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March 7, 2023

Equity Framework Examples

RICHMOND EQUITY AGENDA

Hyperlink - Website: https://www.rva.gov/rvaequity

Ordinance: https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/Res.%20No%20%282%29.pdf

Project Overview

Overall equity "framework" to guide the City. The purpose of the Equity Agenda is to realize the City's definition of equity (see Definitions/Key Terms below).

Main Elements/Structure

10 guiding principles. Under each principle they list recent city initiatives and goals for the city related to the principle.

1. Addressing and Preventing Health Disparities
2. Housing as a Vaccine For Poverty
3. Ensuring Equitable Transit and Mobility for Residents
4. Building Community Wealth to Combat Economic Inequality
5. Supporting and Varying for our Children and Families
6. Creating Equitable Climate Action and Resilience
7. Reimagining Public Safety
8. Telling the Real History Of Richmond
9. Strengthening Community Engagement and Trust
10. Utilizing Economic Development to Create Economic Justice

Definitions/Key Terms

- "Equity" is the empowerment of communities that have experienced past injustices by removing barriers to access and opportunity.

- "Equality" means treating everyone the same regardless of skin color, gender, or socio-economic status. Equity does more – it acknowledges that people have different needs based on their history and identity.

- "The Lost Cause" refers to attempts to cast the Confederate Army defeat in the best possible light (e.g., claims that the war was not about slavery)

- "Structural racism"- racism that is embedded in historical, political, cultural, social, and economic systems and institutions

- Inclusionary zoning (no definition provided)

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Identified Communities

No formal list is included; however, the following are identified throughout the agenda:

- Communities of color/Minorities

- Black and Brown pregnant women and their children

- Children

- Lower income families

- LGBTQ+

- Those experiencing substance use disorder

- Those suffering from a mental health crisis

Considerations

- This is a citywide guidance and not for a specific comprehensive plan or other planning effort

- Idealistic language/jargon (e.g., "a vaccine for poverty")

- Includes an acknowledgement and apology for past harms

- Included a public engagement period for the public to review/comment on the draft agenda

- Contains the reasons/rationale for the agenda that includes both moral/ethical reasons as well as economic – e.g., "research shows that every region of the country would be financially stronger with racial inclusion"

- Addresses equity as it relates to climate resiliency

NYC FRAMEWORK FOR AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

Project Overview

Equitable distribution of resources for better public parks and to provide a strategic framework to develop innovative and data-driven approaches to designing, planning, developing, and delivering services in parks.

Main Elements/Structure

The 9 "milestones" serve as the main steps for the agency to reach its goals. The framework is built around these milestones and these come across more as action items that will lead to equitable outcomes for neighborhoods across the city's five boroughs.

9 near-term milestones which define the framework initiatives:

1. Community Parks Initiative
   - $130 capital investment program to improve parks and connect local stakeholders with city resources (capital investment, programming, partnerships, and maintenance).
2. Programming for Neighborhoods in Need
   - Launching interagency partnerships to deliver recreational programming and services at targeted locations
3. Standardized Maintenance
   - Deploying additional maintenance and horticulture staff as well as expanding pilot operations and maintenance efficiency programs
4. Streamlined Capital Process
   - Address inefficiencies in the capital process and launch publicly accessible capital projects tracking tool
5. Parks Needs Assessment
   - Develop and implement a parks needs and assessment strategy
6. Utilization Program
   - Comprehensive study of park user rates, attitudes, and activities
7. Parkland Expansion
   - Updates parkland development strategy
8. Recreation Center Renovations
   - Advance a physical improvement program to increase the quality and quantity of existing facilities
9. Regional Parks Strategy
   - Follow Community Parks Initiative approach to find opportunities for investment for accessible recreational amenities

Tasks included in the NYC example that could be applied to broader planning project, such as a comprehensive plan:

- Developing plans and programs to invest capital and other resources where the need is the greatest

- Standardize, modernize, and implement leading asset management systems and maintenance practices across agencies (or city departments) to track and target resources where they are needed most

- Strengthen and elevate the planning function of the agency, enhancing policymaking, community engagement, and metric-and needs-based assessments

- Create structures to maximize partner contributions, engage New Yorkers in helping us provide more and better services to park users in all boroughs

- Collaborate closely with communities to establish and prioritize goals for parks and public space

- Develop a more proactive capital strategy and re-engineer the capital process to improve efficiency of delivery and add transparency to the process

- Improve technology implementation to gain data integrity for decision making

- Multi-agency and public-private partnerships

Definitions/Key Terms
- Community Parks Initiative (CPI)

- CPI zones are communities with small parks that are densely populated, growing, and home to a higher-than-average percentage of individuals and families with incomes below the poverty line

- Capital process is the process by which funds from New York City are allocated to city agencies and departments such as the NYC Parks.

Identified Communities
Five NYC boroughs; includes 29,000 acres of parkland. CPI targets 55 neighborhoods in 5 boroughs

Considerations
- Equity is not explicitly defined

- Group identity is an important concept for developing an equity framework. NYC has well established neighborhoods which helps to define impact communities and plan strategies.

- "Creating priorities based on need is the hallmark of equity-based planning."

- Priority communities with the most need are targeted for improvements

- Initiatives such as the Community Parks Initiative (CPI) aim to create a more efficient capital process, i.e., how capital dollars are distributed into the NYC parks system

- Coalition building is a key pillar of initiatives such as the Community Parks Initiative. In addition to funding, NYC Parks is aiming to help community partners building their own capacity to use and program their local parks

- Capital projects are supported by a community outreach coordinator who helps facilitate community engagement and develop long-term local partners and friends-of groups

- Targeted investment to specific communities and CPI zones

- There is a set of quantitative and qualitative "before" and "after" metrics to track performance of the CPI.
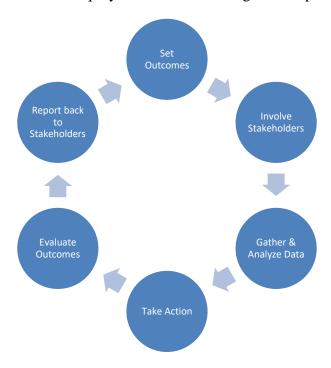
RENTON EQUITY LENS

Hyperlink: [Equity Lens – Renton (2019) (mrsc.org)](mrsc.org)

Project Overview

This Equity Lens is focused on identifying and analyzing the impacts to social identity groups. Different city departments such as Human Resources, Administrative Services, Community and Economic Development, Renton Police, Community Services, and the Municipal Court. One example is the Municipal Court which used Equity Lens to partner with the Mayor in creating processes to create a uniform City-wide process for translation of documents and interpreters at City events.

Main Elements/Structure

The city of Renton follows an Equity Lens Process through a 6-step flowchart

Definitions/Key Terms

- An equity lens is a systematic examination of how different social identify groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. This is a vital tool used to reduce, eliminate and prevent discrimination and inequities.

- A Social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group. Examples of social identity groups include but are not limited to: gender identification, class, language, sexual orientation, religion/spiritual beliefs, physical/developmental/mental abilities, race, ethnicity, age, etc.

Identified Communities

Generally applies to the City of Renton but there is an emphasis on social identity groups that have a history or potential of adverse impacts

Considerations

- An equity lens analysis is useful during the decision-making process, by the decision-making group, prior to enacting new proposals. Can be used to inform decisions such as environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments.

- This equity lens is focused on identifying and analyzing benefits for social identity groups.

- Important questions to consider include:

- What does this policy/program analysis seek to accomplish? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination? Will it advance equity and inclusion?

- Have stakeholders from different social identity groups – especially those most adversely impacted – been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in this analysis? Who's missing and how can they be engaged?

- Which social identity groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the policy / program this analysis seeks to address?

- What positive impacts on equity and inclusion, if any, could result from this policy / program? Which social identity groups could benefit?

- What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks? How will impacts be documented and evaluated?

- At what point in time should an evaluation and report take place? What will be reported? To whom? How will we act on the report information?

EQUITY FRAMEWORK COMPARISONS

- Each framework takes a different angle towards addressing equity. The City of Richmond, NYC Parks, and the City of Renton are broad in scope and associate equity with developing policy and programming.

- Equity Frameworks are applied at different geographic scales. The cities of Richmond and Renton are city specific. The NYC Parks framework is also city specific, but it tends to focus on the Community Parks Initiative, which identifies programs for specific neighborhoods.

- Equity is explicitly defined in the City of Richmond Equity Framework but not in the City of Renton or NYC Parks.

- Where equity is explicitly defined, the City of Renton defines impacted communities and demographic groups by putting them into a broader category within the framework.

- Communities are not always well defined in the equity frameworks. NYC Parks identifies characteristics of certain neighborhoods while the other three frameworks focus on physical and social characteristics of communities that may be impacted by a project, policy, or program. For example, the City of Renton identifies "social identity groups" that may have a history of adverse impacts.

- The City of Richmond framework discuss the historical context of disparities and adverse impacts to the identified communities in the equity framework.

- Each framework addresses public engagement to some degree. For example, the NYC Parks framework includes the support of a community outreach coordinator.

- Evaluation metrics or progress benchmarks are addressed in each of the equity frameworks. NYC Parks is the most detailed as it mentions metrics to track the performance of its CPI program.

- The City of Richmond is the only framework to call out the difference between equity and equality.

- Certain frameworks use idealistic language/jargon more than others. The City of Richmond is the best example of this, using language like "housing as a vaccine for poverty".

- Funding mechanisms that are tied to equitable outcomes are mentioned specifically in the NYC Parks framework but are less explicit in the other two frameworks.