An EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

COMMUNITY-CENTERED SOLUTIONS *FOR* GREEN GENTRIFICATION *AND* DISPLACEMENT

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NPS-RTCA
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We developed this toolkit to inform individuals, organizations and communities on the importance of equitable development in greening projects, with further guidance on how to incorporate and implement equitable development strategies to reduce the risk of gentrification and displacement. The target audiences are nonprofit organizations, community-based groups and other entities who want to integrate anti-displacement strategies into their greening efforts and develop partnerships in support of their equitable development goals. It is important to note that this toolkit primarily focuses on urban areas. We acknowledge that displacement is also a problem in rural areas which, in many cases, are home to previously displaced populations. This is an opportunity for further research.

Additionally, while this toolkit incorporates various perspectives and voices, there are gaps in knowledge and expertise. We, the authors and contributors, do not have all the answers. Rather, we are presenting some ways to change the system while also working within the system. Further, many of us, including the two main authors of this toolkit, are part of mainstream environmental groups that are mostly led and supported by white staff. We acknowledge the history of perpetuating the practices and policies that have excluded the voices and perspectives of low-income communities and communities of color. This work is not easy, and our intention with each presented strategy is not to glaze over the difficulty, but rather to offer a menu of options for how you can start intentionally implementing equitable development strategies. Stepping into this new space while also managing greening projects is challenging and can stir up conflict and trauma internally and externally. It requires more capacity, new partnerships, patience, and consistency, but that does not mean it should be avoided. It is necessary to do this work. A common question is, “when, and how do we begin?” Well, the answer is, “yesterday,” but because we can’t turn back the clocks, start where you are: start today.

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River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates. We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive. We believe that joy and hope for our planet flows through our rivers.

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For us, this has been a labor of love and listening. We want to recognize and thank all of the partners and individuals who made this toolkit possible. Thank you to our partners who funded the development of the toolkit and shared fundamental insights and knowledge: the **National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)**.

NPS-RTCA supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects and assists communities with natural disaster recovery across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

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The UWLN—funded by EPA's Urban Waters Program in cooperation with NPS-RTCA—is a nationwide peer-to-peer network of people and organizations working to conserve, restore, and revitalize America's urban waterways. River Network and Groundwork USA staff work together to deliver tools, training, mentoring, and financial assistance to support the work of UWLN members as they collaborate, develop solutions, and elevate community priorities.

To the Urban Waters Learning Network Equitable Development and Anti-Displacement Collaborative, this toolkit would not exist without your conceptualization:

The UWLN formed the Equitable Development and Anti-Displacement Collaborative in 2020 with the intention to convene a community of experts to listen, learn, and grow the body of research pertaining to equitable development resulting in additional resources for urban waters practitioners on the topics of gentrification, displacement, anti-displacement strategies, and community engagement. Leaders in this space include: Lubna Ahmed from the **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Office of Environmental Justice**; Elizabeth Balladares, Ambassador from the **Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership**; Arthur Johnson from the **Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development**; and Gloria McNair from **Groundwork Jacksonville**.

Thank you to our highly engaged, knowledgeable, and helpful advisory team. We could not have done this without you and your care for the well-being of communities across the country.

Lubna Ahmed, **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Office of Environmental Justice**; Elizabeth Balladares, **Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador**; Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen, **LISC Jacksonville**; Augie Gastelum, Patchwork Community Inclusion; Arthur Johnson, **Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development**; and Ryan Winkle, **RAIL CDC**

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To those who participated in the listening sessions that occurred in October and November, 2023, thank you for sharing your insights and visions for what this toolkit could be.

DEFINITIONS

Before we jump in, we offer the terms below to create a common language around our approach to equitable development. Note that these definitions are under constant debate and refinement and subject to local determination. Used throughout the toolkit, find the definitions of key terms and what we mean when we use them.

Backbone Staff or Organization: laid out by the Collective Impact Forum's **Backbone Starter Guide**, "provides dedicated staff to support the collective impact initiative."

Business-as-Usual Development: refers to projects that don't account for community interests or needs, and continue to perpetuate the status quo.

Collective Impact: defined by **Kania and Kramer (2011)** is "the commitment of a group of cross-sector actors to a common agenda for solving complex social problems."

Community: is about people and includes an understanding of cultural assets of place—individuals and businesses—and their relationship to their environment. **MacQueen, et al (2001)** found that community is *"a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings."* Additionally, **Chavis and Lee (2015)** assert *"community is not a place, a building, or an organization…Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people. People form and maintain communities to meet common needs. Members of a community have a sense of trust, belonging, safety, and caring for each other. They have an individual and collective sense that they can, as part of that community, influence their environments and each other."*

Community Engagement: "Community engagement is not just a set of activities and methods confined to a particular project, policy, or process. Rather, it is a way of communication, decision making, and governance that gives community members the power to own the change they want to see, leading to equitable outcomes."- Policy Link, Kirwarn Inst., **Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities | PolicyLink**

Displacement or Housing Displacement: when residents must leave their homes and neighborhoods due to rising property taxes or costly home repairs. This is what we see as forced displacement. This type of displacement occurs for a variety of reasons, including direct, economic, cultural, and **climate** drivers.

Disproportionately Impacted Communities: communities that experience higher levels of environmental and health impacts. Other terms that are commonly used include disadvantaged, marginalized, overburdened, and underserved communities. These communities are most often majority Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income. Read more in the article, **Confronting Disproportionate Impacts and Systemic Racism in Environmental Policy**

Environmental Justice: "recognizes that all people have a right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, participate freely in decisions that affect their environment, live free of dangerous levels of toxic pollution, experience equal protection of environmental policies, and share the benefits of a prosperous and vibrant pollution-free economy." – **Colorado Environmental Justice Act**

Equity: fairness and justice. Whereas equality means providing the same resources and opportunities to all, equity means meeting communities where they are and allocating resources and opportunities as needed to create equal outcomes for all community members.

Gentrification: a process of neighborhood change that shifts the economy from lower- to higher-income. It can be one of the drivers of displacement unless measures are taken to prevent it. For example, coined by Pastor John Wallace, "**withintrification**" is a term that describes when residents within a community are leading neighborhood revitalization alongside efforts to remain in place.

Greening Projects: interventions that introduce vegetation and natural features into the urban landscape. Examples include: waterway restoration; parks, trails, and greenway development; urban forestry; and green infrastructure installations.

Sustainability: to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.

Reparation: is a process of repairing, healing and restoring a people injured because of their group identity and in violation of their fundamental human rights by governments, corporations, institutions and families.

Resilience: a capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, the economy and the environment.

Revitalization: can be a combination of both ecological and land revitalization as defined below:

Ecological revitalization is the process of returning a contaminated or disturbed site to more natural conditions, similar to what existed before the property was disturbed.

Land revitalization is the sustainable redevelopment of abandoned properties.

WHY THIS WORK IS IMPORTANT

The big questions this toolkit works to address are: *How do we build community resilience through greening projects AND do it in such a way that allows communities to remain in place?*

The toolkit will take steps toward answering these questions by first providing a brief background on historical context and an overview of some key concepts as a baseline of understanding for what we refer to as equitable development. It will also provide groups with processes and resources on how to prepare individuals and organizations to do this work in a way that goes beyond the status quo of community engagement and instead is co-led and co-created alongside community members.

Across the country, neighborhoods that are majority Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income, are disproportionately facing the **worst and most extreme climate and other related impacts**. Because of a history of discriminatory policies and practices—including intentional underinvestment of critical services and infrastructure—there is a need for green improvements in these communities to help address climate and public health risks. While residents recognize this need and want more parks, green space, and safe recreational amenities, they also fear the risks of gentrification and displacement that development can bring.

These fears are founded. There are multiple studies that show greening projects in disproportionately impacted communities can lead to a **reduced sense of belonging** among long-time residents coinciding with an **increase in property values**, and **followed by the displacement of surrounding communities**. In addition, because many community revitalization efforts have moved forward without accounting for community interests or needs—what we call "business as usual" development—there is a lack of trust for further engagement.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

It's important to understand the history of racist policies and practices, like redlining and urban renewal, to understand today's displacement risks as well as how the environmental justice movement is working to reduce these risks.

1930s–1940s REDLINING

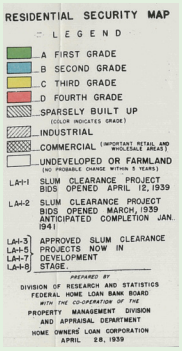
In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the Home Owners' Loan Act.

The **Home Owners' Loan Corporation** (HOLC) was formed to carry out the provisions of the law.

Between 1935–1940, HOLC created Residential Security Maps that ranked neighborhoods based on quality of housing as well as race, ethnicity, and class.

Red communities were cut off from the capital needed to improve their living situations, resulting in decades of racist housing policies and discriminatory loan practices, the impacts of which still exist today.

These maps used colors—red for lowest grades, green for highest grades. Called, redlining, these rankings were used to indicate risk of lending.



RELATED RESOURCE: ***The National Community Reinvestment Coalition research study*** *of 115 cities finds that 74% of the areas classified as red (or lowest grade) are low-to-moderate income today, and 64% are racially diverse neighborhoods.*

1950s–1960s: URBAN RENEWAL

The Federal Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, activated federal funds to invest in affordable housing and the redevelopment of blighted cities. This became known as Urban Renewal.

Between 1955 and 1966, more than 300,000 people were displaced by urban renewal.

RELATED RESOURCE: *A map created by the Digital Scholarship Lab* ***Renewing Inequality Project*** *shows the number of families that cities reported as displaced between 1955 and 1966.*

1960s–1970s: URBAN-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Early environmental movements focused on conservation and preservation of "wild" areas, **the 1960s and 1970s** saw a movement toward urban-centered environmentalism.

The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, OH caught fire at least a dozen times **during the 1960s**, driving concerned citizens and organizations to act for a cleaner environment.

Equity, resilience, community partners, and equitable development are buzzwords in today's environmental movement. Putting these terms on paper is one thing; operationalizing them is another.

Nationwide, organizations are increasingly working with disproportionately impacted communities to create green spaces, prevent flooding, restore forests, and other projects that build resilience and create healthier environments. As groups dive deeper into this work, it is critical to also place emphasis on disrupting the business as usual model by thinking beyond environmental needs, and incorporating the needs of community members, now and into the future. We have an opportunity to avoid the mistakes of the past, to create equitable development practices that give communities opportunities to lead, to share their community priorities, and to create policies that allow them to stay in place.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing equitable development. The strategies used are dependent on the type of project, as well as needs unique to each community that are identified using this framework. *By building multi-sector teams and putting together a toolbox of strategies for equitable development planning, everyone involved is held accountable to development goals and empowered to be stewards of the environment.*

"UNINTENDED" NO MORE

We recognize that any investment can contribute to the cycle of gentrification and displacement: the system is designed for it unless there are interventions. **Refer to the diagram on the next page.** The consequences of inaction, or business as usual, are that residents get displaced and the character of the community changes. This comes with its own costs in terms of relocation, transportation, and impacts to city government, when those dollars could instead be used to support remain-in-place strategies, like home repairs. Local groups and communities advocating for and implementing green revitalization projects have an opportunity to disrupt the system and build both environmental and community resilience.

1960s–1970s: CONTINUED

The first Earth Day was held on **April 22, 1970** as an effort to raise awareness of environmental degradation. In the years following, the United States saw the development of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act.

The early days of the urban environmental movement mostly excluded people of color and low-income residents who were the ones most exposed to high levels of pollution.

1980s to Present: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice's landmark paper—**Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States**—finally unequivocally identified race as the most significant indicator for the location of hazardous waste facilities.

In 1992, the EPA created the Office of Environmental Equity which became the Office of Environmental Justice in **1994** and the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights in **2022**.

In 2021, the federal government established the **Justice 40** Initiative that directs 40% of federal investments to disproportionately impacted communities followed by the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021** and the **Inflation Reduction Act in 2022**.

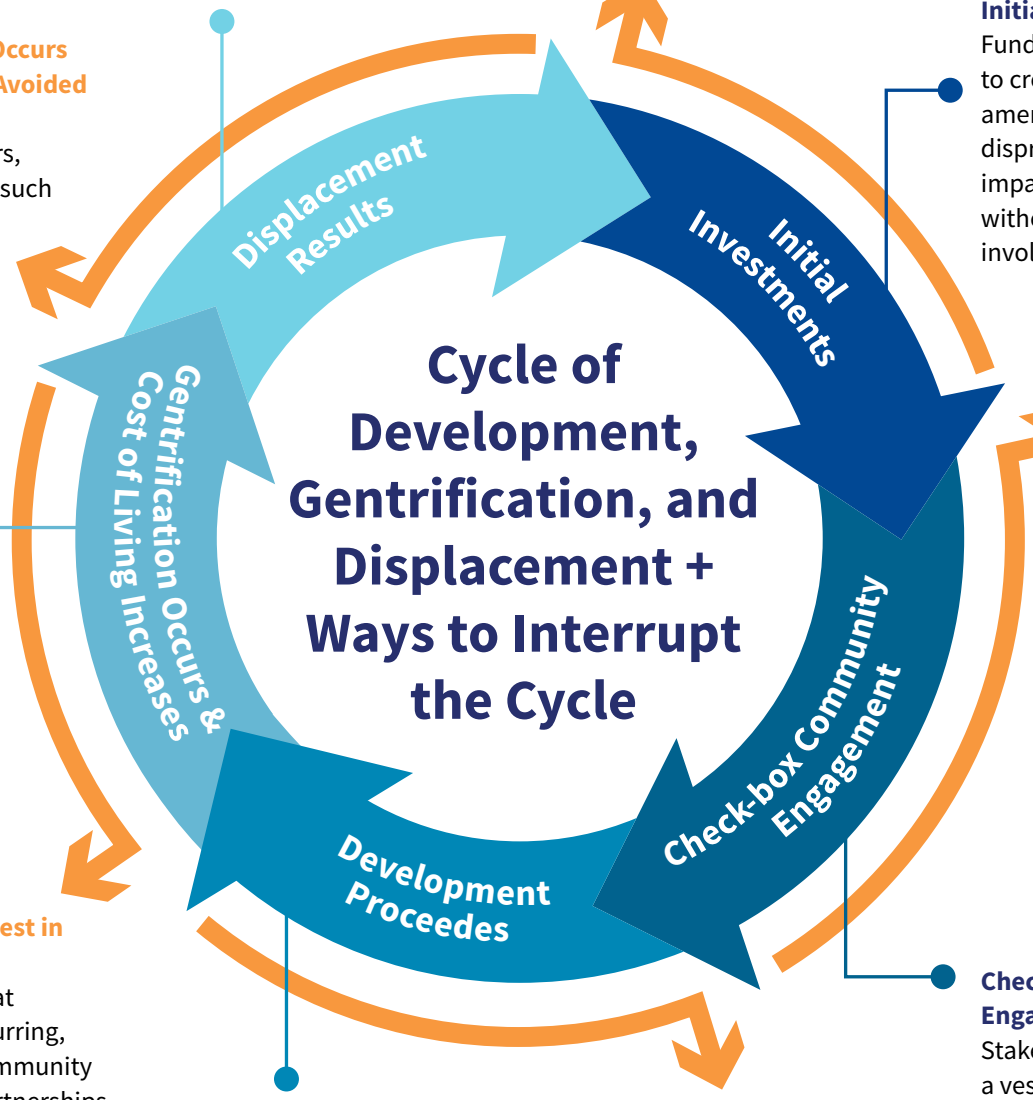
Today, the office "provides resources and technical assistance on civil rights and environmental justice, engages with communities with environmental justice concerns, and provides support for community-led action."

RELATED RESOURCES:
EJ Screen**, **EPA IRA map**, **CEJST**, and **Environmental Justice Timeline

> ***Years ago, we didn't talk about gentrification or displacement. It was something that was seen as a social issue separate from the work that we do… not necessarily an environmental issue, and not necessarily something that we could do anything about… The work that we do—advocating for parks, green space, or beautification on the river—that can change a community. That is not an "unintended consequence" but something that we have a responsibility for and toward."***
>
> **–Candice Dickens-Russell, Executive Director of Friends of the LA River and 2023 Listening Session Participant**

For an analysis of the costs of displacement, see **Economics of Displacement – Little Haiti**. Appendices **C**, **D**, and **E** of the report outline methodologies for calculating relocation, commuting, and social costs.

BLUE = BUSINESS AS USUAL **ORANGE = EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT**



Displacement Results
The original BIPOC residents experience housing and cultural displacement. History and culture are lost. Residents are often pushed to places that still face environmental burdens.

Community-led Vision
Before investments are made, understand community priorities and incorporate them into funding proposals and planning processes.

Initial Investments
Funding is provided to create new green amenities in a disproportionately impacted community without community involvement.

Authentic Community Engagement
Intentionally engage community members using equitable methods. Start developing relationships with other sectors that can support community priorities.

Check-box Community Engagement
Stakeholders with a vested interest in development perform community engagement as part of the necessary process without intention on incorporating the feedback into the plan.

Incorporate Community Priorities into Development Planning
Take community input into account as a baseline for this work and develop planning processes with those multiple benefits in mind.

Development Proceeds
Without incorporating community input or employing remain-in-place policies.

Forming Deeper Partnerships to Invest in Multiple Benefits
At the same time that development is occurring, deepen ties with community and multi-sector partnerships to invest in multiple benefits like affordable housing and workforce development.

Gentrification Occurs and Cost of living increases
Cost of living rises in the community; new residents move in.

Equitable Growth Occurs and Displacement Avoided
Guided by and with community members, growth can occur in such a way that residents are able to remain in place and enjoy the new benefits in their neighborhood.

PROJECT EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES THAT HIGHLIGHT THE IMPACTS OF GREEN GENTRIFICATION

There are several studies that show the impacts of implementing environmental projects, like trails and green infrastructure features. While the scale of the projects is different, there are measured effects on property values. Without also enacting anti-displacement measures, these impacts affect neighborhood dynamics.

IMPACT EXAMPLE: MEASURING THE IMPACT AND COMMUNITY CHANGE OF THE 606

The 606 is a 2.7 mile linear park and transportation corridor in Chicago's northwest side. It divides the area into the 606 East and 606 West. In 2016, when the report was written, 606 West comprised low-income, mostly Latinx people with primarily rental properties. 606 East was higher income, mostly white with a larger percentage of homeownership.

With the development of the trail, real estate prices increased in both the East and the West, with more increases in the West. Researchers also found a direct correlation between the rising costs of housing and the proximity to the trail. "As Chicago and other cities consider future high-profile, potentially catalytic projects like The 606, evidence from this analysis can help inform more proactive and targeted policies to preserve neighborhood affordability." **Read more here.**

IMPACT EXAMPLE: ATLANTA BELTLINE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The **Atlanta Beltline** is a 22-mile rail to trail corridor that plans to link 45 neighborhoods to downtown Atlanta. Launched in 2005 and breaking ground in 2011, the plan originally set a goal of building 5,600 affordable housing units. However, by 2018, fewer than 800 were built. By 2017, a mounting number of indicators showed the Atlanta BeltLine was associated with steep increases in property values.

According to the report, **Sustainable for Whom? Green Development, Environmental Gentrification, and the Atlanta Beltline**, the proximity to the Beltline has had a big influence on home prices. The study shows that from 2011 to 2015, depending on the segment of the Beltline, values rose between 17.9 and 26.6 percent more for homes within a half-mile of the Beltline. In Southwest Atlanta—where there are low-income, disproportionately impacted residents at risk of displacement (**see map here**)—housing values rose by 58.8 percent for parcels located within a half-mile of the Beltline.

In 2020, Atlanta BeltLine launched a **Legacy Resident Retention Program** to help keep property taxes down for existing residents; however, housing advocates in the area describe it as "**at least 10 years too late.**" After a year, the program was **struggling to get the word out** to eligible residents to apply for the assistance. Going beyond the Beltline's program, the Housing Justice League has published an **Affordable Housing Policy Package** as part of a BeltLine for All campaign that calls for affordable housing policies and strategies like filling vacant housing and more rights for tenants. **Read more here.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHT: GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT ON PROPERTY VALUES

This report reviewed the impact of smaller green infrastructure installation. Findings indicate that property values do increase for homeowners, providing an additional benefit to flood control. At the same time, the authors admit that any increase in costs can pose a risk to residents. As such, they advocate for pairing green stormwater infrastructure installations with anti-displacement strategies. **Read more here.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHT: GREEN GENTRIFICATION AND HEALTH: A SCOPING REVIEW

The authors analyze existing research on greening projects in gentrifying neighborhoods, particularly examining the effects on the health of disproportionately impacted communities. Their findings indicate that, when not paired with affordable housing or strong community involvement in design and planning, long-term residents are "negatively impacted by green gentrification as they experience a lower sense of community, feel that they do not belong in green space, and, in many studies, use green space less often than newcomers." In light of these findings, the case is made for more cross-sector collaborations to ensure that health benefits of greening projects are enjoyed by the residents that they are meant to serve. **Read more here.**

SO, WHAT IS EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The EPA defines equitable development as "an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant."

But we see a need to expand this definition further to recognize the cycles of gentrification and displacement that are at play.

It is important to recognize that while restoring rivers, providing access to green spaces, and implementing nature-based solutions will make communities more "healthy and vibrant," these forms of development can change neighborhood characteristics and displace residents to less-desirable locations that are also impacted by a changing climate. *In this toolkit, equitable development means greening without forced displacement.*

To do this work, we propose some underlying values rooted in community-centered planning that make equitable development possible:

- Understanding **community history** and making **preservation** of that history and culture a priority.
- Creating **community-driven** processes and valuing community members as experts by listening to and integrating community voices.
- Recognizing and **sharing power** by providing access to resources, funding, and decision-making.
- Balancing **multiple needs** (environmental, economic, and social) within communities.

We suggest that there are two parts to this work: internal (your organization/group) and external (community facing). As you will discover in the **next section on Strategies for Addressing Risks**, the throughlines of being successful in this work are:

1. building intention around your equitable development practices
2. centering local voices and building trust
3. incorporating equitable processes and organizational practices and policies that center equity and include funding for implementing them
4. building diverse partnerships that touch various sectors
5. defining accountability structures and evaluation.

Find the Strategies for Addressing Risks section after the case studies on **page 18**.

CASE STUDY INTRODUCTIONS

There are some great examples of organizations and partnerships that are implementing equitable development strategies. We highlight three case study examples in this toolkit. Find here an introduction to each of the locations and projects, and throughout the toolkit we include insights and recommendations from the case study contacts.

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA: GROUNDWORK JACKSONVILLE AND THE EMERALD TRAIL

Groundwork Jacksonville is a nonprofit organization in Jacksonville, FL that was formed in 2014 in collaboration with the City to oversee the development of the Emerald Trail and the restoration of creeks along the greenway—McCoys and Hogans Creeks. The Emerald Trail will be 30 miles of greenway through 14 historic neighborhoods in Jacksonville, promoting economic development and connecting the urban core around their waters.

Using community-led research, Groundwork Jacksonville set out to improve their community engagement and equitable development efforts. Through community engagement, Groundwork was able to identify community preferences and priorities. While flooding was originally the main concern of McCoys Creek, the community members saw the revitalization of their neighborhood through Emerald Trail as a more pressing issue due to possible displacement from the restoration. With their input from the beginning, the community was able to implement their wants to bring fishing back to their neighborhoods and it is now a “crucial aspect” of the McCoy’s Creek restoration project.

By communicating with the community and equity planning before finalization and implementation, Groundwork identified four areas of concern among the historically redlined neighborhoods of North Riverside and Brooklyn: (1) housing, (2) small business and job training opportunities, (3) environmental stewardship, and (4) cultural preservation.

To address these community priorities, Groundwork has invested in and started implementing home repair programs, workforce training, and community gardens. The Home Repair Program works to fight displacement by repairing homes to better withstand the impacts of climate change and storm damage. It is led by a resident construction committee that employs a case manager and construction manager to oversee every project. CREST, the Community Restoration Environmental Stewardship Training program, provides employment and training to community members while engaging in the revitalization projects by water quality testing, workshops, creek clean-ups, and more. Food security also became an important goal of residents along the trail. The North Riverside Garden is a big success for community members to not only grow their own food but also to connect and convene with others in their neighborhood. And, the CREST program helps to maintain it.

> ***"There's no reason why a community can't develop and still keep people at the forefront of that development…Gentrification does occur, but gentrification can occur without displacement."*** **-Gloria McNair, Manager, Community Engagement & Equity**

To do this work, Groundwork Jacksonville partners with many organizations and agencies within their city, including LISC Jacksonville, North Riverside CDC, United Way of Northeast Florida, JTC Running, and the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. Groundwork Jacksonville, the City of Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Transportation Authority were recently (2024) awarded a Neighborhood Access & Equity Program Grant from the US Department of Transportation to fund the construction of the five remaining trail segments.

This case study was written in collaboration with Gloria McNair, Manager, Community Engagement & Equity at Groundwork Jacksonville. Find other insights from Gloria and the work of Groundwork Jacksonville throughout the toolkit and specifically on page 25.

MESA, ARIZONA: RAIL CDC AND PARTNERS, PRE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RAIL Community Development Corporation is a place-based community development corporation located in Mesa, Arizona that offers corridor development, small business technical assistance, and neighborhood organizing in low-to-moderate income census tracts around public transit. Rail CDC exists to strengthen and preserve a diverse local economy; a safe and attractive neighborhood; a healthy and resilient community; and an engaged, educated, and empowered community.

Downtown Mesa, located just east of Phoenix, is home to a majority Latino, low-income, and under-resourced community. The Phoenix metropolitan area is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. As a result, Downtown Mesa is seeing a rapid influx of private and public investments, including a $100 million investment from Arizona State University (ASU) to build new campus facilities. The speed at which growth is occurring in the area without any anti-displacement measures in place sparked deep concern that countless residents will be displaced, causing unnecessary harm within the community.

RAIL CDC and the Vitalyst Foundation were invited by ASU to conduct a community engagement process to help shape the new campus in a more equitable and inclusive manner. The central goal of the engagement process was to help ASU better understand the local downtown community and the networks and nuances of these communities to build advocacy measures that will reduce the level of displacement that will inevitably occur. RAIL CDC also took this as an opportunity to support continuous community relationship building as the downtown site grows, and to help support and develop anti-displacement measures now and into the future.

The two partners—with Patchwork Community Inclusion, LLC, All Voices Consulting, LLC; ASU Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts, LISC Phoenix, and Mainstreet Learning Lab—used the Pre-Community Engagement methodology developed through Vitalyst Health Foundation's healthy community work to develop an approach to community engagement that is meaningful, relevant and personalized to a particular community.

IN MESA, THIS LOOKED LIKE:

1. Gathering demographic data (age, race, income, education level) and digging into the history of place
2. Conducting 1-1 interviews with 50 community members that provided perspectives matching the demographics of the place
3. Forming a Community Advisory Board, also matching the demographics of place, to develop community engagement strategies for ASU

> ***It's important and also difficult to center the community. If you do that, you will gain trust. In the long run, it will have a more positive impact."***
> **–Augie Gastelum, Patchwork Community Inclusion, Community & Economic Development Consultant**

The complete pre-community engagement process, from research to report development, took the team about a year to complete. ASU was provided with helpful information to guide the development of the new campus, but most importantly, deep relationships and trust was formed with community members. From the interviewing process, the team was able to create a Community Advisory Group who continue to engage with ASU by bringing a critical local voice to decision making processes, and they also bring the tough questions and answers. Further, this process gave the community an opportunity to learn about the new developments, the risks of displacement, and how they can become local advocates. RAIL CDC has further supported community benefit projects that were identified in this process, further building trust and resilience. Setting up a solutions-oriented mindset goes a long way toward solving larger scale problems.

This case study was written in collaboration with Augie Gastelum, Patchwork Community Inclusion, Community & Economic Development Consultant. Find other insights from Augie and pre-community engagement work throughout the toolkit and specifically on page 25.

SOUTH BRONX, NEW YORK: SOUTH BRONX UNITE COMMUNITY WATERFRONT PLANNING

South Bronx Unite (SBU) is a nonprofit organization working to bring together residents, community organizations, and other partners to restore and protect the social, environmental, and economic future of Mott Haven and Port Morris. Though rich in culture and ingenuity, the South Bronx is a low-income, primarily Black, Brown, and immigrant community that is disproportionately impacted by environmental injustice, a legacy of redlining, urban renewal, and disinvestment

The waterfront there is dotted with heavy industry and polluting facilities like major expressways, waste transfer stations, peak power plants, last-mile warehouses, and thousands of daily diesel truck trips. Today, the South Bronx has some of the worst air pollution levels in the country, with asthma hospitalization rates 21 times higher than any other New York City neighborhood. Asthma is known to limit physical, social, and professional aspects of life; and air pollution causes other health issues, like heart disease and cancer.

Relief from the air that is literally killing residents in the South Bronx could be found along the waterfront, but access is non-existent even though those polluting facilities are on public land. The South Bronx is also at an extreme risk of increased heat and flooding over the next 30 years, both of which have already started

South Bronx Unite's **Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan** is their proposal to provide residents with access to a public waterfront while also providing solutions to air pollution and climate change effects. What makes this plan different from other developments is that it is a community-envisioned and **community-managed waterfront**. Through charrette activities and other forms of engagement, the community put forth the vision to create seven interconnected green spaces on the waterfront. SBU has been working with landscape architects, urban designers, engineers, students, elected representatives, and city and state agencies to bring this vision to life with green infrastructure and nature-based solutions that provide benefits for mental and physical health while decreasing flooding and heat risks.

To achieve the goals of the plan, partnerships are of the utmost importance. SBU partners with many different entities in the community. They host walking tours several times a year for elected representatives, government officials, school groups, and other stakeholders to see the polluted

waterfront and invite them to share in the community vision for it and its potential. [See **report by Earth Economics** on the community and economic benefits analysis of the Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan.] Ten years in the making, SBU continues to engage with the community to make sure that priorities that they had previously are still relevant.

At the same time as developing the waterfront plan, SBU also advocates for

- **Clean air through air quality monitoring** that documents pollution levels and identifies sources of contamination. This data-driven approach facilitates and strengthens advocacy for solutions and raises awareness about the health impacts of poor air quality.
- Green space equity: Compounding the pollution burden and resulting health challenges is a scarcity of green spaces in Mott Haven and Port Morris. SBU is addressing this injustice through local and citywide advocacy efforts to advance green space equity, including through policy changes and a tool that will allow frontline communities to assess the value of green spaces in their specific communities.
- The **community land trust model** as a way to create community spaces. Under this umbrella, SBU's sibling organization, the Mott Haven – Port Morris Community Land Stewards, acquired an abandoned city-owned building that will be converted to a community center. The **H.E.ARTS Center**—a community center for Health, Education and the Arts—will include services for holistic and preventive health, education and workforce development (by **Green City Force**), and the arts.
- Legislative advocacy: SBU understands that the myriad injustices and inequities that persist in the South Bronx must be addressed at their roots, and, to do that, better public policies and legislation are needed. They are active in several coalitions with other organizations to advance policies and legislation that center the realities and priorities of frontline communities. One recent and major accomplishment through coalition work was the passage of the **cumulative impacts legislation** in New York State. This legislation would help to prevent the siting of any additional polluting facilities in already pollution-burdened communities. SBU is currently with a coalition to pass a companion bill, the **Enhanced Public Participation legislation**.
- **Equitable Development Principles** in the South Bronx community, including **(1)** Jobs, **(2)** Housing, **(3)** Environmental Justice, **(4)** Empowering Local Arts, Artists, and Communities, **(5)** Promoting Community Cohesiveness, **(6)** Local Economic Development, **(7)** Health Equity, and **(8)** Public-Private Projects.

> ***What sets this plan apart from other development plans is the fact that the community was rooted from the beginning in those conversations…Once people feel rooted to a community or a place, they want to stay there. The hope is that because they've been engaged for so long in the planning of these wonderful open spaces, they see this as their home. Young people, when they get to an age where it's time to decide where it is that they're going to plant roots, the hope is that they will choose to stay and not see it as a place they have to leave."***
> **–Elizabeth Balladares, NY-NJ Harbor and Estuary Program Community Stewardship Manager and SBU partner**

This case study was written in collaboration with Arif Ullah, Executive Director of South Bronx Unite (SBU). Find other insights from Arif and the work of SBU throughout the toolkit and specifically on **page 27** and **page 31**.

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING RISKS

As more groups and individuals start to understand the importance and benefits of incorporating equitable development strategies in their greening projects, many find themselves asking how and where do we begin. While there isn't one clear answer to this question, there are various tactics that your group can piece together in a way that is unique to your project and authentic to the community you are working with.

In the introduction section of this toolkit, we discussed why incorporating equitable development and anti-displacement strategies into greening initiatives is imperative to allow current residents to have the option to stay in place. We believe understanding the history and the "why" of this work is the first step to effectively consider and address the risks of displacement and gentrification in relation to your project. In this section we will introduce the "how" of this work by highlighting internal (your organization/group) and external (community facing) strategies to help you and your organization, community group, or project team reach your equitable development goals. The principles laid out in this toolkit are a commitment to mutually beneficial outcomes for environmental and social resilience.

LOOKING INWARD: PREPARING ORGANIZATIONS TO DO THIS WORK

Similar to the development of many projects and proposals, we often want to jump right into action. Action is what drives and excites us. We are eager to see and feel the results as quickly as possible. And while the external action steps are critical to get to the results, the beginning planning stages are just as, if not more important. To successfully implement equitable development strategies it requires internal understanding and intentionality, as individuals and as teams.

In this section, we humbly share a few suggestions to support your organization as you embark on the path of equitable development. The following sections related to internal preparedness are to be curated and implemented in a way that meets you where you are, while also being meaningful and representative of you and your community.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

If your organization is not doing this already, we encourage staff and board members to recognize and challenge the ways in which racism, inequality, and privilege intersect with their work in conservation. One step is to prioritize Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. A few ways to think about incorporating these practices into your organization include:

- **Cultural Competency:** Staff should receive training and support to develop cultural competency and awareness of issues related to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions of diversity.
- **Mission Alignment:** The organization's mission, vision, and values should explicitly include commitments to equity, inclusivity, and social justice.
- **Equitable Policies and Practices:** Implementing policies and practices that promote equity and inclusivity in hiring, promotion, procurement, and service delivery.
- **Diverse Representation:** The organization should reflect the diversity of its communities, both in its leadership and staff composition.

Check out **River Network's EDI Resource Library** and the **Urban Waters Learning Network, Reciprocity Consulting Library** for an extensive list of EDI training resources. There are many consultants that support organizations in this work, and we recommend reaching out to local consultants who are familiar with your community.

SETTING YOUR INTENTION

By incorporating equitable development practices into your greening projects, you are making a commitment of centering community in the work, and to disrupting the systems that perpetuate business-as-usual projects. Effectively, this commitment recognizes that historical practices have not benefited disproportionately impacted communities, and you are advocating for change. This change and commitment require intention. Your intention is the why of this work, and also the inspiration. When we root our work in intention, we can show up fully for the communities we are engaging with and advocating for.

As you start to engage and implement equitable development strategies into your projects, we recommend that you develop your why, or intention, of doing this work. This practice can be done either individually, as an organization, or within your project team. Not only setting, but also sharing this intention can:

1. Inspire and encourage others to follow along, including inspiring leadership or project partners who feel hesitant or opposed to implementing new strategies.
2. Build trust with the local community.
3. Be a key component to your fundraising strategy.
4. Reinspire yourself when feeling burnt out.

Remember, the why is not what you do or how you do it, it is the reason, it is the heart of your work.

> ***Our why is the purpose or belief that drives every one of us. It is about your contribution to impact and to serve others. It is the inspiration."***
> **–Simon Senek, The Golden Circle**

WORKSHEET

Set your why statement:

ADDRESSING BARRIERS

Environmental and conservation nonprofit organizations and others who work in urban spaces may be aware of the exploitative nature of business as usual projects, but are often overcome by internal and external barriers, including a lack of resources and knowledge of how to disrupt systemic injustices. As a result, they find themselves unintentionally feeding into the displacement pressures that can result from investments in parks, green infrastructure, and other types of environmental restoration.

Internally, to individuals and organizations: this work takes time and money. It requires intentionality and patience. It's challenging. Individuals and organizations do not feel knowledgeable enough. Project partners or leadership are hesitant because it's unfamiliar. It can be challenging to build the proper partnerships. It might cause conflict between you and other partners. You may have tried to do the work but aren't getting the results you want and feel defeated.

Externally, for project partners and community members: There is a lack of trust between community members and outsiders (state and local gov't, NGOs, developers, etc.). Historical and ongoing injustices and broken promises within low-income and communities of color have created a high degree of distrust. The result is a disinterest in engaging with outsiders, no matter the intention. This lack of trust is justified, and it is not the fault of the community members. This piece is also one of the biggest barriers to overcome that requires intention, commitment, and patience.

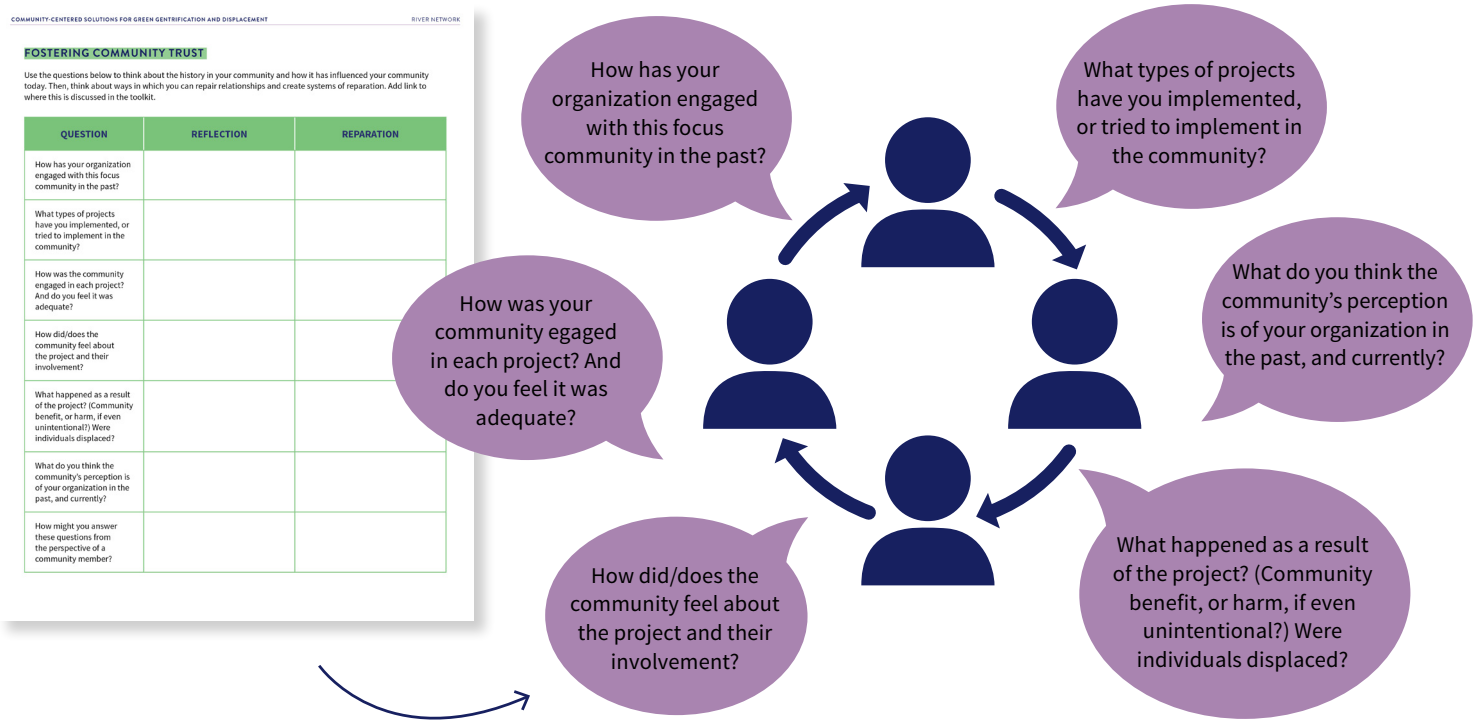
Now is the time to start developing tactics to address them. We've provided some examples below. This activity can be done as you make your way through this toolkit, and as more tactics and resources are provided.

BARRIER	TACTIC	RESOURCES NEEDED
Lack of Trust	See **Fostering Community Trust**	
Leadership does not support the work	See **Fostering Leadership Commitment**	
The work is not funded	See **Funding and Budgeting to do the work**	
Add your own here…	See **Appendix A** for a blank rubric	

Take time to think through, and talk about what your specific barriers are externally. Using the blank worksheet in **Appendix A**, create your list of barriers both internal and external. This exercise can either be done individually or as a team. Once the list is complete, brainstorm a few tactics to address each barrier and the resources you will need to implement them. Once you have a few tactics for each barrier, circle those that you think you can easily implement and start the process of addressing them. Some barriers, especially those that are more systemic in nature, will be more challenging to overcome and will require more resources. Start small, and work your way up. You aren't going to solve the root of why these barriers exists, but you can start.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY TRUST

In the introduction of this toolkit we discussed the history of place and how systemic processes of divestment in communities of color have caused immense harm physically, emotionally, socially, and economically. Knowing this history, and how it has influenced and shaped where we are today is critical to break the perpetuation of these systems. Similarly, knowing the history and context of the relationship between your organization, other institutions, and the community is an important step in 1) acknowledging what was done, and 2) understanding how to repair relationships and creating systems of reparation. With your organization, take some time to reflect on the questions below. Use **the worksheet in Appendix A** as a reference point.



FOSTERING LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

For equitable development strategies to be the most successful, buy-in from staff of all levels is needed. However, many conservation/environmental practitioners have a hard time fostering leadership buy-in to integrate equitable development strategies into their work. This might be attributed to lack of knowledge on the topic, fear of the unknown, and/or limitations on time and additional resources needed.

Often, mid- to entry-level staff have the most direct connection and relationship with the local community. There is a deeper understanding of community needs and the issues that they are experiencing. There is often a strong desire to address those needs beyond previously determined deliverables. Unfortunately, traditional power dynamics inhibit staff in non-leadership roles to feel comfortable speaking up or feel that they have been heard.

The goal in this section is to offer some tools and steps to empower staff at any level to foster leadership buy-in. We also want to note, if you are in a leadership role, the key here is to **LISTEN**. We urge you to listen to staff who are bringing you these ideas, and listen to the community you are engaging with, they know better than anyone. **See the diagram on the next page** for tactics that can be used to generate leadership buy-in.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

You have the connection with the community and other partners, and thus you have more knowledge on what is needed on the ground. This knowledge is powerful. Know that you can be an advocate, or a bridge between the local community and your organization using some of the following tactics.

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

Reduce the fear of the unknown by gathering data and research findings that demonstrate the importance and urgency of equitable development and anti-displacement work. Share case studies and examples of successful equitable development and anti-displacement projects that the social, economic, and environmental benefits of such initiatives.

ENGAGE LEADERSHIP DIRECTLY

Learn how leadership prefers to receive information, and tailor your messaging in that manner. Schedule meetings to discuss the rationale and potential impact of equitable development and anti-displacement initiatives. Address specific concerns and priorities, such as financial sustainability, reputation management, or regulatory compliance. Align your goals with a broader strategic goal.

IDENTIFY CHAMPIONS

Identify influential champions within the organization who can advocate for equitable development and anti-displacement work at the leadership level. These champions could be board members, executives, or key stakeholders who are passionate about social justice and community empowerment.

RESEARCH & DATA COLLECTION

Connect the organization's mission and values to the goals of equitable development and anti-displacement efforts, emphasizing the moral imperative and alignment with broader societal trends.

ADDRESS POTENTIAL BARRIERS

Anticipate and address potential barriers or objections that leadership may raise, such as cost concerns, perceived risks, or political sensitivities. Provide evidence-based responses and mitigation strategies to alleviate their concerns and build confidence in the proposed initiatives.

OFFER TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Provide leadership with opportunities for training and capacity building on issues related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-displacement strategies. Empower them with the knowledge and skills needed to champion these initiatives within the organization.

BUILD COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Form coalitions with other organizations, community groups, and stakeholders who share similar goals and values. Leverage collective influence and expertise to amplify the message and demonstrate broad-based support for equitable development and anti-displacement efforts.

PILOT PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATE IMPACT

Start with small-scale pilot programs or demonstration projects to showcase the potential impact of equitable development and anti-displacement strategies. Collect data and testimonials to measure outcomes and build a compelling case for scaling up the initiatives. Regularly communicate updates and successes to leadership to maintain their engagement and support.

FUNDING AND BUDGETING TO DO THE WORK

> ***Local, state, and federal funding processes associated with infrastructure development offer necessary and important opportunities to advance an equitable green development framework. Rather than advocating for equity after funding has been distributed, setting parameters governing the distribution of funds that include equity is a more systemic and effective way to guide green space expansion and development so that it is more responsive to community needs."*** **–Greening in Place: Protecting Communities from Displacement**

FUNDING

This work takes time, additional capacity, and additional funding. This includes more funding for internal staff time as well as funding to compensate community members for their time and expertise. The key in this section is to ensure you are incorporating equity into ALL of your work, and thus all of your proposals. Your "why" statement developed in the section above can be used to help guide this piece.

Other things to consider related to funding development:

- It's not just about foundations and public funding sources, but also how you can garner the support of local businesses, or branches of corporate groups who have a larger stake in the community.
- Equitable development incorporates various disciplines, think about how to leverage your partnerships to apply for new, diverse funding opportunities. How can you connect funding sources to your equitable development strategies? Examples include funding for health and wellbeing, workforce development, arts and culture.
- Host a capital campaign for the larger project to not only raise more funds, but to also put a spotlight on the new project. Check out the **capital campaign** and the **ways to give** in support of the 11th Street Bridge Project in Washington D.C.

For a list of public funding sources for community engagement and equitable development projects check out Appendix B, Funding. Here is a **funding pipeline template** that can be used to organize the various funding opportunities.

The Housing and Urban Development's Community Engagement toolkit: Building Purpose and Participation has a helpful framework for securing funding for community engagement efforts.

1. Find your north Star
2. Allocate resources
3. Get clear on your ask and make giving accessible
4. Meet with potential funders

BUDGETING

It isn't just about funding equity work, but more importantly budgeting for the work. Ensure your initial budgets have ample opportunity to equitably and intentionally engage community members—including compensating community experts for their time. This engagement, when done well, will help set the stage for other areas and projects that will require funding in the future. We suggest implementing a phased budgeting approach.

> ***A phased budgeting process involves breaking down the engagement budget into increments that can build upon each other, based on the data from community engagement. The objective of initial phases should be to gather data and synthesize priorities based on community feedback from those phases. Subsequent phases' budgets should be designed conditionally, so that they are contingent upon the initial phased feedback from the community. Taking an iterative, and thus community-focused approach allows for important adjustments to be made based on new understandings gained from initial engagement."*** **–HUD Exchange**

Learn more about creating a phased budgeting in HUD's Community Engagement Toolkit, specifically page 37. Here is a **Budget Template** to help support this piece of the work.

FROM INWARD- TO OUTWARD-FACING WORK

We have shared ideas, activities, and resources that can support individuals and organizations along the path to incorporating equitable strategies. It starts with the internal work of centering equity, diversity, and inclusion and defining the "why" that motivates the work. It also involves understanding the history of and barriers to engaging with communities. Eventually, new processes and leadership commitment emerge that lead to incorporating equity into organizational structures, funding proposals, and budgets. We've presented suggestions to take your work that much closer to incorporating equity across the entire organization that facilitates equitable development work for the next section: planning externally.

LOOKING OUTWARD: ENGAGING AND PLANNING FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT WORK

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Most organizations using this toolkit will have a thorough understanding of the environmental needs within the community they are working. Looking at the environmental issues through an equity lens—rooted in the EDI practices and policies adopted from your individual or organizational **internal work**—will provide a different perspective and understanding about the interconnections between the environmental, economic, and social needs and benefits.

Groundwork USA's Climate Safe Neighborhoods program, for example, provides a "Roadmap" for equity-centered climate action in their story map **Changing Systems: a Guide to Jumpstart Local Climate Action**. The process starts with understanding and mapping communities that are vulnerable to climate impacts and relating that to historical inequities, like redlining.

To go deeper in understanding the social, economic, and political landscapes of a community, **Pre-Community Engagement** methodologies—**like the one covered in our case study from Mesa, AZ**—are important processes to incorporate.

Pre-community engagement provides an understanding of the community, history, culture, and demographics as well as how the community would like to engage. Further, the information collected in this step will be key in evaluating your project over time, in relation to how successful you have been in addressing displacement. **See our case study example from Jacksonville, FL** for more information about community engagement on the Emerald Trail.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHT: MESA, AZ

All of the steps in the Pre-Community Engagement methodology are important: **(1)** Seek to Understand the Layers within a Community, **(2)** Understand a Range of Community Member Perspectives, and **(3)** Identify Engagement Strategies that Support Community Preferences. It doesn't have to be as deep or detailed as in the Mesa analysis; however it is important to:

- Understand the context and history of place as well the place as it is right now
- Make connections with folks living in the place and conduct at least 10 interviews with a variety of people.
- Provide community members with information about how you will use it as well as the outcomes of the conversations you're having with them.
- Act on the issues that are important to them, even small-scale issues that affect their daily lives. This sets up a solutions-oriented mindset to tackle larger scale issues.
- Invest in the process (it's more important than a large report as an outcome).

> ***"This has become a practice anytime that we're going into a new place…The whole idea is that all of the assets in a community already exist. All of the leadership in a community already exists… Diving deeper to really identify the more granular pieces takes a lot more work, and if we do that on the front end, it then makes the result for everything else that much easier, more authentic, and better informed by community."*** **–Augie Gastelum, Patchwork Community Inclusion, Community & Economic Development Consultant**

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHT: JACKSONVILLE, FL

Through experiences gained while developing the Emerald Trail in Jacksonville, Florida, Gloria McNair—from Groundwork Jacksonville—shares the following best practices for community engagement:

1. Engage community early and often
2. Apply an equity lens
3. Build trust
4. Be transparent
5. Value residents as subject matter experts
6. Find and share available resources
7. Look at the big picture

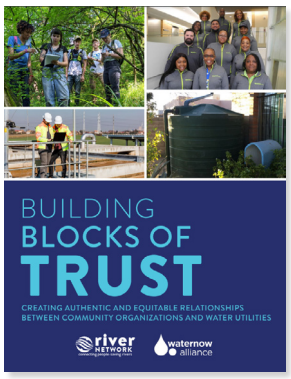
OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES:

There are many tools to begin to engage community members in authentic ways. Other River Network resources include **Tools for Equitable Climate Resilience**.

The **Community-Led Research** toolkit provides step-by-step guidance and lessons learned on how to effectively engage with community members to understand climate impacts and to develop more equitable climate resilience strategies.

The **Fostering Community Leadership** toolkit aims to build the capacity of organizations to serve as catalysts in supporting members of their communities stepping into leadership roles, engaging them meaningfully in defining the scope of local climate change risks and impacts, and formulating and implementing equitable solutions.

River Network's **Building Blocks of Trust** report also provides strategies for building trusting relationships. While this is focused on community relationships with water utilities, the trust-building practices are widely applicable to understanding different roles and finding commonalities in goals.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is the heart of this work. Discover various approaches to authentic community engagement, and discuss which tactics align best with your community.

- The People's Climate Innovation Center **Resource List for Community Engagement**
- Reimagining Civic Commons **Community Engagement Card Deck**
- HUD's **Community Engagement Toolkit: Building Purpose and Participation**

UNDERSTANDING NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

Having data about how neighborhoods are changing is a valuable tool for guiding decision-makers and advocating for policies that allow people to stay in place. Learn to collect and communicate relevant data.

- The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership **Guide to Measuring Neighborhood Change to Understand and Prevent Displacement**

NAVIGATING POLITICAL LANDSCAPES

Sometimes, the local or regional political landscape holds different values. There can still be strides made in advancing policies for equitable development using different messaging and campaign strategies.

- Spitfire guides **Mindful Messaging** and **Planning to Win**.
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's **Strategic Communication Planning Hub**.

BUILDING THE TEAM

Through pre-community and community engagement, it becomes more clear who should be on the "team" and what the priorities are. Some members will need to be outside of the environmental/conservation field. This is multi-sector work. It can and should include representatives from the community, other nonprofit organizations, and municipal government officials. Others you may think about incorporating into the planning and development, are realtors, developers, federal and state agencies, and more. Figuring out the players on the team to advance equitable development goals can be supported by:

- Values: **Conduct a stakeholder analysis** Guide
- The **Community Tool Box**, a service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas

There are varying ways to do multi-sector work. One example is **Living Cully** in Portland, OR. The Cully neighborhood is the most diverse census track in Oregon with high rates of poverty and a lack of green space. Working together using a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Living Cully is a partnership of five organizations—Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East, Hacienda Community Development Corporation, Native American Youth and Family Center and Verde. The group works together to support environmental infrastructure side-by-side with anti-displacement strategies framed out in the report **Not in Cully: Anti-Displacement Strategies for the Cully Neighborhood**.

What makes this partnership successful is the presence of a backbone organization for collective impact. In the Living Cully MOU, Verde is specifically designated as the backbone organization and agrees to host a program coordinator and lead on facilitation of the partnership. **See an example MOU here.**

FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND FUNDERS:

While coalitions and multi-sector work are necessary for effective planning, this work is difficult and exhausting, particularly for community members who are often not compensated for their contributions to the collective impact work. These kinds of partnerships are also underfunded. **Funders** – there are many opportunities to support this kind of work moving forward. A good example of where this kind of work has been funded is in the 7th Ward of New Orleans, a nonprofit organization called **Healthy Community Services**.

To establish a community of care, see the presentation slides with resources: **Let's talk about Burnout and How to Heal from It**.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHT: SOUTH BRONX

As in our South Bronx case study, South Bronx Unite has worked on the Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan—a community managed waterfront development—for over ten years. The plan to add green space and nature-based solutions will protect the community from flooding and sea level rise, mitigate heat island effects, and provide open space for respite from air pollution that is prevalent in the area. In doing this work, South Bronx Unite partners with many different entities in the community, including community members, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, state agencies, and state and local elected representatives.

> ***Partnerships are key to our work and accomplishments. We're a staff of four and there are never enough hours in the day to check off all our daily tasks. Partnerships and coalition work have allowed us to leverage our efforts and make meaningful progress on priority issues for South Bronx residents."*** **– Arif Ullah, Executive Director, South Bronx Unite**

Successes include the development of Cully Park and the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the Cully neighborhood. Cully Park is a restored brownfield and Living Cully's Signature Project that opened in 2018 at the same time as advocating for the **ordinance** that preserves mobile home parks as permanent affordable housing in the City of Portland. Living Cully advocated for the **(TIF) district in the Cully neighborhood** to direct funds to community-led projects; it was **approved in November 2022**.

These are some of the tools that Living Cully identified and agreed to work on in their equitable development planning processes; and they have been identified as priorities through community engagement.

CREATING THE TOOLBOX AND A PLAN

Once the community priorities are understood and the team is assembled, it's time to understand what practices and policies to focus on to create the toolbox of anti-displacement and equitable development strategies.

> ***I think the methodology of before the project begins, putting together a team who's going to think about this is…really important and a very smart strategy…. I get this question all the time, "What can you do?" The truth is that it's never one thing, and it's never the same. Having an understanding of the entire toolbox and knowing how to use the different tools that you have at your disposal, either through your city, through your county, through legal representation, through educating and supporting the residents themselves, knowing when to kind of pull which lever, and having a group of people that are all working together, who have some knowledge of these various levers and deploying that strategically, is what will work, is what has worked." – Candice Dickens-Russell, Executive Director of Friends of the LA River and 2023 Listening Session Participant***

There are many toolkits that provide examples of strategies, policies and practices that can be used in establishing a plan. Again, the strategies that are used in the planning should center around community priorities and be supported by partners in the work.

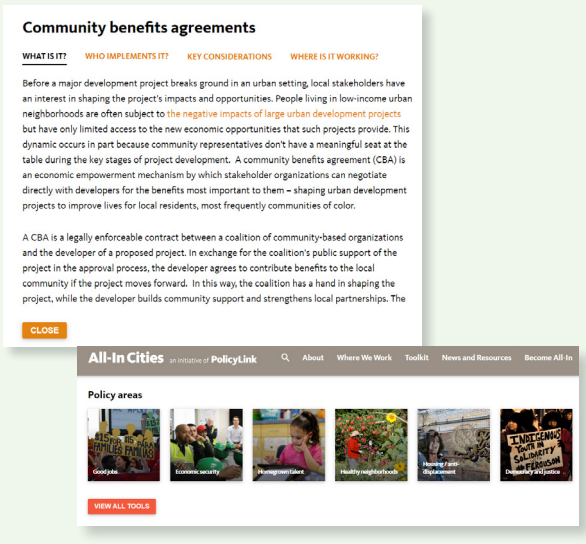
RESOURCES

CREATE Initiative: Sharing in the benefits of a greening city

What we like about this one! **Section III From Toolkit to Action** provides checklists and example best practices for taking action based on the kind of organization you are working with, including policymakers; regulators and public agencies; planners and project managers; nonprofits; community organizers; and community development and philanthropy.

PolicyLink All-In Cities Policy Toolkit

Find in this toolkit specific policies as well as examples of where they have been implemented. Toolkit and policy example below:

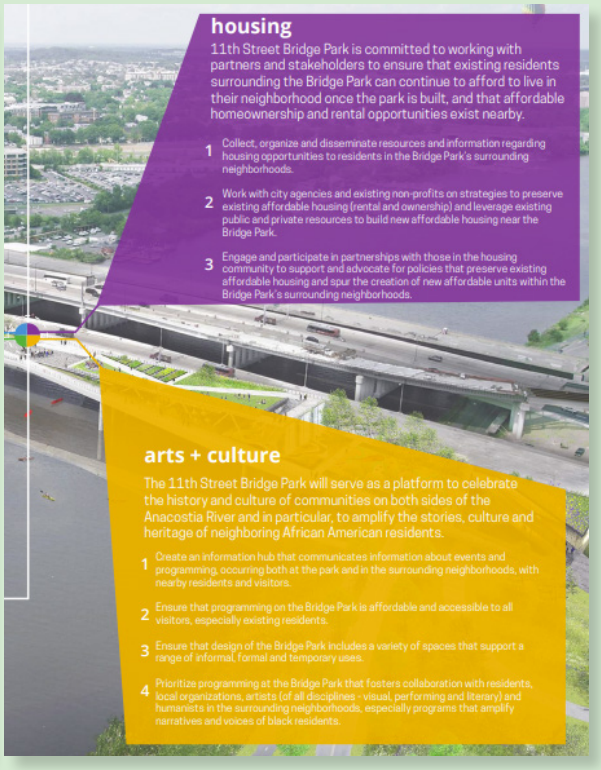


To think about how you can use these different tools, use the example framework below to build out your toolbox. For a blank rubric, see **Appendix A**. For a more comprehensive list of toolkits, strategies, equitable development plans and other resources refer to **Appendix B**.

Identified Community Priority (be very specific)	Example Policies or Tools that would address it	Who can you partner with to accomplish this goal? Who is the team lead?
Housing *(Stabilizing housing costs, paying for housing repairs, helping with heirs property taxes, education for first time homeowners, building a community land trust)*	Examples from the City of Newark: **rent control**, **inclusionary zoning**, and **right to counsel** and the North Riverside CDC and Groundwork Jacksonville Home Repair Program	
Workforce Development *(how can you tie the development work to job opportunities for the community? What kinds of trainings can you provide? And are there placements available after the training?)*	Examples of workforce development programs: **Green City Force** and Groundwork New Orleans **Ground Crew**	
Community Preservation *(Is it a specific location or gathering place to preserve? Can art and/or storytelling contribute to the work)*	Find examples from the National Endowment for the Arts Guide: **How to Do Creative Placemaking**	
Economic Development *(what small businesses would benefit from being a part of the development? What already exist that can be preserved?)*	Find examples in the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland **Small Business Anti-Displacement Toolkit**	
More Community Priorities Here… Find a blank rubric in Appendix A.	Refer to **Appendix B** for more tools.	

With the community involved, the team assembled, priorities identified, and strategies understood, developing an equitable development plan keeps the work accountable and serves as a reference point. Having a plan in place that is guided by community priorities is a living, guiding document for when funding for projects ultimately comes into play, and will also act as an important document to evaluate your progress to overall goals. See an example below.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHT: 11th Street Bridge Park: **Equitable Development Plan**



LONG TERM: CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

In this toolkit, we are stressing the need to center community in all aspects of your greening project. This means community engagement activities must occur over the course of the entire project, including during and after a project has "broken ground."

CONTINUAL ENGAGEMENT MUST-DO'S:

- Share project updates using a variety of methods and venues, even if there isn't anything all that new to share.
- Be transparent in your communications. If a project isn't progressing in the way you envisioned, share that. Create opportunities for feedback. Make sure those you are sharing information with continually feel ownership over the project.
- At certain key points, evaluate if the project is progressing in a way that the community envisioned. This is also a place to learn about any concerns or signs of displacement.

CONTINUAL ENGAGEMENT SHOULD DO'S:

- Go beyond your initial project's end goal and start implementing smaller, low-hanging fruit projects, such as tree plantings, fence fixing, or environmental education programming. This helps to build/nurture community relationships and trust, and can act as a placeholder while the larger project is occurring.
- Get creative! Celebrate local history and culture, install temporary art installations, conduct an oral history of the neighborhood, or host pop-up farmers markets. Who in the neighborhood has skills that they can share with others?

While it is critical to continue engaging and nurturing community relationships, community engagement fatigue must also be taken into consideration. **Engagement fatigue is a real thing**.

> ***We know that community engagement overload is real and further perpetuates the harm of decades of disinvestment, performative equity, and extractive "engagement" processes.."*** **– People's Climate Innovation Center**

Some communities have been overstudied and engaged so many times that they are frustrated with providing input with no results. If this is the case, a different approach is needed.

TIPS TO AVOID ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

- Ask community members how they want to be engaged **(pre-community engagement)**
- Meet the community where they are already meeting and in places that are safe and comfortable to them
- Continually compensate individuals for their time
- Get creative and use new strategies
- Be specific about your engagements, only bring relevant pieces forward. Spend time and effort where it matters most
- Don't only focus your time on the people who are the loudest
- Explore more here: **How public agencies can address public input fatigue**

THE PROJECT IS FINISHED, NOW WHAT?

To start, you did it! You, project partners, and the local community made it through the installation of your greening project. First, pause and have a party to celebrate! Invite everyone involved in this effort, including your funders, and share in delight together. But, does the work really end once the project has been installed? The answer, no.

There are opportunities to build capacity within communities. For example, in our case study about the Emerald Trail, Groundwork Jacksonville is starting to empower residents in the 14 communities along the trail to become more independent by building up community organizations and neighborhood associations that steward the spaces that have been created by their vision. This work is done by supporting the communities with funding and organizational development resources.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHT: SOUTH BRONX

South Bronx Unite understands that it is important to continually engage with the community.

> ***We understand that this waterfront park that the community is envisioning will be happening at a time when this gentrification is in full swing. It's going to complement [it]...We're hoping that the model that we're using—the community-envisioned waterfront plan...and... community land trust—gives the community in perpetuity to have a say over what happens in those spaces. That is a very different model from adjacent parks that are being built by luxury developments...the community input will continue to be a part of the process even after these spaces are built. We are re-engaging the community to see if the priorities that they had 10 years ago are still relevant through charrettes, engagement sessions, surveys, and also an arts-based activity on the waterfront to raise awareness about the waterfront and serve as another opportunity to collect input..."***
>
> **– Arif Ullah, Executive Director, South Bronx Unite**

In addition, there is still work to be done to evaluate the project over time to understand if the project is accomplishing what it was set out to accomplish. Part of this is continuing to support additional community needs identified throughout your engagement processes. Remember, we are doing this work to keep people in place, and that work does not stop.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

To measure how effective your equitable development strategies and plan have been at reaching their goals, it's necessary to continually evaluate and report on your progress. Your evaluation metrics should be associated with your goals and occur in intervals that make the most sense for your project. If you conducted the pre-community engagement process, the information and data collected in this step can be used as your baseline to measure any changes in the community such as:

- Community demographic changes/shifts
- Growth or reduction of small businesses
- Community well-being

> ***I look at this from a fairly simple lens and that is how many people lived there prior to development three or more years and how many live there during and post development."*** **–Dr. Irvin Cohen, LISC Jacksonville, Florida**

With each evaluation, share your findings with your partners and community members. If certain strategies are not meeting their goals, discuss reasons why, and identify ways to address the challenges moving forward.

RESOURCES For evaluation, there is a great opportunity to engage with others in the community who specialize in evaluation. For example, the Urban Institute published a **4-year progress report** on Washington, DC's 11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan that includes metrics used and lessons learned. Building Better Regions—an Economic Development Administration supported community of practice—also summarizes **Equitable Evaluation Practices for Place-Based Development**.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

It cannot be understated how important the work of equitable development and anti-displacement is, especially as the impacts of a changing climate only worsen. We also know that it's not simple and can be exhausting, especially for community members that have been engaged around similar and unrelenting issues for many years. As organizations that intend to create healthier, safer environments, it's important to center equity in all processes by putting in the effort to understand the history of place as well as the priorities of the place as it is now. Engaging with community members from beginning to end and beyond is also important to build trust and maintain relationships. By building multi-sector teams and putting together a toolbox of strategies for equitable development planning, everyone involved is held accountable to development goals and empowered to be stewards of the environment.

We leave you with words of wisdom from Gloria McNair, Groundwork Jacksonville, in reference to community-centered work.

> ***It isn't as daunting as it may seem, let the community lead the way."***

Highlighting some of the main steps outlined in this toolkit, please see the summary diagram and list that puts all of the components into perspective on **the next page**.

PROCESSES AND PRACTICES FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

LOOKING INWARD

Start (or continue) equity, diversity and inclusion training; create internal processes for equity.

Learn about history of place, economic and social needs, and identify community partners (pre-community engagement).

Identify projects and funding sources, applying equity lens in all of your planning frameworks and funding processes.

PROJECTS INCLUDE

- Green infrastructure (including urban forestry)
- Park and trail access
- Nature based solutions
- Other resilience efforts to migrate flooding, drought, heat, and provide access to green, healthy spaces

LOOKING OUTWARD

Engage with community early and often. Identify co-benefits with community. Incorporate public feedback into the development plans.

Build the team. Identify a backbone organization.

Create a toolbox of Equitable Development Strategies, finding ways to integrate co-benefits by creating partnerships and exploring other funding opportunities

Go back to the community with new plans and implementation strategies; provide information and resources about other organizations and agencies partnering in the work.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES (from Gloria McNair, Groundwork Jacksonville)

- Engage community early and often
- Apply equity lens
- Build trust
- Be transparent
- Validate residents as subject matter experts
- Find and share available resources
- Look at the big picture

LONG TERM: CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Stay in contact with community members throughout; continue to create partnerships, advocate for policies and practices

Follow-up once implementation is completed, stay in contact, build capacity (when appropriate)

EXAMPLE: KEY TEAM PLAYERS

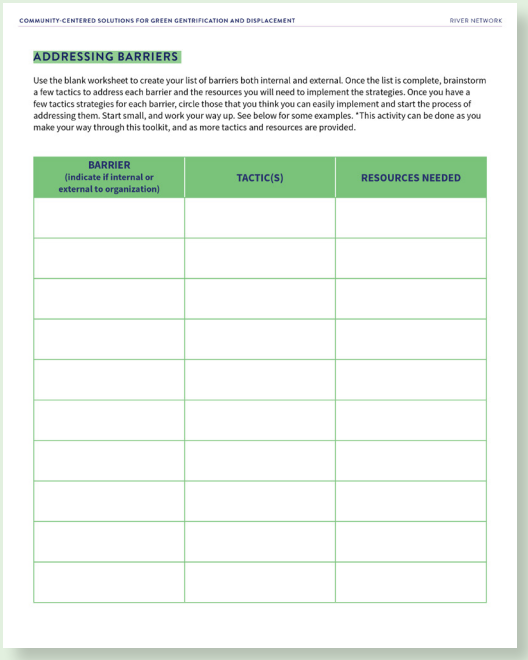
- Community members (including the unhoused)
- Resource providers (housing/ workforce nonprofits, funders)
- City officials (Mayors office, parks and rec, commissioners)
- Developers of the project (and their consultants and lawyers)
- Advocates (Conservation orgs, neighborhood associations)
- Federal / state agencies

SAMPLE TOOLBOX OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- Affordable Housing Practices and Policies: Community Land Trusts, Rent control ordinances, permanently affordable housing
- Workforce Development training programs, local government policies, sustained funding for design, implementation, and management
- Cultural Preservation and Placemaking through community art, stories, and engagement
- Economic Development, investments in small business, preservation of long-time businesses

APPENDIX A: TEMPLATES AND RUBRICS

This appendix provides blank copies of rubrics and example templates that have been referenced throughout the toolkit. The read-only files to download and print can also be found on our toolkit shared folder: **Appendix A: Templates and Rubrics**. Other materials will be added to the shared folder as we develop training materials.

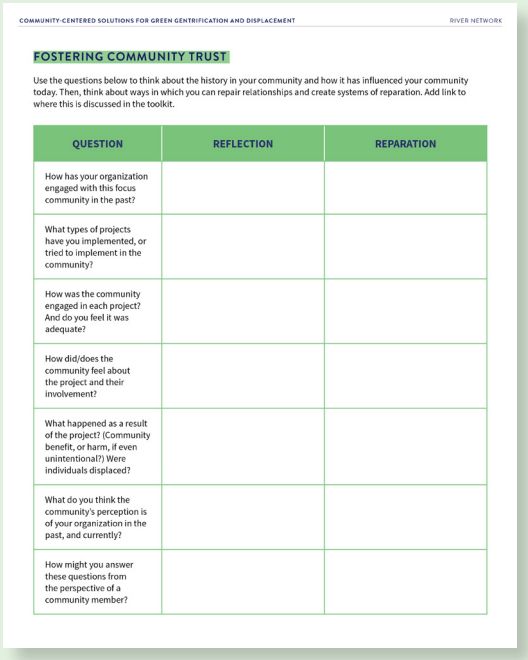


COMMUNITY-CENTERED SOLUTIONS FOR GREEN GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT RIVER NETWORK

ADDRESSING BARRIERS

Use the blank worksheet to create your list of barriers both internal and external. Once the list is complete, brainstorm a few tactics to address each barrier and the resources you will need to implement the strategies. Once you have a few tactics strategies for each barrier, circle those that you think you can easily implement and start the process of addressing them. Start small, and work your way up. See below for some examples. *This activity can be done as you make your way through this toolkit, and as more tactics and resources are provided.

BARRIER (indicate if internal or external to organization)	TACTIC(S)	RESOURCES NEEDED

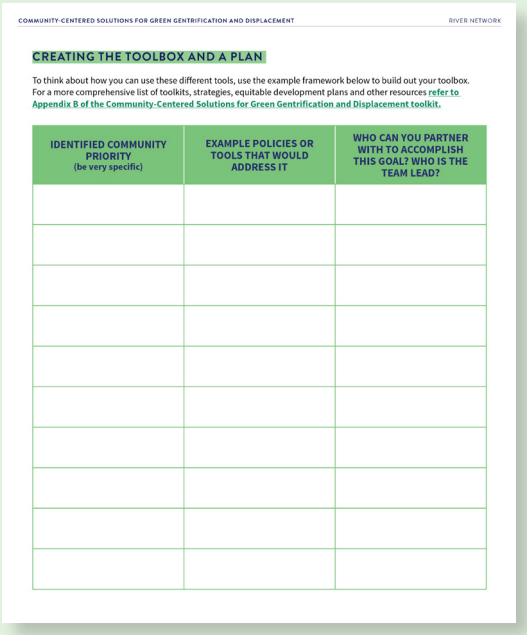


COMMUNITY-CENTERED SOLUTIONS FOR GREEN GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT RIVER NETWORK

FOSTERING COMMUNITY TRUST

Use the questions below to think about the history in your community and how it has influenced your community today. Then, think about ways in which you can repair relationships and create systems of reparation. Add link to where this is discussed in the toolkit.

QUESTION	REFLECTION	REPARATION
How has your organization engaged with this focus community in the past?		
What types of projects have you implemented, or tried to implement in the community?		
How was the community engaged in each project? And do you feel it was adequate?		
How did/does the community feel about the project and their involvement?		
What happened as a result of the project? (Community benefit, or harm, if even unintentional?) Were individuals displaced?		
What do you think the community's perception is of your organization in the past, and currently?		
How might you answer these questions from the perspective of a community member?		



COMMUNITY-CENTERED SOLUTIONS FOR GREEN GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT RIVER NETWORK

CREATING THE TOOLBOX AND A PLAN

To think about how you can use these different tools, use the example framework below to build out your toolbox. For a more comprehensive list of toolkits, strategies, equitable development plans and other resources refer to Appendix B of the Community-Centered Solutions for Green Gentrification and Displacement toolkit.

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY PRIORITY (be very specific)	EXAMPLE POLICIES OR TOOLS THAT WOULD ADDRESS IT	WHO CAN YOU PARTNER WITH TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL? WHO IS THE TEAM LEAD?

ADDRESSING BARRIERS

Use the blank worksheet to create your list of barriers both internal and external. Once the list is complete, brainstorm a few tactics to address each barrier and the resources you will need to implement the strategies. Once you have a few tactics strategies for each barrier, circle those that you think you can easily implement and start the process of addressing them. Start small, and work your way up. See below for some examples. *This activity can be done as you make your way through this toolkit, and as more tactics and resources are provided. **Read more in the toolkit.**

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APPENDIX B: OTHER TOOLKITS AND PLANS, LOCAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

This appendix provides examples of toolkits, local policies for anti-displacement and equitable development, equitable development plans or planning frameworks, as well as other resources for funding and learning more.

OTHER TOOLKITS

Other organizations and entities have done great work on putting together toolkits for equitable development. Here are some examples with highlights of what we find useful about them.

Audubon Center at Debs Park and partners **Greening in Place**

Introduces six equitable green development strategies for public agencies, advocates and developers: Tenant Protections, Land Use & Housing,Aligning Funding with Equitable Outcomes, Enhancing Economic Opportunities, Community Engagement & Ownership, Design & Operations

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CREATE Initiative Sharing in the benefits of a greening city

What we like about this one! **Section III From Toolkit to Action** provides checklists and example best practices for taking action based on the kind of organization you are working with, including policymakers; regulators and public agencies; planners and project managers; nonprofits; community organizers; and community development and philanthropy.

TAKING ACTION IN CONTEXT

Before taking action it is important to situate yourself in context. This process of situating should happen repeatedly throughout the interventions you make; afterall, both your position and your context will inevitably change over time. Situating is both a question of justice and a question of strategy. It is a question of justice because procedural justice requires that our processes and interventions center those at the margins. It is a question of strategy because effective interventions bring together organizations with different and complementary resources.

SITUATING YOURSELF *Check all that apply*

Toolkit User	Expertise and Resources:
☐ Policymaker	☐ Proximity to political power
☐ Regulator, public agency employee	☐ Technical expertise
☐ Planner, project manager	☐ Institutional knowledge
☐ Non-profit	☐ Non-financial material resources
☐ Community organizer	☐ Coalition-building and facilitation
☐ Community development, philanthropy	☐ Financial resources
☐ Community resident, local leader	☐ Local knowledge, community leadership

UNDERSTAND YOUR STRENGTHS

What capacity, knowledge, and expertise do you have to offer? What are you good at?

UNDERSTAND YOUR LIMITATIONS

What resources, connections, or coalition-building do you need to be successful? Who else is well-positioned to address these needs?

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Quote from the authors about harm reduction, not harm eradication:

> ***[addressing green gentrification] merely expands the realm of considerations that these investments must take into account so that they can do the justice work we say we want them to do"***

Georgetown Climate Center [Equitable Adaptation Legal & Policy Toolkit]
Intended for Local Governments and Community-Based Organizations to aid in implementing equitable climate adaptation and resilience policy that aim to address "pervasive stressors" including displacement and gentrification. The toolkit includes a section on Resilient Affordable Housing, Anti-Displacement & Gentrification.

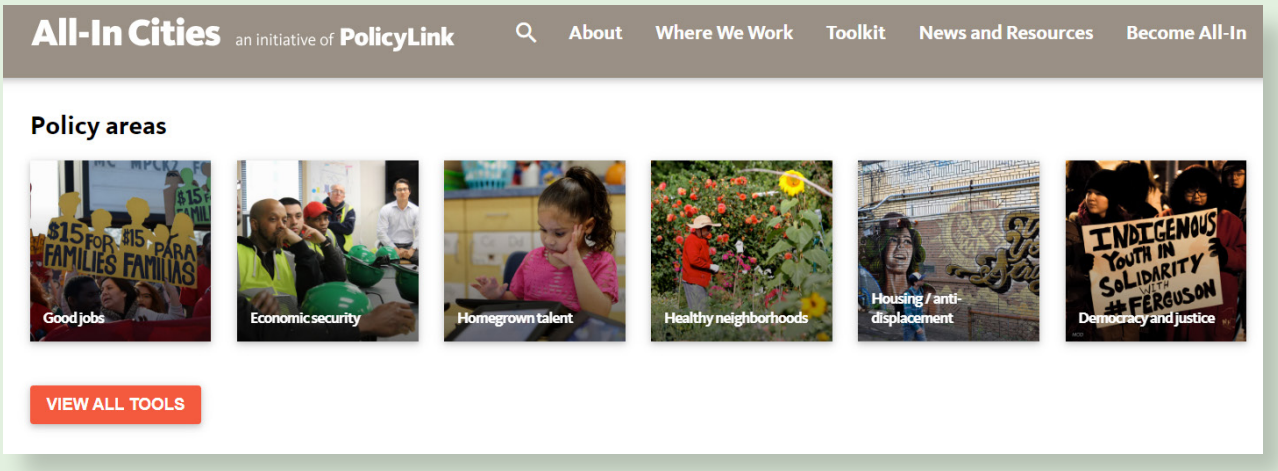
National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland (UMD)
[Small Business Anti-Displacement Toolkit]

This toolkit serves as a guide for small business leaders, focusing on commercial gentrification, with strategies including Commercial Preservation and Property Improvement, Local Hiring and Entrepreneurial Support, Tax Credits and Incentives, Zoning and Form-Based Codes, Commercial Tenant Protections, and Commercial Property and Community Ownership.

Resource Note: One of the authors of this toolkit, the **Small Business Anti-Displacement Network** encompasses policymakers, nonprofits, and technical assistance providers, scholars, government agencies, and small business owners to promote anti-displacement policies and practices in communities both in the US and internationally.

PolicyLink [All-In Cities Policy Toolkit]

Find in this toolkit specific policies—like community land trusts, inclusionary zoning, and housing trust funds—as well as examples of where they have been implemented. Toolkit and policy example below:



STRATEGIES, POLICIES, PRACTICES

Often, these strategies, policies, and practices are advocated for alongside greening or climate resilience projects.

Housing

- Article with examples: **Preventing housing displacement: What works and where more research is needed**
- Article with examples: **How It's Working: Laws That Help Tenants and Nonprofits Buy Buildings**
- City of Newark policies: **rent control**, **inclusionary zoning**, and **right to counsel for evictions**
- Rent Stabilization Policy in Los Angeles: **Ordinance adopted Nov 2019**
- Portland Policy for Affordable Housing advocated for along with Cully Park: **Portland Approves Protection For Mobile Home Parks**
- Housing Ordinance City of Atlanta, adopted in 2016 in response to displacement driven by the Beltline: **Ordinance No. 2015-57 (14-O-1614) | For Affordable Housing**
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Jacksonville **Heirs' Property** information and **Heirs' Property Toolkit**
- North Riverside CDC and Groundwork Jacksonville **Home Repair Program**
- Community Land Trusts with a tie to environmental, conservation work
  - → **Chinatown Community Land Trust** 華埠土地信托會
  - → **Athens Land Trust**
  - → Caño Martín Peña **Fideicomiso de la Tierra**
- **EPA's Data, Policy and Tools Related to Smart Growth and Equitable Development**

Workforce Development

- Report: **Jobs and Equity in the Urban Forest**
- Organization: **Green City Force**
- Organization: Groundwork New Orleans **Ground CREW**
  - → **What we like about this program:** Ground CREW members receive certification from the **Center for Watershed Protection Clean Water Certification Program** and the **National Green Infrastructure Certification Program**. They are on staff and involved in project implementation from beginning to end. See the **Urban Waters Learning Network story map** for more information.
- Section from Georgetown Climate Center's Equitable Adaptation Legal & Policy Toolkit: **Workforce Development and Training Programs**

Community Preservation / Placemaking

- National Endowment for the Arts Guide: **How to Do Creative Placemaking**
- National Endowment for the Arts and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) **Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance**

Community Benefits Agreements

- **Delaware Community Benefits Agreement Coalition**
- Broadway Corridor, City of Portland, Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)
  - → **CBA Term Sheet** and **DDA Term Sheet** as approved by City Council (9/23/2020)
  - → **CBA Summary**
  - → **Comparison of Benefits** with and without a CBA

Other related policies

- The country's first **environmental justice and cumulative impacts legislation** for the State of New Jersey
- New York **Environmental Justice Legislation Reducing the Cumulative Impacts of Pollution on Disadvantaged Communities**
- Resolution: **ADM-18.30 - Citywide Racial Equity Goals and Strategies | Portland.gov**

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT / ANTI-DISPLACEMENT PLANS

Putting together the ideas from planning frameworks and through community engagement to see what priorities and policies are important, some organizations have created equitable development plans that guide their work.

- **11th Street Bridge Park - Equitable Development Plan**
- LA THRIVES and Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH) Coalition **Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development**
- National Association of Climate Resilience Planners: **Community-Driven Climate Resilience Planning: A Framework**
  - → **What we like about this framework:** There are seven clearly defined components for community driven-planning, and each section highlights ways to achieve the component "in-practice"
- Portland **Anti-Displacement Action Plan**
  - → **What we like about this one:** This plan includes a thorough history of place and also includes diagrams outlining traditional cycles of displacement and ways to make development more equitable.
- Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development **Equitable Development Implementation Plan**

FUNDING RESOURCES

- **River Network's tapping into federal funding**
- **EPA Technical Assistance** related to Smart Growth and Equitable Development. There are four different programs and support services.
- **EPA's Environmental Justice Grants, Funding and Technical Assistance Programs**
- **EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)**: Supports infrastructure projects emphasizing water quality improvement. Local governments can apply for low-interest loans and grants to fund projects like green stormwater management systems.
- **HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**: Addresses community development needs, including infrastructure projects. Cities can apply for grants to fund various initiatives, including green infrastructure projects and enhancing community sustainability.

- **Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA)**: Targets transportation projects incorporating green elements. State and local governments and private entities can apply for low-interest loans to fund sustainable transportation infrastructure projects.
- **USDA Rural Development Water and Environmental Program**: Supports water and waste management projects in rural areas. Rural communities can access loans, grants, and guarantees to implement green infrastructure solutions for sustainable water management.

OTHER RESOURCES

Find more information and connections at the resources highlighted below.

- Urban Waters Learning Network **Equitable Development and Anti-Displacement Collaborative**
- The Alliance **Equitable Development Scorecard and Principles**
- UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability and the University of Utah **Greening without Gentrification** report
- **Redlining (HOLC) maps and associated notes** for communities across the U.S.
- Partnership for Working Families and the Community Benefits Law Center **Common Challenges in Negotiating Community Benefits Agreements—and—How to Avoid Them**
- Trust for Public Land **Great parks should not uproot communites: Green Gentrification Risk Factors and Anti-Displacement Options**
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) **Program Areas**
  - → **Get connected:** LISC has 38 offices across the United States. Reach out to your local office today!
  - → **Here is a map, including contact information, of local offices**.