

# Information Item

Committee of the Wholes



Meeting date: October 18, 2023

## Topic

Equity and Environmental Justice Definitions in the Regional Development Guide

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| <b>District(s), member(s):</b>   | All   |
| <b>Policy/legal reference:</b>   | Metropolitan Land Planning Act (§473.145)   |
| <b>Staff prepared/presented:</b> | Maia Guerrero-Combs, Senior Planner, Housing and Livable Communities (651-602-1060)<br>Sarah Gong, Researcher, Research (651-602-8437)<br>Angela Torres, Senior Manager, Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1566) |
| <b>Division/department:</b>      | Community Development   |

## Background

At the September 20, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council members endorsed the Regional Equity Framework for *Imagine 2050*, the next regional development guide. At that meeting, definitions for equity and environmental justice were identified needs for the context of the equity work in *Imagine 2050*. At the Committee of the Whole meeting on October 18, 2023, staff will present drafts for discussion. The draft Equity and Environmental Justice definitions build upon the endorsed Equity Framework. Each definition will shape the context of policies and actions developed as part of the regional planning work and guide the Council's approach to equity and environmental justice implementation. The draft definitions are included below along with discussion questions to guide feedback on the definitions. Council staff will facilitate a structured engagement to receive feedback from Council members.

## Draft Equity Definition

*Equity at the Metropolitan Council means that historically excluded communities - especially Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color - have measurably improved outcomes through an intentional and consistent practice of adapting policies, systems, services and spending so that they contribute to the repair of both historic and ongoing injustice.*

## Conditions for Success for Equity Definition

To provide the necessary context for this process, conditions of success are included to ensure that the final drafted language reflects the Council's values, the Equity Framework, and well-established principles of equity work.

- Lead with race: Improve outcomes toward eliminating racial disparities
- Action-oriented: Intentional, ongoing, and consistent practice of adapting policies, systems, and structures
- Historic context: Repair both historic and ongoing injustice
- Power-sharing: Historically excluded communities share power in all levels of decision-making
- Accountability: Measurably improve outcomes as defined by those most affected by them through engagement

## **Draft Environmental Justice Definition**

*The Metropolitan Council Environmental Justice (EJ) framework defines 'Environmental Justice' as the right for all residents to live in a clean, safe environment that contributes to a healthy quality of life.*

## **Supporting Context for Environmental Justice Definition**

- Centers communities who experience a legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers that have resulted in environmental injustices, harms, and risks.
- Requires change in the way we work by conducting community-centered engagement, repairing past and ongoing harms, distributing benefits equitably, and preventing future burdens.
- Requires necessary adaptations to Council services, requirements, policies, practices, processes, and decisions.

## **Discussion Questions**

At the meeting, Council members will be asked to consider the following questions for discussion in small groups.

1. What about these definitions resonates with you?
2. How do you want to use these definitions? How do they help achieve regional goals?

