

**Equity Action Plan
Baltimore City Department of Planning**

2017

Baltimore remains one of the most segregated cities in the US, according to 2010 Census data. It is undeniable that historic policy and planning decisions created and exacerbated inequity and inequality in Baltimore City. Policies to deliberately segregate white and black residents - such as restrictive covenants, the Federal Housing Administration's openly racist system for mortgage loan approval, urban renewal, and others - directly contributed to many of the economic and social challenges Baltimore City faces today.

These and other policies have led to distinct "health and wealth gaps" between white and black populations in Baltimore. For example, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance found a 22.4 year difference in life expectancy between two neighborhoods, with the lowest in a neighborhood with 96.3% black residents and the highest life expectancy in a neighborhood with 20.4% black residents. Black residents in Baltimore have higher unemployment rates, more children living in poverty, less access to goods and services, and lower educational attainment than white populations within the city.

A desire to understand and actively work to dismantle and remedy the legacies of inequity drove the Department of Planning (DOP) to hold staff training on structural racism in March 2015. The Uprising a month later accelerated conversation and increased commitment within the Department, leading to the creation of the Equity in Planning Committee (EIPC).

The goal of EIPC is to help erode the forces that create or sustain structural racism and other entrenched inequities in Baltimore City. EIPC promotes use of an "equity lens" for planning and hopes it ultimately will be applied to all City-driven decisions. The lens is not a static rubric, but sets an intention and provides a framework to provoke conscious acknowledgement of equity considerations during public engagement and decision-making processes, as well as accountability after the fact.

Drawing from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, EIPC's equity lens considers four overarching areas of equity and prompts questions like those listed below. For any policy or project, decision makers should consider:

1. **Structural Equity:** *What historic advantages or disadvantages have affected residents in the given community?*
2. **Procedural Equity:** *How are residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes being authentically included in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed policy or project?*
3. **Distributional Equity:** *Does the distribution of civic resources and investment explicitly account for potential racially disparate outcomes?*
4. **Transgenerational Equity:** *Does the policy or project result in unfair burdens on future generations?*

While racial equity is an explicit focus of EIPC's equity lens, the lens should also be applied to other groups whose life outcomes are disproportionately affected by structures in society.

It is through the equity lens that EIPC set the five goals outlined in this document and plans to implement them. Much of this work requires partnership and collaboration with other City agencies, in addition to the community of residents. DOP is ready and willing to create a model to engage these entities and invites all of Baltimore City government to institutionalize an equity lens and framework.

Goal 1: Improve and increase the dialogue and connections between the Department of Planning and underserved communities in Baltimore.

1. Empower residents through education and information sharing.

- Continue Baltimore Planning Academy workshops for residents of Baltimore City to build community leadership around planning and development topics.
- Train and support agency staff by developing guidelines for community engagement.
- Develop a "*How to Navigate the Development Process*" guide, with a particular focus on Planning Department commissions.

2. Increase residents' access to opportunities to provide input on planning topics.

- Schedule commission meetings and other Planning events outside of business hours when possible in order to make such opportunities more accessible to Baltimore residents.
- Expand use of pop-up and mobile events (at farmers markets, local recreation centers, libraries and schools) to engage community members, building on the #PlugintoPlanning model.
- Promote the availability of video live streaming of Planning Department commission meetings and other Department events.
- Expand use of technology designed for community and resident engagement processes, building on the CiviComment pilot.

3. Build relationships within underserved communities.

- Provide training opportunities for agency staff related to community engagement and outreach best practices.
- Elevate Ambassador strategy to Department-wide level, resulting in increased technical knowledge among community members and more effective influence on Agency policy, programs and plans.
- Coordinate staff volunteer opportunities in the community, on a quarterly basis.
- Work with MIMA to provide materials in multiple languages and at appropriate reading levels.

4. Improve communications through the development of a strategy that elevates and prioritizes transparency

- Improve and increase use of social media (Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor).
- Improve *Compass* newsletter circulation and content to better engage community members.
- Use Google Analytics and other tools to collect data on communications tools.

How to make this happen:

- **New staff:** Hire staff dedicated to developing and leading engagement strategies.
- **Dedicate staff time:** Dedicate time of all staff across the department to implementing strategies developed by equity committee staff. At every Departmental meeting, ensure that there is an equity component to the discussion.
- **Funding:** Dedicate resources for events, publications, technology, etc.
- **Training:** Provide staff training opportunities to improve skills for engaging, effective and inclusive discussions with community.
- **Policy:** Investigate offering more variability to the the location and times of Commission meetings.

Goal 2: Ensure that the Planning Department Staff Reflect the Demographics of Baltimore City

1. Create more opportunities for students and young professionals to learn about planning and help create a pipeline for the profession.

- Allocate money for DOP interns and fellows and discourage unpaid internships.
- Create a centralized application system that advertises opportunities. Proactively reach out to students in regional and priority institutions when opportunities are available.
- Create fellowship positions to “staff” commissions and review panels (Planning, Sustainability, and CHAP Commissions and UDARP). Create a youth advisory position on the Planning, Sustainability, and CHAP commissions.
- Develop a mentorship program with area colleges.
- Host an annual open house or “Planning Day” similar to GIS Day to showcase our work to partners within Baltimore City.
- Support organizations and programs working to get more students and professionals of color into planning, architecture, development, and sustainability related fields.

2. Improve efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

- Support the creation of an internal task force or workgroup to develop strategies aimed at improving recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.
- Ensure that all job listings are posted to a variety of sources, specifically including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and minority-focused and led planning groups (e.g. APA divisions such as Planning and the Black Community, Latinos and Planning). Budget for job posting fees.
- Include a diversity statement in job announcements; articulate that the department is accepting and inviting of diversity and has a mission of inclusion and addressing inequity head on.
- Ask applicants for all positions about their personal interest and/or professional experience related to racial equity as part of the application and interview process.
- Create an internal mentorship program to foster inclusion and new employee retention.

How to make this happen:

- **New staff:** Hire staff dedicated to implementing strategies, including, but not limited to, those listed above. In the short term, this position could be funded through philanthropic community, but in the long term the City should commit to supporting these strategies.

- **Dedicate staff time:** Dedicate staff time to implementing strategies listed above. This will require assigning staff fewer tasks, and potentially increasing the number of staff in the department.
- **Funding:** Dedicate resources for internships, fellowships, events, advertising, etc.
- **Policy:** Most of these recommendations require policy shifts that would need to be championed by the Mayor's Office, Department of Human Resources and assigned agency leaders tasked with overseeing compliance with the Equity Assessment Program.

Goal 3: Develop a model equity assessment tool in compliance with Baltimore's new Equity Assessment Program.

1. Develop an equity framework for development review.

- Create, pilot, and implement an equity assessment tool as a model citywide for Agencies. This tool is now required as part of the new Equity Assessment legislation passed in 2018.
- Offer equity training to agency commissioners and staff that includes training in the use of the equity assessment tool.
- Institute an annual workshop on development review procedures and standards including equity indicators, for all community organizations and developers.
- Assess methods to integrating equity goals into the development review process.
- Track equity indicators throughout the development review process.

2. Plan for Baltimore's future using an equity lens.

- Use an equity lens to develop the next Comprehensive Plan for Baltimore City.
- Update the City's Sustainability Plan using an equity lens.
- Use an equity lens to develop food access strategies, such as food desert retail strategy, emergency food access, and supermarket attraction and retention strategies.
- Use an equity lens to prioritize capital investments (see Goal 4).

How to make this happen:

- **Policy:** Most of these recommendations require policy shifts that would need to be championed by the Mayor's Office and other City agencies in addition to the Planning Department.
- **Dedicate staff time:** Dedicate time of existing staff across the department to working on these policies. This will require assigning staff fewer tasks, and potentially increasing the number of staff in the department.

Priorities for 2019-2020

- Create, pilot, and implement an equity assessment tool as a model citywide for Agencies (2020)
- Institute an annual workshop on development review procedures and standards including equity indicators, targeting community organizations and developers (2020)

Goal 4: Use an equity lens to prioritize capital investments.

1. Conduct an equity analysis of the Capital Improvement Program and set equity goals.

- To the extent possible, conduct an equity analysis of the CIP. Identify missing information and strategies for collecting it.
- Educate Planning Commission, Department of Finance, Mayor's Office, agencies, and others about why equity is an important criteria for the CIP.

- Provide guidance to agencies about equity goals for CIP.
 - Compare investments before and after equity goals.
- 2. Implement policies that support more equitable allocation of funds.**
- Create a routine capital transfer process to incentivize specificity in capital requests.
 - Require agencies to provide locations when requesting capital transfers.
 - Work with agencies to develop strategic capital plans that include equity as a driving factor.
 - Analyze equity implications of capital improvements that are made outside of the CIP (TIF, 21st Century Schools, etc.).
- 3. Engage stakeholders in the capital budget process.**
- Empower residents to participate in the capital budget process through information sharing, improved access, and better communications (See Goal 1).
 - Explore using participatory budgeting to allocate a portion of the City's budget.
- 4. Identify additional capital dollars to meet Baltimore's overwhelming capital needs.**
- Partner with State, Federal, philanthropic, anchor, private sector, etc.
 - Analyze whether funding formulas are fair. For example, formula for State contribution to City roads.
 - Shift ongoing programs out of the capital budget to allow additional capital improvements.

How to make this happen:

- **Policy:** Most of these recommendations require policy shifts that would need to be championed by the Mayor's Office, Finance and Capital Budget staff within city agencies.
- **New staff:** Additional staff and/or interns will be required to implement these recommendations.

Goal 5: Evaluate the Planning Department's internal practices and policies.

- 1. Incorporate equity into staff work plans, SMART goals, & professional development.**
- Commit an annual portion of professional development funds to equity training.
 - Fundraise for additional resources to allocate towards professional development for staff on equity topics.
 - Incorporate equity into at least one Smart Goal for each staff member.
 - Review all Smart Goals and ADPs through an equity lens.
- 2. Spend department funds on goods and services provided by local, minority-owned businesses whenever possible.**
- To the extent possible under current purchasing regulations, commit to spending department funds and special project funds on goods and services provided by local, minority-owned businesses whenever possible. This includes catering, office supplies, printing & binding, and any other consumable good or service.
 - Create shared document of local and minority owned businesses that could meet department needs.
 - Expand DOP-related programs that engage and pay city residents for their expertise and effort (e.g. Sustainability Ambassadors, Care-A-Lot, farm incubator).

3. **Ensure that the Planning Department Staff and Commissions reflect the demographics of Baltimore City.**

- Evaluate the selection process for appointment to all planning commissions (Planning, UDARP, CHAP, Sustainability) and identify barriers to appointments of individuals from under-represented communities.
- Set goals for commission appointments that mirror citywide demographics and reflect equity goals.
- Ensure that the Planning Department Staff Reflect the Demographics of Baltimore City (see Goal 2).

4. **Continue to partner with other agencies and the Mayor's Office to collectively work towards equitable outcomes.**

- Pilot strategies and actions in the Planning Department with the intention that best practices will serve as models for other city agencies.
- Work with other agencies to develop an Equity Action Plan.
- Encourage the use of an equity lens in scoring Outcome Budgeting service proposals.

How to make this happen:

- **Dedicate staff time:** Dedicate time of existing staff across the department to implementing equity strategies.
- **Funding:** Dedicate resources for professional development, procurement of goods and services from local, minority-owned businesses, community expertise, etc.
- **Policy:** Most of these policy shifts are internal to the Planning Department, but may require coordination with other agencies such as Purchasing, DHR, and Boards and Commissions.

Equity Lens Questions for Consideration in Policy and Decision Making

1. Structural Equity:

- a. What historic advantages or disadvantages do residents face?
- b. What current policies and practices promote or discourage equity? Are there policy barriers that can be removed to close health and wealth gaps?
- c. How can this agency institutionalize an equity framework and be accountable to it?
- d. How can the City build a shared understanding of equity in government?

2. Procedural Equity:

- a. Are engagement and representation inclusive, accessible and authentic?
- b. How can citizens be better informed about how City government functions?
- c. How can citizens influence decision making?
- d. What does an equitable outcome look like in this situation, and who helps decide that?

3. Distributional Equity:

a. Public Investment:

- i. How is public money spent? Who receives money and at whose expense?
- ii. How can this agency ensure that areas with the most need receive resources commensurate with their need and that those resources are used effectively and equitably?

b. Development:

- i. What is the impact of development? What policies are available to prevent displacement as neighborhoods change and preserve opportunities for existing and low-income residents?
- ii. What is the developer's track record for fulfilling project benchmarks or aspirations that contribute to equity?
- iii. How can development be used to create opportunities for housing, jobs and education for residents most in need of them?

4. Transgenerational Equity:

- a. How are the needs of future generations considered in current planning efforts?
- b. Do the concept and implementation of sustainability include equity?
- c. Will future generations of city residents bear an unfair burden if a proposed plan is fully implemented?