



JUST COMMUNITIES ACTION RESOURCE GUIDE v.1.0

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Just Communities is an initiative of the Partnership for Southern Equity.

JUST COMMUNITIES ACTION GUIDE

Developing a Comprehensive Strategy to Advance Equitable and Regenerative Development

Just Communities is a comprehensive and practical implementation framework to help resident leaders, community-based organizations, developers, and municipalities advance racially equitable and regenerative development – from large-scale redevelopment to neighborhood revitalization. Just Communities helps deliver meaningful social, economic, and environmental outcomes across a range of interconnected issues by bringing together public, private, civic, and community stakeholders to form a shared vision, comprehensive roadmap, and governance model that encourages collaboration and rewards impact.

The Just Communities Action Guide includes **seventeen implementation activities**, organized into four phases, to help guide every phase of development, from organizing to implementation. Each action has guidelines, engagement tips, and templates to help stakeholders move community-scale projects from vision to reality. The guide calls for authentic and sustained collaboration to tackle vexing challenges and build inspired models of community development that is guided by ambitious performance metrics and mutually reinforcing investments that address the Just Growth principles and pillars of racial equity and climate resilience. Just Communities is not an incremental form of green and sustainable development that creates benefits for a chosen few. It is a rigorous, community-centered approach to community development that is centered on equity, repair. And regeneration of our people and the planet.

We believe that every community has the required assets, skills, talents, and solutions to set a positive development direction for their neighborhood, and we look forward to supporting and lifting up those who are dedicated to becoming a Just Community.

PHASE ONE: GROUNDWORK

The Groundwork phase helps communities gather insights and build a collective understanding of the neighborhood and the people who live in it. Key actions include organizing a Working Group, identifying opportunities and threats, setting a geographic boundary, asset mapping, and documenting land use plans, projects & programs.



CONVENE WORKING GROUP

The process of launching a Just Community starts with bringing together local leaders who share a common vision and are committed to collaboration. This action helps to guide formation of a Working Group that is responsible for 1) project scoping, 2) initial assessment, and 3) governance development. The makeup of the Working Group will vary depending on the project scope, responsibilities, and resources. For instance, stakeholders serving the residents in an existing neighborhood will be quite different from a developer leading a major redevelopment project.

Activities

1. Identify potential organizations and individuals to participate on the Working Group.

- Using the first part of the Working Group Assessment Template, list organizations and individuals who could make strong candidates to join the Working Group. Key considerations include the sector they represent, potential role, and willingness to participate and contribute to advancing an equitable and regenerative development strategy for the community.
- List organizations and individuals who are not active or typically underrepresented in neighborhood planning and community development activities. Key considerations include:
 - Does the Working Group represent Black and historically disinvested communities of color?
 - Does the Working Group include community members most at risk from and impacted by climate change?
- If you identify an organization, but not a representative from that organization, inquire to identify the right staff member to participate on the Working Group based on their roles and responsibilities relative to the community.

2. Assess potential Working Group participants.

- Using the second part of the Working Group Assessment Template, assess the potential members by answering the following questions:
 - Influence: Rank each of the stakeholder's power and influence within the community (low to high).
 - Trust: Rank each of the stakeholder levels of community trust (low to high).
 - Capacity: Rank each of the stakeholder by level of capacity to lead and support in the organizing and planning for this work (low to high).
 - Diversity: Identify and rank the stakeholder's delve of diversity in terms of race, gender, age, income, and lived experience. (low to high).
- Create a cumulative score for each stakeholder and reach out to determine their willingness to participate and what role they expect to play. Note this on the Working Group Assessment Template.

3. Confirm and create Working Group.

- Using the results of the assessment above, finalize the Working Group by confirming final membership. Address any gaps or redundancies from the assessment to ensure the Working Group is representative and well positioned to lead this complex work.
- Using the Working Group Charter Template, describe the purpose of the Working Group, roles and responsibilities, and key priorities and outcomes for the Working Group.

Engagement

- The list of potential Working Group members should be vetted among resident leaders and community-based organizations, with a focus on ensuring that the list of potential participants is inclusive of the most pressing community issues raised in the Groundwork phase.
- It is important to note that the Working Group is responsible primarily for the Groundwork and helping to create the Governing Body.
- If there is distrust or disunity among Working Group members, third party mediation may be required to elevate and address issues and create ground rules for involvement.

Templates

- Working Group Assessment Template
- Working Group Charter Template

Resources

- What Does Antiracist Community Development Look Like in Practice?, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

PRELIMINARY SCOPING

To assess a community's interest in becoming a Just Community, preliminary assessment is necessary. This action provides guidance in identifying drivers for change, conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, and defining the geographic boundary of work.

Activities

1. Document the key drivers for the work.

- Using the [Preliminary Scoping Template](#), answer the following questions:
 - What is prompting us to pursue Just Communities? (i.e., major development plans, policy changes, funding, etc.)
 - Who are we trying to benefit through this work?
 - Who has the interest and capacity to collaborate? (And likelihood to bring resources to the table)?

2. Conduct SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

- Using the [Preliminary Scoping Template](#), answer the following questions:
 - What are the community's primary strengths and opportunities today and anticipated in the future? Strengths are internal the community and specific to what makes it unique, while opportunities are external to the community such as policies, market forces, industry trends, etc.
 - What are the community's primary weaknesses and threats today and anticipated in the future? Weaknesses are internal to the community while threats are external forces.
- Further refine the SWOT by answering the following questions:

- What are the most significant disparities and inequities (i.e., health outcomes, educational attainment, access to transportation, housing affordability) within the community? Who is most impacted?
- What is the most significant climate change related risks within the community? Who is most impacted?

3. Set community boundary.

- Using the [Preliminary Scoping Template](#), develop a proposed geographic boundary by answering the following questions:
 - Are their existing geographic boundaries that are helping to shape the proposed geographic scope of work (i.e., neighborhood association, business district, special purpose district, watershed, opportunity zone).
 - Are there important sites, landmarks, and historic events that are helping to influence the proposed geographic scope of our work (i.e., historic district)?
 - Are their significant development or infrastructure projects that are shaping the geographic scope of our work (i.e., brownfield site)?

Engagement

- Conduct engagement and interview key organizational, business, and resident leaders and relevant public and elected officials to gather information and refine and corroborate the results.
- Hold at least one community workshop to share preliminary findings and solicit feedback.
- Solicit feedback through online surveys and post results.

Templates

- [Preliminary Scoping Template](#)

Resources

- [Community Toolbox](#), University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development

LISTEN & HEAL

Many communities have endured significant trauma and harm from the cumulative impacts of unjust and racist land use policies and development practices. Before communities can build trust and a common agenda together, individual, and collective restoration and healing is required. This action provides guidance in capturing resident's stories and reflections using a variety of tools, including oral histories, listening sessions, and story circles that connect people to their lived experiences. The opportunity for transformation starts with deep listening.

Activities

1. Develop a strategy to promote positive community dialogue and healing practices.

- Work with local health practitioners to identify techniques to address stress and trauma in community meetings, which can include mediation, body work, participatory art, and music and creation of sensory spaces for people to retreat, reflect, and rest.
- Identify and make available an inclusive and collaborative space within the neighborhood for group members to share openly and build (or rebuild) trust with each other. Refer to trauma informed design principles to ensure the space is welcoming and calming.

2. Collect oral histories from community members.

- Using the [Listen and Heal Template](#), survey and document the firsthand experiences of community members about living in the neighborhood, changes they have experienced, and the impact of changes over the years. Key questions to consider include:
 - What are your most important memories of living in the neighborhood?
 - What changes have you seen in the neighborhood over time?
 - What do you like and dislike about the neighborhood?
 - Has living in the neighborhood enhanced or hurt your quality of life and personal health?

3. Create and host story circles to spark community dialogue and relationship building.

- Using the [Listen and Heal Template](#), gather stories, with the goal of building a deeper understanding of community members' lived experience within the neighborhood. Key questions can include:
 - Have you been impacted by changes in the neighborhood over time? If so, can you describe?
 - What disparities (i.e., health outcomes, educational attainment, access to transportation, housing affordability) do you think exist in the community?
 - Is there a history of conflict within the community? If so, describe.
 - Can you point to projects or policies that have increased racial inequities within the neighborhood?
 - Can you point to projects or policies that have increased environmental pollution (including the impacts from climate change) within the neighborhood?
 - Are you or anyone close to you suffering from any form of trauma? If so, are you willing to share details about what you are experiencing and what you are doing to mitigate or overcome the trauma?
 - Do you have recommendations for promoting healing within the community?

Engagement

- Work with an inter-cultural mediator with experience collaborating with communities to identify principles and techniques to navigate distrust and disruptive behavior among community members and stakeholders to ensure that all voices are heard and respected.
- When designed well, story circles are powerful events for deep listening and building empathy. See below for tools to help design effective circles.
- While we have offered up sample questions, it is important to design questions that match the local context to reflect the most pressing issues and history of the neighborhood. Pay attention to inherent or explicit bias in the development of questions.

Templates

- Listen and Heal Template

Resources

- Building to Heal: A Framework for Holistic Community Development, Enterprise Community Partners
- Recommendations for Trauma-Informed Design, National Council for Behavioral Health
- Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit, Preservation of Affordable Housing
- Story Circles: Tool for Community Dialogue, US Department of Arts & Culture
- Conflict Literacy Framework, Mediators Beyond Borders International
- The Circle Way Pocket Guide, The Circle Way

MAP COMMUNITY ASSETS

Community asset mapping is a process of identifying a neighborhood's most significant strengths, which can include physical, economic, cultural, and environmental resources, in addition to local traditions, history, and events that shape the neighborhood's identity. This action helps to identify, organize, and map key assets and build deeper connections and knowledge about the neighborhood to help guide future planning and implementation work.

Activities

1. Conduct a neighborhood-wide asset mapping exercise.

- Using the [Asset Map Template](#), identify key assets within the neighborhood by the following categories:
 - Individuals
 - Local Economy
 - Physical Spaces
 - Institutions
 - Associations
 - Events
 - History and Traditions

2. Assess the impacts of racial equity and climate resilience in the asset mapping:

- Identify and mark assets that help to mitigate or perpetuate racism or racial bias.
- Identify and mark assets that help to support or weaken climate resilience.

3. Categorize each asset by the five Just Communities commitment areas:

- Belonging
- Opportunity
- Wellbeing
- Mobility
- Environment

4. Create a physical map of the assets.

- Transpose the physical assets identified in the asset mapping exercise to a map of the neighborhood.

Engagement

Engage and interview key organizational, business, and resident leaders and relevant public and elected officials to create and refine the asset map.

Share preliminary findings and solicit feedback with the community, with a focus on collaborating with members of historically marginalized communities that have been impacted by development and growth.

Solicit feedback through online surveys and post results.

Consider where the community has gaps relative to the Just Community Commitments areas.

Templates

[Asset Map Template](#)

Resources

[Asset-Based Community Development Toolkit](#), Asset-Based Community Development Institute

[Asset Mapping: Create Placemaking Toolkit](#), Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

SUMMARIZE PLANS, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

To understand the potential pace of growth (or lack of) in a neighborhood, it is important to understand the underlying drivers of change from land use plans to proposed projects that could spark gentrification. This action provides guidance to help document existing plans (i.e., new zoning to encourage new development), current & proposed projects (i.e., housing, transportation, parks, infrastructure), and current programs (i.e., small business grants).

Activities

1. Review public-sector plans and development proposals within the neighborhood, including:

- Land use, transportation, economic development, water and flood management, housing, sustainability, equity, public health, and / or climate action plans and policies.
- Funded capital improvements within the district or neighborhood as identified in metropolitan planning organization, municipal, public works, transportation authority, and special district budgets.
- Current public sector construction projects.

2. Identify local project and program investments, including:

- Significant real estate projects (i.e., housing, mixed use development)
- Utility or clean energy projects (i.e., district energy, community solar, EV charging, resilience hubs)
- Private mobility investments (i.e., car bike, and scooter sharing)
- Program investments (i.e., workforce training, grants, after school programs).

3. Assess the impacts of racial equity and climate resilience.

- Document who benefits and is burdened by each of the identified plans, projects, and programs from a racial equity lens.
- Document which of the identified plans, projects, and programs will improve or weaken climate resilience within the community.

4. Using the Plans, Projects and Programs Template, document relevant plans, projects, and programs by each of the Just Communities Commitments:

- Belonging
- Opportunity
- Wellbeing
- Mobility
- Environment

Engagement

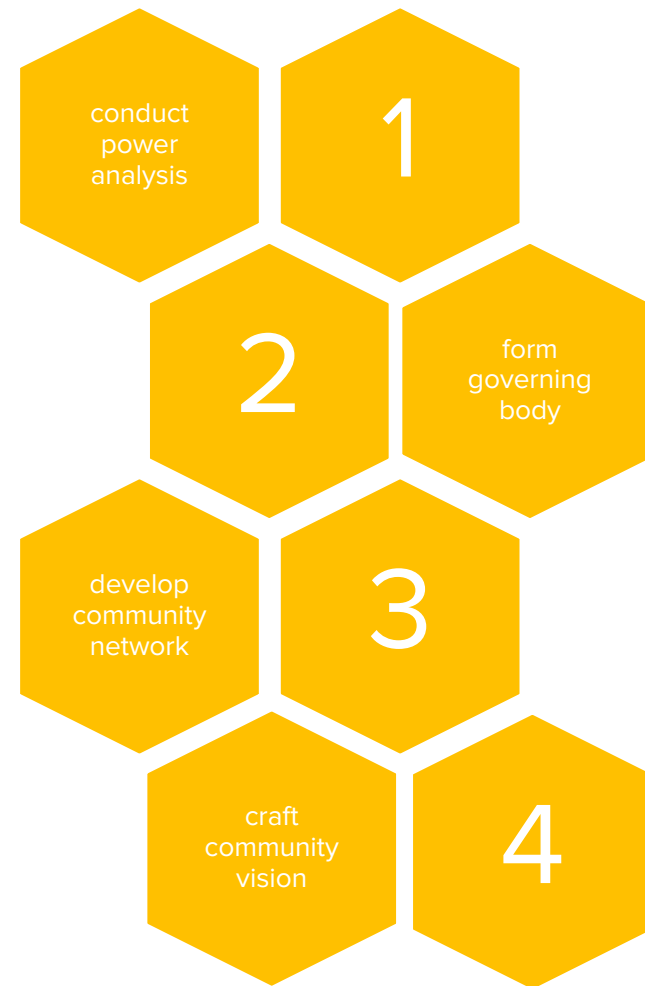
- Engage and interview key organizational, business, and resident leaders and relevant public and elected officials to further refine and corroborate the results.
- Hold at least one community workshop to share preliminary findings and solicit feedback.
- Create a virtual platform to solicit feedback through online surveys and post results.

Templates

- Plans, Projects, and Programs Template

PHASE TWO: GOVERNANCE

The Governance phase focuses on developing a collaboration and decision-making framework and comprehensive community vision to lead and oversee all aspects of Just Communities implementation and certification. Key actions include conducting a power analysis to help build an inclusive governance model, creating a formal Governing Body and community engagement network to guide long-term implementation, and building a shared community vision to inspire action.



CONDUCT POWER ANALYSIS

When building a Governing Body, it is important to understand who has power, who does not, and the cumulative impacts of those power dynamics. This action helps to shape an effective process of building an inclusive governing model to support the Just Communities agenda – including who is poised to help or hinder progress and likely to be positively or negatively impacted.

Activities

1. Identify and assess community stakeholders' level of interest and impact.

- Building off the [Working Group Assessment Template](#) used in the previous phase, organize people into the following categories:
 - [Key stakeholders](#) - those who can significantly influence, or are particularly important, to the success of the work. (e.g., members of the Working Group or organizations essential to developing a vision that resonates broadly)
 - [Primary stakeholders](#) - those who are directly impacted by the work. (e.g., residents, local businesses, public agencies, etc.)
 - [Secondary stakeholders](#) - all others who have a stake or interest in contributing (e.g., watershed association that is located upstream of the district) or are indirectly impacted by the efforts of key stakeholders (e.g., students who go to school in the district but do not live there).

2. Document stakeholder power dynamics.

- Using the [Power Analysis Template](#), document stakeholder power and influence by answering the following questions:
 - What is the stakeholder's level of community influence?
 - What is the stakeholder's level of community authority?
 - Is the stakeholder likely to support or oppose the Just Communities work?
 - How is the stakeholder likely to benefit from the work?
 - What other motivations might influence the stakeholder?
 - Describe actions necessary to ensure stakeholder will not derail work.

Engagement

- Vet the list of stakeholders among resident leaders and community-based organizations, with a focus on ensuring that the list of potential participants is inclusive of the most pressing community issues raised in the Groundwork phase.
- The Working Group should solicit input and synthesize results of the stakeholder power mapping assessment with the listed stakeholders. The goal is to ensure that each listed stakeholder can review the assessment and provide feedback.

Templates

- Power Analysis Template

Resources

- [Power Mapping and Analysis](#), The Commons Social Change Library
- [Harnessing the Policy Power of Stakeholder Mapping](#), Georgetown University Beeck Center

FORM GOVERNING BODY

Every Just Community requires a robust management structure with the authority, capacity, and resources to oversee planning and implementation. This action creates a Governing Body and selects a backbone or host organization with the capability to support implementation. The result is a Declaration of Collaboration (DOC) that memorializes a commitment to a common agenda, shared indicators, defined roles and responsibilities, governing principles, and organizational support.

Activities

1. Develop list of Governing Body candidates.

- Identify candidates from the Working Group and power analysis.
- Create short list of potential Governing Body members. Note that the list of candidates may or may not include Working Group members.

2. Finalize the membership of the Governing Body.

- Refine candidate list by meeting with each candidate to collect the following information:
 - Specific contribution(s) to addressing the Just Communities Commitments within the neighborhood.
 - Specific expertise and lived experience in the Just Communities Commitments.
 - Willingness to share power and work transparently.
 - Level of commitment to address and prioritize racial and social inequities within the community.
 - Relevant expertise and training in racial equity and climate resilience.
 - Any conflict with other candidates.
 - Candidates that would need to be compensated for participation.
- Finalize the Governing Body and confirm candidates' willingness to serve on the Governing Body.

3. Assess and select a backbone organization to support the Governing Body.

- Using the Backbone Organization Assessment Template, make a list of potential organizations that could serve as a backbone to the Governing Body.
- Assess candidate organization by answering the following questions:
 - Does the organization's mission and work line up with the Just Communities priorities?
 - Does the organization have adequate capacity to support the Just Communities work? Do they need to hire additional staff?
 - Who will the Just Communities staff report within the organization?
 - Is their existing funding available to support the Just Communities work in the short and long term (e.g., salaries, benefits, operating expenses)?
 - Is the organization committed to/ have expertise in advancing racial equity. Has the organization been responsible for or contributed to reinforcing historic racial injustices? Is the organization trusted among local communities of color?
 - Is the organization committed to / have expertise in advancing climate resilience? Does it have relationships with other partners that are advancing climate resiliency and justice work?
 - Does the organization have effective Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and procedures guiding internal hiring, leadership development, program design, and partnerships?
- Select the backbone organization and secure their formal participation.

4. Establish the governance structure and operations.

- Using the Declaration of Collaboration Template, memorialize the agreements in a formal Declaration of Collaboration signed by all members of the Governing Body and backbone organization.

Engagement

- Vet potential Governing Body members with the Community Network, with a focus on ensuring that the list of potential participants is inclusive of the most pressing community issues raised in the Groundwork and Governance phases.
- if there is significant distrust or disunity among proposed Governing Body members, third party mediation may be required to elevate and address issues and create ground rules for involvement.
- Clarify how to represent and elevate voices traditionally excluded from neighborhood planning and redevelopment activities.

Templates

- Backbone Organization Assessment Template
- Declaration of Collaboration Template

Resources

- Backbone Starter Guide, Collective Impact Forum and FSG

DEVELOP COMMUNITY NETWORK

Just Communities calls for consistent and authentic engagement within the community it serves. This action helps to develop relationships and build trust by formally elevating voices of those not in positions of power and nurtures an extended network that brings additional wisdom, ideas and resources to the planning and implementation phases.

Activities

1. Recruit community stakeholders to participate in the Community Network.

- Review the [Working Group Assessment Template](#) and [Power Analysis Template](#) from the previous actions to identify participants.

2. Complete Community Network engagement analysis.

- Using the [Community Network Template](#), categorize how each stakeholder would like to contribute to the Just Communities planning and implementation work:
 - **Inform:** Recipient of information to support understanding over time. No active involvement or direct feedback.
 - **Consult:** Review analysis, alternatives and/or decisions in published documents or presented in public meetings or through online engagement tools.
 - **Involve:** Provide direct input to ensure needs and perspective is understood and considered.
 - **Collaborate:** Formal involvement in all aspects of the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions through working groups or other formal involvement structures.
 - **Empower:** Granted formal decision-making authority by the Governing Body.

3. Document stakeholder priorities and alignment regarding Just Communities Pillars.

- List stakeholders' racial equity priorities within the neighborhood. Document areas of alignment among candidates.
- List stakeholders' priorities to improve climate resilience within the neighborhood. Document areas of alignment among candidates.

4. Formalize the Community Network.

- Convene Community Network to formalize and acknowledge participation.
- Develop a purpose statement for the Community Network to document how they will engage with the Governing Body. Solicit feedback to refine the purpose statement to ensure clarity regarding levels of participation, communication, meeting schedules, etc.

Engagement

- Start by engaging community stakeholders that the Working Group has strong relationships with to build an understanding of the Just Communities initiative. Broaden the outreach, with a focus on contacting often unrepresented populations – youth, renters, seniors, immigrants, and people with physical and cognitive differences.
- Listen deeply and treat community members with respect and honor their knowledge and lived experiences throughout the engagement effort.
- The Working Group should solicit input and synthesize results of the [Community Network Template](#) with each listed stakeholder to ensure the results represent their input to date.

Templates

- Community Network Template

Resources

- [Community Engagement Best Practices](#), Racial Equity Tools, Equity in the Center
- [Engaging The Community In The Development of a Local Housing Strategy](#), Local Housing Solutions, NYU Furman Center
- [Community Engagement for Collective Action](#), Penn State University And University Of New England

CRAFT COMMUNITY VISION

Visioning is a process by which a community defines the future it wants. Creating a succinct and powerful community vision is critical to build a sense of purpose and shared values among diverse stakeholders. This action provides guidance to help design an effective community visioning process, with a focus on advancing racial equity and climate resilience.

Activities

1. Review and synthesize findings from the Groundwork phase including:

- Results of the SWOT analysis.
- Community asset map.
- Reflections from the Listening and Healing action.

2. Draw on the community to draft the vision.

- Partner with the Community Network to co-design a public engagement strategy to solicit feedback from community members and key stakeholders in the neighborhood.

3. Assess key racial equity considerations by answering the following questions:

- What are the most critical issues affecting Black and historically disinvested communities of color?
- What are the most important demographic trends that impact racial equity?
- What is the community doing today to promote racial equity?
- What will the community do to help achieve racial equity in the future?

4. Assess key climate resilience considerations by answering the following questions:

- What are the community's most significant climate risks?
- Who is most affected and most vulnerable to climate risks?
- What are the core issues affecting those who are least prepared for them?
- What are we doing today to strengthen climate resilience?
- What will the community do to help achieve climate resilience in the future?

5. Develop a final community vision statement that includes:

- Using the Community Vision Template, document the following:
 - The most pressing challenges facing the neighborhood.
 - The neighborhood's most unique and positive qualities.
 - A description of a future state of the neighborhood.
 - Racial equity and climate resilience priorities.
 - Fundamental values and principles that will help us achieve that future state.

Engagement

Hold workshop/s with the community network to solicit input and synthesize results. The goal is to build consensus on core values and to help people realize that despite differences they share many of the same long-term goals.

If there is significant distrust among stakeholders, community mediation may be essential to elevate and address issues and create ground rules for further involvement.

Create a virtual platform to solicit feedback through online surveys and post results.

Be sure to include at least one organization with expertise in racial equity and one with climate resilience and secure a letter of support from each.

Templates

- Community Vision Template

PHASE THREE: ROADMAP

The Roadmap phase focuses on the creation of a comprehensive implementation strategy to successfully shape, guide, and leverage neighborhood-scale community development investments. Key actions focus on collecting baseline data; setting objectives, indicators, and targets to help define what success looks like; assessing potential strategies and building a detailed work plan.



GET TO KNOW THE COMMUNITY

The first step in building out a Just Communities Roadmap is documenting key demographics, current conditions, and observed trends to help the Governing Body build an informed understanding of the neighborhood and the long-term impacts from growth and development (or a lack of it). This action provides clear guidance in creating a baseline to guide future projects, programs, and policies.

Activities

1. Create a demographic overview.

Identify and document the community's demographic trends using data from the [American Community Survey](#) and specific census tract. Include at a minimum:

- Population by race, gender, and age
- Median household income
- Percent living in poverty
- Employment status
- Educational attainment

2. Document current land use and zoning.

Identify and document your community's zoning by use (Residential, Industrial, Commercial, Institutional, Retail, Mixed Use) using your municipality's zoning base maps.

3. Map inequities.

Identify and document your community's historic and current racial inequities using the following data sources:

- Redlining: Determine if the district or neighborhood was "redlined" or graded as hazardous by the federal government's Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930's using the [Mapping Inequality tool](#).
- Segregation: Determine the level of segregation in the district or neighborhood using the [Mapping Race in America Tool](#).
- Disadvantaged Community: Determine if the district or neighborhood is designated as a "disadvantaged community" using the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#). The tool has an interactive map and uses datasets that are indicators of burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

4. Identify housing trends.

Identify and document your community's housing trends, using the following data sources:

- Cost Burden: What percentage households, by race, are considered cost burdened (spend 30% of their income on rent, mortgage or other housing needs) using [National Eviction Map](#).
- Eviction Rates: What are the eviction rates over time using the [National Eviction Map](#).
- Home Value: What is median home value over time using Zillow's [Home Value Tracker](#).

5. Identify health disparities.

Identify and document your community's health vulnerabilities, including, heart disease, poor mental health, obesity, diabetes, respiratory disease, food deserts, and bike and pedestrian injuries, using the following data sources:

- Social Determinants of Health: How has the neighborhood's health changed over time using the Center for Disease Control's [PLACES interactive map](#).
- Health care coverage using data from the [American Community Survey](#).
- Social Vulnerability: Determine if the district or neighborhood is at risk of external stresses on human health, including natural or human-caused disasters, or disease outbreaks using the [Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#).

6. Identify climate vulnerabilities.

Identify and document your community's current and expected climate change-related risks shocks including overall climate risk, community resilience, air quality, drought, earthquake, flooding, heat, wildfire, winter weather, storms (hurricanes / tornados / wind) using the following data source:

- Climate Risk: Determine if there areas that are at a higher risk of heat events, flooding, food scarcity, wildfire, severe storm events, and utility outages using the [FEMA National Risk Index](#) or [Neighborhoods At Risk mapping tool](#).

Engagement

- Assign a trusted organization with the task of collecting and visualizing the data to ensure it is easy to understand.
- Engage and interview key organizational, business, and resident leaders and relevant public and elected officials to further refine and corroborate the results.
- Hold at least one community workshop to share preliminary findings and solicit feedback.
- Create a virtual platform to solicit feedback through online surveys and post results.
- Document personal stories and "lived experiences" that touch on each of the topics (i.e., housing, health, etc.) to ensure that community voice and wisdom is being captured.

Templates

Get to Know the Community Template

Relevant maps and tables that document the results of the demographic assessment.

Resources

Social Determinants of Health

- [Social Vulnerability Index](#) – Mapping tool that measures social vulnerability using 16 U.S. census variables to help local officials identify communities that may need support before, during, or after disasters. Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health. A project of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [Neighborhood Atlas](#) – measures online tool that enables customized ranking and mapping of neighborhoods according to socioeconomic disadvantage across the full U.S., including Puerto Rico. The Area Deprivation Index (ADI) is based on a measure created by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA). **(Census Tract Level)**
- [ParkScore](#) – In depth comparison of park systems across the 100 most populous cities in the United States. It also includes ParkServe, a mapping platform that pinpoints needed park investments to address park need, climate, equity, and health. A project of the Trust for Public Lands **(Municipal Level)**
- [County Health Ranking](#) – Rich data set at the county level that provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support leaders in growing community power to improve health equity. A project of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. **(Country Level)**
- [PLACES Interactive Map](#) – PLACES provides health data down to the census tract to help better understand the burden and geographic distribution of health measures at the neighborhood level and assist planning public health interventions. A project of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the CDC Foundation. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [WalkScore](#) – Walk Score is a neighborhood-scale index that measures walkability, bike access, and transit quality. **(Zip Code Level)**
- [AARP Livability Index](#) – The AARP Livability Index captures a community's quality of life using 61 indicators in seven critical categories and: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity. **(Zip Code Level)**

Equity

- [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) – Tool that identifies "disadvantaged" communities based on various socioeconomic, environmental and health criteria. The CEJST provides a contemporary measure of residential disparity in the United States. Created by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [EJScreen](#) – US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) environmental justice mapping and screening tool that includes a nationally consistent dataset and approach of 46 environmental and demographic socioeconomic indicators. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [Mapping Race in America Tool](#) – Interactive mapping tool that illustrates the level of segregation in every city, region, and neighborhood in the US. A project of the Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [National Equity Atlas](#) – A state, county and municipal level tool that brings together 32 indicators to provide a detailed report card on racial and economic equity in the US. A project of PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. **(Country Level)**
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Climate Resilience

- [Heat Vulnerability Index](#) – Census tract level tool that combines various socioeconomic, demographic, biological, and exposure determinants of heat vulnerability into a single measure. A project of the Yale Center for Climate Change and Health. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [FEMA National Risk Index](#) – The National Risk Index is a dataset and online tool to help illustrate the United States communities most at risk for 18 natural hazards. It was designed and built by FEMA in close collaboration with various stakeholders and partners in academia; local, state, and federal government; and private industry. **(Census Tract Level)**
- [CDC Heat & Health Tracker](#) – The CDC Heat & Health Tracker provides local heat and health information so communities can better prepare for and respond to extreme heat events **(Country Level)**
- [Climate and Health Outlook Portal](#) – Interactive county-level monthly forecasts for heat, wildfire, and drought in the United State from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Climate Change and Health Equity. **(Country Level)**
- [Neighborhoods at Risk](#) – Interactive data tool that provides neighborhood-level information about potentially vulnerable people and climate change. The tool allows users to filter and explore census tracts based on 13 socioeconomic and climate exposure variables. It also provides climate projections for changes in temperature and precipitation for the selected location. Neighborhoods at Risk uses census tract-level socioeconomic data from the latest release of the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. **(Census Tract Level)**

SET TARGETS

The creation of robust performance metrics is fundamental to measuring and evaluating progress over time. This action provides guidance to help assess, select, modify, and confirm objectives and indicators found in the five Commitment Areas and set long term performance targets. The work draws on the results of previous actions to clarify what success looks like and how to measure progress over time.

Activities

1. Identify and refine objectives.

- Become familiar with the Just Communities Commitments.
- Review the results of the previous actions to identify the most relevant objectives.
- Select the most relevant objectives per Commitment. Modify the objectives to meet the goals and needs of the community, as appropriate.
- Document any refinements to the objectives using the [Targets Template](#).

2. Assess and select indicators.

- Select indicator(s) that best measure success of the proposed objectives. Communities may use the suggested indicators provided or identify different ones that best reflect local priorities.
- Consider the following questions, which should each be answered with a "yes," to confirm efficacy of each indicator.
 - Does it (indicator) inspire action?
 - Is it easily understood?
 - Does it measure a fundamental aspect of a selected objective?
 - Is it easily measurable, using available and regularly updated data sources?
- Set a baseline and baseline year for each indicator. Use the results of the Get to Know the Community action to guide decision making.
- Finalize indicators and document in the [Targets Template](#) including:
 - Indicator name
 - Unit of measurement

- Brief definition
- Data source
- Frequency of data availability
- Current baseline

3. Assess and select targets.

- Review the [Projects, Programs, and Policies Template](#), from the Groundwork Phase, to consider existing and relevant local targets (i.e., City has an already established target for tree canopy for the neighborhood).
- Document or develop growth estimates for the neighborhood based on projected *population growth* (residential and employee) and/or *development square footage* (based on city growth projections for residential, commercial, and industrial) to provide context for how growth may impact targets (i.e., the neighborhood is expected to build 2,000 new housing units for 3,000 new residents by 2030).
- Consider the racial equity impacts of setting targets by asking if the targets be disaggregated by demographic categories, including race, ethnicity, and gender?
- Explore using an [Equity Gap Score](#), which provides context to the targets being considered.
- Select proposed targets for each Commitment using the [Targets Template](#). Targets should be ambitious but achievable and must represent improvements over baseline conditions. Specify the time period for each target such as short (0-3 years), medium (4-6 years), and long (7-10 years).

Engagement

- Convene the Community Network for an input session to provide additional input and rank objectives, indicators, and targets selected by the Governing Body.
- Work with Community Network to identify opportunities for additional community feedback through surveys or additional public meetings.

Templates

- Targets Template

Resources

- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Community Indicators Consortium Project List](#)
- [National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership](#)
- [World Council on City Data](#)

ASSESS STRATEGIES

This action helps identify and rank a set of potential strategies to advance the community vision and Commitments. It helps to categorize potential strategies prioritize them based on impact, viability, level of community support, and how they will improve racial equity and climate resilience.

Activities

1. Brainstorm potential strategies.

- Cross reference the asset map and [Projects, Programs, and Policies Template](#) from the Groundwork phase.
- Review projects and programs of Governing Body and Community Network members.
- Review potential equitable and resilient development best practices that fall within the five Commitment areas. There are multiple guides and rating tools that highlight equitable and sustainable development best practices and strategies, including:
 - Enterprise Green Communities, LEED ND, LEED for Cities, Sustainable Square Mile, SITES, Envision, Fitwell, Living Communities, WELL for Communities
 - Subject matter guides from the NAACP, US EPA, US DOE, ULI, USGBC, AIA, ASLA, APA, Smart Growth America, CNU, etc.
- Create a list of potential strategies to help achieve objectives across the five Commitment Areas.

2. Evaluate each strategy.

Assess and rank each strategy using the following criteria:

- Impact on racial equity: Does each strategy advance racial equity? Key issues include:
 - What equity problem is the strategy attempting to solve?
 - Who experiences this issue and how?
 - What is the current and historic causes of this equity issue?
 - What is the strategy's desired equity result and outcome?
 - What data is being used to lift up the strategy?
 - What is the data telling us and what gaps in the data remain?
 - Who will benefit from the proposed strategy?
 - Who will be burdened by the proposed strategy?
 - How will you mitigate unintended consequences?
 - How will you ensure accountability?

- Impact of climate resilience: Does each strategy advance climate resilience? Key issues include:
 - Stresses: Does the strategy improve or worsen food and housing insecurity, health inequities and outcomes, environmental pollution, and neighborhood hazards?
 - Shocks: Does the strategy improve or worsen the community's capacity to respond to sudden, isolated events or disturbances such as heat waves, energy and water infrastructure failures, floods, fires, or pandemics?
 - Decarbonization: Does the strategy improve or worsen the community's dependency on fossil-fuels and transition to net zero GHG emissions and energy?
- Advances multi-solving: Does the strategy provide co-benefits that advance objectives other Commitments? Use the [Multisolving Institute's Flower Tool](#) to help assess which strategies have the most community benefits.
- Impact on targets: How likely is it to advance targets?
- Level of stakeholder support: What is the level of Governing Body and Community Network support?
- Capacity to implement: Is there sufficient capacity within the Governing Body to lead implementation?
- Funding availability: What level of existing or available funding (federal subsidies, loans, bon money) is available to implement the strategy?

3. Select strategies.

- Using the [Strategy Assessment Template](#), identify which strategies which are prioritized for inclusion in the work plan.

Engagement

- Convene the Community Network in each step of identifying, assessing, and ranking potential strategies. Encourage the Community Network to leave their issues at the door, and to look for co-benefits when assessing potential strategies.
- Partner with technical experts such as architects, urban planners, sustainability consultants, and local faculty to help identify and vet strategies.

Templates

- Strategy Assessment Template

Resources

- [Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit](#), Race Forward
- [What is a Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#), Chicago United for Equity
- [The Sustainable Square Mile](#), Blacks in Green
- [Multisolving Institute](#)

DEVELOP WORK PLAN

The last step in building a Just Communities Roadmap is the creation of a detailed work plan to guide implementation. This action creates a plan with critical tasks for each strategy, the organization(s) with primary implementation responsibility, estimated implementation costs, potential sources of funding, and an implementation schedule.

Activities

1. Prepare the draft work plan using the Work Plan Template to include the following elements:

- Strategies. List each strategy by Commitment.
- Critical tasks. Identify high level key tasks to implement each strategy.
- Responsible party. Identify lead organization with primary responsibility for delivery for each strategy.
- Products/outcomes. Describe key outputs or achievements for each strategy.
- Timeline. Identify critical dates for progress for each strategy. If specific dates are unknown, use short-term for those to deliver in 1-3 years; mid-term for those to deliver in 4-6 years; and long-term for those to deliver in more than 7 years.

- Funding. List estimated cost of implementation per strategy and sources of funding to cover costs to plan and implement the strategy. Describe if funding is available, pending, or unavailable/uncertain)

2. Refine and finalize the work plan by answering the following questions:

- What do we need to add to the work plan to support achievement of our vision?
- What modifications are necessary to ensure achievement of targets?
- Does the Community Network support the work plan? If not, what can we do to gain that support?

Engagement

- Meet with individual implementation partners, including funders, to review the draft work plan and make relevant modifications.
- Convene the Community Network to review the work plan and to provide additional input.

Templates

- Work Plan Template

PHASE FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation phase focuses on long term implementation, which includes 1) management of all aspects of program, project, and policy delivery and 2) reporting and communicating on progress, annually, to organizational partners, funders, and the broader community. Key actions include building out project management and target tracking tools, updating governance and work plans to reflect changes over time, and producing annual reports to share the results of the work. This phase helps to build the conditions for trust, continuous learning, and knowledge sharing to ensure the Just Communities Governing Body and work plan remains relevant and responsive to the community's needs.



TRACK PROGRESS

Consistent and accurate project management and reporting helps to build trust among the Governing Body, implementation partners, the Community Network, funders, and other key constituents. This action supports ongoing management and measurement tracking to document progress on each of the strategies and selected targets.

Activities

1. Create a target tracking tool.

- Develop a tracking tool and that can be updated over time and included in an annual report. At a minimum, use the [Target Template](#) as a guide.

2. Collect the latest data.

- Collect data, for each Roadmap indicator, to document progress towards targets.
- Assess which indicators are on track to meet targets and which need attention to ensure targets are met per the Target year.
- Record the results in the [Progress Reporting Template](#).

3. Assess the data.

- Review the data and discuss where progress is being made and where it is stalled. Identify issues that need to be addressed to inform priorities for the next several years. Key questions include:
 - In what areas have we made the most progress?
 - In what areas have we made the least progress?
 - What should we prioritize to ensure we remain on track to meet our objectives and deliver on our overarching vision?
 - Are there negative impacts regarding racial equity and climate resilience priorities emerging. If so, identify possible modifications for correction.
 - How might these adjustments inform how we update governance and our work plan?
- Determine whether selected indicators are effectively measuring progress or whether different indicators, along with targets and target dates, should be considered.

Engagement

- Convene the Community Network to share and solicit feedback on progress to date, including what factors may help or hinder progress in areas that require more work.
- Publish the data within the community and ask for additional input regarding how progress is being felt to provide more context and depth to the quality of the data collection.

Templates

- [Progress Reporting Template](#)

UPDATE GOVERNANCE

Collaborative governance models require maintenance as community dynamics change and leadership and power structures shift. Over time, the governance structure may require refinement or restructuring to ensure it is effectively structured to oversee the work plan. This action helps to assess the Governing Body's organizational capacity and leadership on an annual basis to ensure its structure is effective and remains representative of community stakeholders and their interests, supports advancement towards targets, and identifies new opportunities to strengthen partnerships. This should happen internally, through reflection by the members of the Governing Body, and externally through listening sessions with the Community Network to capture feedback about perceptions and the effectiveness of the Governing Body. The result is an updated Declaration of Collaboration (DOC).

Activities

1. Assess the Governing Body's efficacy in implementing the Just Communities work plan.

- Conduct an internal review of the Governing Body's performance to ensure its structure is effective and remains representative of community stakeholders and their interests, supports advancement towards meeting the selected targets, and identifies new opportunities to improve project and program delivery.

2. Assess the backbone organization's role in supporting implementation.

- Assess the backbone organization to determine if it is providing adequate support to the Governing Body, including staff support. If there is a lack of alignment or conflict between the Governing Body and backbone organization, the Governing Body may determine that a different organization should serve as the backbone.

3. Update the Declaration of Collaboration.

- Using the [Declaration of Collaboration Update Template](#), reflect changes in membership, backbone organization, and roles and responsibilities.
- Solicit feedback from the Community Network on the proposed changes to the Declaration of Collaboration before finalizing.

Engagement

- Conduct a robust internal reflection and assessment of the Governing Body to assess its capacity to lead.
- Hire outside expertise to lead the assessment if significant issues are raised or there is significant disagreements or conflict among members of the Governing Body or with the backbone organization.
- Convene a separate listening session (s) with the Community Network to gather feedback on the efficacy and representation of the Governing Body and backbone organization.

Templates

- Declaration of Collaboration Update Template

REFINE WORK PLAN

The Just Community work plan is a living document that requires occasional modifications over time to respond to changing priorities, unforeseen challenges, and new opportunities. This action revisits the work plan created in the previous phase to help the Governing Body make essential adjustments to targets, strategies, activities, schedule, and funding.

Activities

1. Review work to date.

- Assess work to date to determine the status of each strategy, including completed tasks, deliverables, and timeline/due dates.
- Meet with implementation partners to identify areas of concern that need to be addressed in the revision of the work plan.
- Convene a Governing Body meeting to review the results and gather additional input.
- Capture successes and challenges in each Commitment area and specific strategies

2. Update work plan.

- Amend the existing work plan, as needed, by completing the Work Plan Update Template in the following areas:
 - **Indicators.** Determine if the identified metrics for a Commitment area should change. Ensure any changes, and their rationale, are fully transparent and documented in the revised work plan.
 - **Targets.** Determine if the targets, and/or target years should be modified based on progress to date or possible barriers. Ensure any changes, and their rationale, are fully transparent and documented in the revised work plan.
 - **Strategies.** Determine if modification to the strategies is necessary to achieve objectives and vision.
 - **Work Plan.** Document any changes to strategies and make related updates to the responsible party, outcomes, timeline, budget, etc.

Engagement

Hold workshop(s) with the Community Network to share progress and proposed modifications to the work plan. Commit to facilitating an open discussion about what is working well, what is not, and where the Governing Body is proposing changes to improve the efficacy of the work plan.

Solicit feedback on the work plan activities to date and proposed changes through online surveys to the broader community and post results.

Templates

- Work Plan Update Template

COMMUNICATE PROGRESS

It is important to build a strong, multi-faceted communications strategy to share results and encourage community and stakeholder involvement. This action supports the creation of an annual progress report and target tracker to share progress to meeting the Just Communities Commitments. It is important to highlight key projects, programs, and policies that are helping to shape the growth of the neighborhood, and to capture a diverse number of perspectives from within the Governing Body and Community Network.

Activities

1. Develop comprehensive communication plan.

- Create a strategy that includes email, online, and social media to share progress.
- Ensure effective and frequent communication with stakeholders, implementation partners, and funders.
- Consider the following questions:
 - How can we increase transparency in our work?
 - How have diverse perspectives shaped the work to date?
 - How can we improve our communications and engagement with the broader neighborhood community?

2. Prepare progress report.

- Drawing on the work from the previous three actions, create a comprehensive report that highlight progress on key strategies – with a focus on what is on track and what is behind schedule and why. Include tracking on all indicators and overall impact towards Just Community Commitments.
- Share lessons learned or stories from the work to date.

Engagement

- Seek input from the Community Network on the communications plan. Ensure the plan includes engagement pathways for residents that are traditionally underrepresented and lacking power.
- Develop a robust database of community stakeholders, implementation partners, funders, and other stakeholders critical to implementation and input.
- Be mindful that some stakeholders may not use smart phones or electronic media. Identify other forms of sharing information including in person gatherings and local newspapers.
- Consider partnering with a local technology company, school, or university to help build out an online target tracker and information exchange.

Templates

- Communication Template

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTHERN EQUITY

Founded in 2008, PSE advances racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South. Through forums, research, and organizing efforts, PSE helps to lift up and encourage just, sustainable, and civic practices for balanced growth and opportunity. Through the organization's strength in connecting and educating diverse individuals and organizations, PSE encourages the adoption of just and sustainable practices for shared prosperity. By fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective action, PSE helps communities realize their civic agency and build power through the organization of money, people, and data.

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