

Appendix I: Equity

This Appendix provides more details on Our Climate Future’s equity-centered engagement process, and shares lessons learned to date in support of City Council’s adopted City Strategic Plan Objective *Neighborhood Livability & Social Health 1.4: Advance equity for all, leading with race, so that a person’s identity or identities is not a predictor of outcomes*. At the beginning of the Our Climate Future process we set a goal to create a future where everyone benefits from a carbon neutral Fort Collins. To do this we invested in an equity-centered approach that engaged community members who have historically been left out of community conversations about climate, energy and waste. This Appendix shares what we learned along that journey.

Overview

We know that not everyone has the same experience living in Fort Collins, and today, identity is a predictor of one’s outcomes – whether that is related to home ownership, neighborhood safety, mental health concerns, utility cost burden, and ease of traveling by public transit.¹ From an everyday perspective, we need to acknowledge that our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and our historically underrepresented groups may not feel as safe, as heard, or as cared for as others in our community. As highlighted in the [Existing Conditions Assessment](#), these inequities are exacerbated by climate change, where our current systems leave Black, Indigenous, People of Color and other historically underrepresented populations more susceptible to climate change impacts.² The call out box on the next page identifies the groups considered “historically underrepresented” in the context of Our Climate Future with the recognition that it is not exhaustive.

We designed Our Climate Future with the goal of equitable solutions that address a spectrum of needs within our community. Leading with race means we recognize that the most disparate outcomes in our country follow racial lines, and Fort Collins is no exception to this. An emphasis on racial disparities is a starting place for inclusion as we expand outward, bringing in all marginalized populations and all parts of our community. This approach is intentional about addressing barriers and designing solutions that work for those most impacted, while also ensuring all community members can benefit, participate, and influence outcomes. This appendix highlights in detail how we have centered equity and lead with race in our process and what our key learnings are that we will apply moving forward in implementation.

¹ Check out the Equity Indicators dashboard for more information – anticipated release later in 2021

² See for example, [this article](#) about vulnerabilities to wildfire, the [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#), which illustrates how climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities - especially in low-income communities, communities of color and other vulnerable populations.

What does “Equity” mean?

Equity is often confused with equality, but they are not the same (see definitions in the call out box). Equality means treating everyone the same, which is not enough to ensure everyone is able to fairly reach the same beneficial outcomes and quality of life because of the documented historic and present-day inequities that exist in American systems. In contrast, the work of equity is to understand those historical and present-day negative impacts and then work to change systems so that people’s identities do not predict their outcomes in life.

What does “Centering in Equity, Leading with Race” mean?

- Identifying which communities have been intentionally or unintentionally excluded from processes historically or even currently;
- Working to rebuild trust and make things accessible so that those communities want to participate and feel their perspectives are valued and a true, significant part of the decision-making process;
- Integrating historically underrepresented voices, leadership, knowledge, and skills into planning and implementation, and
- Developing and evaluating strategies using an equity lens

Equity vs. Equality

Equity: Designing programs, policies, and systems to ensure identity is not a predictor of outcomes

Equality: Designing programs, policies, and systems that treat everyone the same

What is a Historically Underrepresented Group?

Leading with equity in process means asking who is most impacted by a decision and has historically had the least influence. For Our Climate Future, historically underrepresented groups include, but are not limited to:

- Communities of Color
- Community members under age 29
- DACA Students
- LGBTQIA+ Communities
- Local Indigenous Communities
- Migrant Communities
- Communities of Disability
- Veterans
- Religious minorities
- People experiencing homelessness
- People living in manufactured homes
- Commuter community
- Low-income communities
- Small businesses

These identities often overlap and intersect. We recognize that many people are a part of multiple groups.

A best practice in equity work is to start by focusing on improving race-based outcomes because, in the United States, racial inequity is the most pervasive form of inequity regardless of where one lives. Focusing on racial equity provides the opportunity to bring forward a framework, tools and resources that help address inequities associated with other marginalized identities.