainable energy economy, and can avoid or mitigate air quality related health risks.

1.1 Reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled.

A. Create development practices and regulations that reduce the need for vehicle travel. Examples include encouraging mixed-use development, increased density, and shared or reduced parking among neighboring businesses.

Equity Dimension: Creates greater connectivity for those who are transit dependent and should be aligned with housing affordability provisions near areas of infill development or Transit Oriented Development areas.

B. Adopt a Complete Streets policy.

Equity Dimension: Provides for more efficient and safe transportation infrastructure for non-motorized travelers.

C. Prioritize proximity to transit stops, multi-use paths, and sidewalks in site selection decisions. Examples include siting within a quarter-mile of a transit stop.

Equity Dimension: Creates greater connectivity and access to services, employment and resources for those who are transit dependent.

F. Create a telecommuting policy that supports diverse workplace and employee needs.

Equity Dimension: Allows for more flexibility for workers and households with transportation, childcare, or other barriers to employment.

1.2 Increase alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure.

E. Install widespread public charging and alternative fuel stations to support EV and alternative fuel vehicle use in all neighborhoods.

Equity Dimension: Creates infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in all neighborhoods, including neighborhoods at greater risk of air pollution.

F. Collaborate on a regional approach for EV infrastructure planning with priority for equitable distribution.

Equity Dimension: Ensures EV infrastructure is equitably distributed in all neighborhoods throughout the region.

1.3 Reduce per capita energy consumption across all sectors.

D. Conduct education and outreach to encourage energy efficient improvements and practices.

Equity Dimension: If targeted toward lower income households, can help reduce energy cost burden and further supports housing affordability.

F. Engage minority, disadvantaged, small, and women-owned businesses to address energy needs.

Equity Dimension: Ensures economic benefits of energy efficiency efforts reach minority, disadvantaged, small and women-owned businesses.

1.4 Increase local renewable energy generating capacity.

D. Support community solar and other programs to provide renewable energy opportunities and associated jobs in low-to-moderate income communities.

Equity Dimension: Ensures advances and growth in the renewable energy economy and provides economic opportunities for low to moderate income workers.

1.5 Reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions.

C. Implement inclusive outreach and engagement strategies that encourage input from marginalized communities to shape beneficial solutions.

Equity Dimension: Ensures engagement and inclusion of the voices of marginalized communities to inform greenhouse gas reduction efforts in their neighborhood and the region.

1.6 Increase the number of days with good air quality.

B. Implement/support low-cost air quality monitors at the neighborhood level to collect pollution data and identify where the disparities occur in order to target local solutions for improving air quality.

Equity Dimension: Ensures all neighborhoods, particularly marginalized communities who face environmental justice barriers, have adequate data to identify and mitigate air quality risks.

C. Adopt an Idle-Free vehicle policy.

Equity Dimension: Ensures better air quality for workers and residents who live near areas of shipping, logistics, and other emission locations.

E. Establish an Air Quality Alert Day action plan to minimize emissions when high pollution days are forecasted. Strategies include refuel in the morning or after dark, refrain from using gas powered lawn equipment, no vehicle idling, maintain proper tire pressure in vehicles.

Equity Dimension:

F. Establish a communication or outreach process to inform staff and partners about air quality forecasts and Alerts, and encourage strategies to reduce pollution.

Equity Dimension: Ensures air quality alerts reach vulnerable populations that are most at risk from the health impacts of air pollution.



GOAL 2



Protect and preserve natural resources to support a healthy and resilient region.

RATIONALE

The following objectives and strategies seek to reduce food insecurity, mitigate environmental risks, reduce water costs, and reduce energy costs for marginalized communities.

2.1 Reduce the amount of municipal solid waste per capita disposed in the landfill.

A. Implement community-wide curbside recycling.

Equity Dimension: Ensures that all residents of Central Ohio have easy access to at-home recycling programs.

B. Promote food waste prevention and implement food waste rescue and composting programs.

Equity Dimension: Can reduce food insecurity for lower income households and also provide a new renewable resource for food production.

E. Support re-use or donation of items, such as computers, with priority for donations going to organizations serving low-income residents.

Equity Dimension: Encourages re-use of materials to help meet the needs of low-income residents and reduces household expenses for low income residents. Also reduces potential hazards into the landfill.

2.3 Improve water quality in central Ohio watersheds.

A. Utilize green infrastructure (GI) best practices to reduce flooding and stormwater pollution. Examples include rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, and vegetated buffers.

Equity Dimension: Reduces flood risk for households living in flood prone areas or areas with inadequate stormwater infrastructure, while preventing erosion and pollution into local waterways.

F. Prioritize implementation of water quality improvements to benefit all neighborhoods, especially in underserved areas. Activities may include siting green infrastructure, plantings, river-clean up locations, educational outreach, and areas with consistent home septic treatment system failures.

Equity Dimension: Ensures water efficiency and water quality improvements benefit marginalized communities, those at greater risk of water pollution or flooding, or those underserved by existing infrastructure.

2.5 Reduce the conversion rate of farmland.

A. Include strategies to support agriculture and food production in community and comprehensive plans.

Equity Dimension: Ensures local food production continues, and reduced food insecurity within the region.

C. Support local food through institutional purchasing, farmer's markets, etc.

Equity Dimension: Can support local entrepreneurial activities, particularly for economically marginalized areas, supports greater access to fresh, healthy food, and reduces food insecurity.

E. Target financial tools to incentivize farmland preservation.

Equity Dimension: Provides economic support to local farmers who are critical in supporting food production and reducing food insecurity in the region.

GOAL 3



Improve quality of life for all residents by creating sustainable and equitable communities.

RATIONALE

The following objectives and strategies seek to ensure equitable access to recreational assets, transportation options and supports transportation safety for marginalized communities.

3.1 Improve transportation and mobility safety for all residents.

- C. Prioritize safety improvements in underserved neighborhoods where higher rates of fatalities and injuries occur.

Equity Dimension: Recognizes disparities in transportation safety experienced by underserved neighborhoods, supports safety improvements in these areas, particularly for those most at risk for transportation accidents or fatalities.

3.2 Prioritize infrastructure development that supports multi-modal transportation options for all users.

- B. Establish processes or policies that prioritize transit and bikeway infrastructure access.

Equity Dimension: Provides greater mobility for transit or non-motorized dependent households and reduced transportation expenses for those who shift to non-motorized transportation.

- C. Establish connections between pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure.

Equity Dimension: Supports safety and travel experience for households who are dependent on non-motorized forms of transportation.

- D. Expand and create a low-stress network for non-motorists to improve the user level of comfort.

Equity Dimension: Provides greater mobility for transit or non-motorized dependent households and reduced transportation expenses for those who shift to non-motorized transportation.

- E. Prioritize investments in areas where there are disparities in sidewalk coverage and areas underserved by a multi-modal transportation system.

Equity Dimension: Recognizes and addresses disparity in sidewalk and multi-modal infrastructure and improves transportation options for those who are dependent on non-motorized forms of transportation.

- F. Implement/support initiatives that enhance mobility options for seniors and people with disabilities.

Equity Dimension: Ensures safety and enhanced mobility for those who face barriers to motorized transportation or are transit dependent.

3.3 Increase access to parks and regional trails.

- C. Increase safety and accessibility of routes to parks and trails.

Equity Dimension: Ensures all residents and communities have access to park and trail infrastructure for active living, passive recreation, mobility, and children's play.

- E. Include park land acquisition in community plans and budgets, and prioritize areas where there are gaps in parks/trails access.

Equity Dimension: Prioritization of addressing gaps in park/trail access for marginalized

F. Implement inclusive public engagement and outreach to reflect the needs of the residents in park design.

Equity Dimension: Ensures participation and inclusion of perspectives of marginalized communities in park design.

3.4 Reduce household energy cost burden.

A. Promote and increase participation in available utility energy efficiency programs, including free programs for income-qualified households such as the Columbia Gas of Ohio WarmChoice® program.

Equity Dimension: Reduces energy consumption while addressing cost burden and housing costs for lower income households.

B. Target resources, tools, and outreach programs to address energy consumption in areas with unaffordable household energy burden.

Equity Dimension: Directly targets populations with the highest energy cost burden and provides energy efficiency improvements to reduce household expenses for lower income households.

C. Collaborate on solar development and other initiatives to attract clean energy investments and jobs in underserved neighborhoods.

Equity Dimensions: Ensures advances and growth in the local renewable energy economy and provides economic opportunities for low to moderate income workers and minority-owned, small or women-owned businesses.

3.5 Reduce the rate of elevated blood lead levels among children.

A. Encourage lead testing and educational programs to reduce lead exposure in underserved communities.

Equity Dimension: Recognizes disparities in lead risk and lead poisoning experienced in marginalized and underserved communities. Mitigates lead exposure risks for children most at risk for lead poisoning.

B. Implement lead service line replacement.

Equity Dimension: Acknowledges and mitigates the increased prevalence of lead lines in older and historically disinvested communities.

C. Implement or promote existing lead abatement and safety programs for housing.

Equity Dimension: Ensures lead mitigation occurs in low to moderate income communities, older housing, and affordable housing.



GOAL 4



Promote robust, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development.

RATIONALE

The following objectives and strategies are tailored to ensure low to moderate income households and traditionally underserved or disinvested communities have access to areas of infill redevelopment; stable, safe, and affordable housing; and supports fair housing (and access to jobs, services, and resources) throughout the region.

4.2 Maximize infill and redevelopment along existing infrastructure.

A. Include infill and redevelopment in zoning code and/or community plans.

Equity Dimension: Must be aligned with efforts to support housing affordability (and diverse housing options) in tandem with infill redevelopment areas.

B. Update land-use policies and zoning codes to encourage mixed use development and density.

Equity Dimension: Must be aligned with policies and efforts to ensure a range of affordable housing options within mixed use and higher density developments.

F. Prioritize infrastructure investments in underserved communities with the greatest need.

Equity Dimension: Recognizes disparities and historical disinvestment in marginalized communities. Ensures infrastructure is upgraded and maintained in communities that have historically been underserved or neglected.

4.3 Increase availability of affordable housing options near transit or job centers.

A. Develop a Local Housing Action Agenda based on the Regional Housing Strategy.

Equity Dimension: Ensures greater access to neighborhoods, jobs, and resources throughout the region, particularly for low to moderate income households.

B. Preserve existing affordable and naturally occurring affordable housing.

Equity Dimension: Ensures affordability is maintained in areas of redevelopment and mitigates pressures of housing displacement.

C. Target financial tools and incentives toward development of housing to serve low-to-moderate income households

Equity Dimension: Direct targeting of resources and initiatives toward low to moderate income households that are most at risk of housing instability or are severely cost burdened by housing

4.4 Increase employment in green jobs.

A. Promote and collaborate with workforce development programs that create job opportunities focused in underserved communities.

Equity Dimension: Ensures economically vulnerable and lower income communities are able to engage with and benefit from the growth of the green economy.

A photograph of a woman wearing a black graduation cap and a beige hijab, smiling slightly. She is wearing a black garment with gold lace detailing. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. The entire image has a dark blue overlay.

ADDENDUM B

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



POLICY AND PRACTICE RESOURCES:

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION'S PLANNING FOR EQUITY POLICY GUIDE

APA's Planning for Equity Policy Guide calls for the incorporation of equity in policies and the removal of barriers that may prevent equity, through the adoption of an "equity in all policies" approach. This guide highlights recommended policy actions and topics to consider for new policies and/or policy alterations, to advance equity in all aspects.

https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/publication/download_pdf/Planning-for-Equity-Policy-Guide-rev.pdf HUD Regional Sustainable Communities Initiative Resource Library

HUD REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE RESOURCE LIBRARY

This Sustainable Communities Initiative is made up of two grant programs that are put in place to enhance the well-being of communities, both locally and regionally. This initiative provides a variety of resources to provide guidance and the tools necessary for a multitude of approaches. The resources in this library are broken down by resource type and theme, all of which provide insight into what a sustainable community should look like and measures that should be taken to increase sustainability.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/sci/resources/>

POLICYLINK'S ALL-IN CITIES POLICY TOOLKIT

The All-In Cities Policy Toolkit focuses on advancing social equity by providing tools that are chosen for each specific policy area. This interactive tool lays out the different policy areas, and specifies the different strategic tools that can be used to advocate for social equity. Each tool specifies who should implement the tool, key considerations, and it lists case studies in which the tool has been successful.

<https://allincities.org/toolkit>



DATA TOOLS

NATIONAL EQUITY ATLAS

The National Equity Atlas provides different tools for advancing racial equity based on 9 equity indicators. These indicators are displayed on a map to indicate where disparities exist and show how areas compare to each other, with respect to equity considerations. Ultimately, these tools are to be utilized to support policy change and advocacy.

<https://nationalequityatlas.org/>

EJSCREEN: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SCREENING AND MAPPING TOOL

EJSCREEN creates displays of demographics and environmental information, and it produces environmental justice indexes. This tool was created by the EPA for the purpose of producing and displaying environmental justice maps to enhance the well-being of the environment and public health. The maps produced by this tool compare a selected area to the nation at large, and it helps to determine vulnerabilities within selected areas.

<https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>

USDA FOOD ACCESS ATLAS

The Food Access Atlas helps to identify areas in which food deserts exist, through the mapping of food access indicators. Food access indicators, such as low income and vehicle availability, are shown as they are two of the major factors that affect accessibility to food. This mapping tool also locates food sources and illustrates their distance in relation to food access indicators.

<https://allincities.org/toolkit>

DIVERSITY DATA KIDS CHILD OPPORTUNITY INDEX

The Child Opportunity Index (COI) maps developmental resources that support healthy environments for children. These resources and environments are observed through an equity lens, to ensure that all children have fair access to opportunities that will allow them to grow. Each census tract is ranked from very low to very high with respect to opportunity levels for children in the area. The different indexes displayed on the mapping tool include: overall child opportunity, the education index, the health and environment index, and the social and economic index.

<https://www.diversitydatakids.org/child-opportunity-index>

OHIO HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY: OPPORTUNITY INDEX AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE INDEX

The Opportunity Mapping Tool identifies affordable housing options in Ohio, based on indicators that support healthy communities. This tool is utilized in order to increase equitable housing and deconcentrate impoverished neighborhoods. The Opportunity Mapping Tool aims to preserve affordable housing, as well as strategize housing investments, to advance the growth of healthy communities.

<https://ohiohome.org/ppd/opportunitymap.aspx>

OPPORTUNITY INSIGHTS: OPPORTUNITY ATLAS

The Opportunity Atlas allows for the mapping of different demographics to locate potential economic barriers. By mapping potential barriers, this tool aims to encourage and advance upward mobility. This tool specifically focuses on children and the chance for them to earn more than their parents when they become adults, to show where opportunities exist.

<https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

HUD AFFORDABLE HOUSING MAP SYSTEM

The HUD Affordable Housing Map System allows users to locate different types of subsidized housing options based on location, HUD program type, year, etc. There are three different categories that describe these housing options, including: tenant-based; public housing; and privately owned, project-based. The results of each search can be exported into an excel sheet with the specified HUD housing program.

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assthsg.html>

PORTLAND'S REGIONAL EQUITY ATLAS

The Regional Equity Atlas aims to enhance sustainability by identifying the allocation of resources within a region and determining if these resources are distributed equitably. The distribution of resources is displayed in a map to visually display the comparison of differing demographics, and indicate the areas in which equity needs to be expanded.

<http://www.equityatlas.org/>



LOCAL RESOURCES

COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO: Provides home energy audits, appliance rebates, and weatherization.
<https://www.columbiagasohio.com/energy-efficiency/for-your-home>

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE: Home improvement store containing re-used and salvaged materials.
<https://www.habitat.org/restores>

SWACO HOUSEHOLD WASTE SEARCH: Tool showing where household waste can be recycled, composted, or dropped off.
<https://recycleright.org/recycle-reuse-search-tool/>

FRANKLIN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT: Information on backyard conservation including rain gardens, rain barrels, and composting.
<https://www.franklinswcd.org/community-backyards-program>

OHIO FEDERATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: All 88 counties in Ohio have a Soil and Water Conservation District providing locally driven solutions to natural resource concerns in rural and urban settings.
<https://ofswcd.org/>

POWER A CLEAN FUTURE OHIO: A non-partisan coalition that works with local leaders to develop and implement equitable, community-driven carbon reductions in Ohio.
<https://www.poweracleanfuture.org/>

MORPC'S SUSTAINABLE2050 PROGRAM: Sustainable2050 is a program that supports its member communities' sustainability efforts through direct technical assistance, collaboration, and recognition.
<https://www.morpc.org/program-service/sustainable2050/>

CLEAN FUELS OHIO: Clean Fuels Ohio is a Clean Cities Coalition that works to support energy and economic security through partnerships that advance efficient, affordable, and environmentally beneficial domestic transportation fuels, technologies, and mobility systems.
<https://cleanfuelsohio.org/#>

OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL: Their mission is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home.
<https://theoec.org/>

GREEN ENERGY OHIO: A non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable energy technologies, policies, and practices.
<https://greenenergyohio.org/>

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLIANCE OF CENTRAL OHIO: They increase the availability of affordable housing options through the partnership of many member organizations that work to improve and fund affordable housing.
<https://www.ahaco.org/>

SMART COLUMBUS: Their mission is to accelerate human progress through open mobility. The goals are to drive economic growth, improve people's quality of life, foster sustainability, and improve safety.
<https://smart.columbus.gov/>