

## **Racial Equity Pocket Questions – Request to Set a Public Hearing on Land Use Ordinance Text Amendments**

In accordance with North Carolina General Statutes, consideration of text amendments (G.S. 160D-601(a)) require legislative public hearings. Public hearings provide a forum for public input for community members to comments on a matter. The Town Council has broad discretion in its decision making and can engage with community members on amendments. Prior to the Town Council holding a legislative hearing, there must be proper public notice; this includes publishing notice in a newspaper, for two successive weeks before the date of the hearing.

**What are the racial impacts?** Lack of representation on elected and appointed boards (advisory boards also provide comments for public hearings) can reduce participation, especially by those who don't learn about these types of processes and/or are unable to participate in meetings. Decisions might be made without considering these points of view.

**Who is or will experience burden?** Shift workers and people who have limited time, transportation choices and/or children may have difficulty finding the time to learn about a proposal, attending meetings, understanding how and when to provide input, and to whom. It can take time to learn the development process and to obtain a comfort level to participate. Language may also provide a barrier for some residents.

**Who is or will experience benefit?** The public hearing process requires that these types of legislative decisions occur in a public form and that the community can comment before a decision is made. Beneficiaries include those who are able/available to and do participate in these ways and those who support or see no negative effects from the changes.

**What are the root causes of inequity?** Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use, as well as residents' personal experiences with government, can further alienate those that may find it difficult to attend meetings—like working individuals and families—and contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting. Disparate access to quality education, which in turn affects economic outcomes, as well as historical barriers to government for community members of color can lead to undue burden.

**What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?** Changes to land use regulations can benefit or harm land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding residents and property owners. The public hearing process is intended to provide a way for community members to learn about a proposal and provide input in a public setting. Even with published notice and social media releases, some people may not learn of a proposed amendment to the Land Use Ordinance in time to provide input and/or feel that they understand the project and/or approval process enough to fully participate. The Planning Department is in the process of evaluating the amendment process through the REAL and identifying ways to ensure that engagement is consistent with the Inclusive Carrboro plan.