

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Council Approval of Consolidation of the Affordable Housing and Human Services Advisory Commissions

Department: Housing and Community Services

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Centuries of systemic racism have created significant challenges for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in achieving the socioeconomic prosperity enjoyed by their white counterparts. Historical injustices—such as American Slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining, and the over-policing of Black neighborhoods—have severely hindered their progress and often reversed it. The cumulative effects of various forms of discrimination, coupled with a lack of reparations, have resulted in fewer educational and job opportunities for BIPOC Americans. Consequently, they frequently experience lower incomes, a diminished ability to build generational wealth through home and land ownership, and worse health outcomes.

This leads to a vicious cycle for BIPOC households, where both adults and children are more likely to encounter poverty and housing insecurity, alongside everyday racism and microaggressions. These challenges adversely affect children's academic performance and social development, often resulting in lower-paying jobs as adults and reduced financial and social mobility, further perpetuating the cycle. The interplay between education, income, and housing has direct and far-reaching effects on overall health and livelihood.

Exclusionary school policies and practices, such as expulsions, suspensions, and administrative prejudices disproportionately impact Black children and can deeply affect their success in academics. In Orange County in 2022, white students had a postsecondary enrollment rate of nearly 75% (NC average = about 64%) , while Black students' enrollment rates sat around 45% (NC average = around 54%).¹ Compared to the rest of the state, white students in this school system perform substantially better, while outcomes for Black students are worse than the rest of the state, clearly indicating a disparity in the education Black students are receiving, even in elite school systems.

Due to the far-reaching impacts of systemic racism in institutions like education, and both historical and current policy, Black, Latino, and Native American workers are more likely to be in lower-paying fields like service and production. This is contrasted with white workers, who have greater accessibility to, and more regularly hold, management and leadership roles.² In 2024,

¹[Carrboro town, North Carolina - Census Bureau Profile](#)

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a; Allard & Brundage, Jr., 2019

Black workers made \$0.76 for every dollar made by white workers. For Latino workers it was \$0.73, and for Native American workers, \$0.77.³ In 2022, white households owned 85% of total household wealth in the US but made up only 66% of households.⁴

Less income and opportunities for gainful employment for BIPOC result in less capital to pay for housing costs and lower rates of rental success and homeownership. Conversely, this leads to higher rates of housing insecurity and homelessness among BIPOC. Racial economic disparities across the US and in our area specifically clearly indicate that the burden of high housing costs falls disproportionately on communities of color. Black residents make up over 50% of those experiencing homelessness in Orange County, while only comprising 12% of the population. Comparatively, white residents represent 77% of Orange County's population and only 40% of those experiencing homelessness.⁵

Socioeconomic and housing status often have a significant impact on physical and mental health. Research has found that people with higher professional status, who are more often white, enjoy more financial freedom, work autonomy, engage in less manual labor, and have fewer occasions of being exposed to health risks. Similarly, higher incomes are usually associated with better nutritional status, housing conditions, and medical services. People with higher levels of education also tend to have better health awareness and health-related knowledge. Aside from access to quality healthcare, medical racism also plays a large role in reduced health outcomes for BIPOC. This is especially true for Black women, who have a birth mortality rate 2.6x higher than white women.⁶ Research has shown that a low socioeconomic status is also associated with psychological distress, such as depression and anxiety.⁷ Specifically, the experience of homelessness/chronic homelessness have been proven to have deeply negative effects on one's physical and mental health, reducing average life expectancy by a staggering 26 years.⁸

When looking at the reality that BIPOC community members face, there is a clear need for supportive human services that address the root causes of racial disparities in education, health, and housing outcomes, and assist in navigating obstacles and advocating for necessary policy and social change to reduce the socioeconomic disparities experienced by BIPOC.

The purposes of the Affordable Housing and Human Services Advisory Commissions are to provide affordable housing policy recommendations and technical review on policies and procedures relating to affordable housing; and to recommend funding for local human services

³ [Earnings Disparities by Race and Ethnicity | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)

⁴ [U.S. Wealth Gaps Remain Despite Widespread Gains | St. Louis Fed \(stlouisfed.org\)](#)

⁵ [Homelessness in Orange County | ocpeh \(ocpehnc.com\)](#)

⁶ [Why are Black maternal mortality rates so high? - Mayo Clinic Press](#)

⁷ [Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Physical and Psychological Health: Lifestyle as a Mediator - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁸ [Premature Mortality in Homeless Populations - O'Connell, MD 2005 \(sbdww.org\)](#)

organizations, respectively. Merging the Affordable Housing and Human Services Advisory Commissions will enhance racial equity by creating a unified approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of these issues. A consolidated commission can facilitate more inclusive decision-making, promoting better outcomes across education, health, and housing for BIPOC in Carrboro.

Who is or will experience community burden?

IF APPROVED – Members with special interest in Human Services and Affordable Housing will serve on the same commission and attend the same meetings. Inevitably, members will be present for some parts of meetings that do not directly pertain to their subject matter interest or expertise.

Housing and Community Services (HCS) staff will face some burden in successfully coordinating the consolidation and ensuring members’ time and expertise are prioritized.

IF NOT APPROVED – Council and staff liaisons who will continue going to meetings for, and managing, two separate commissions.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

IF APPROVED – Affordable housing and human services partner organizations will benefit from a more robust review process that connects housing to all other essential parts of one’s livelihood.

Council and staff liaisons will have the ability to streamline commission processes and recommendations.

Commission members will learn more about the interconnectedness of affordable housing and human services efforts.

IF NOT APPROVED – The HCS department could continue with their current commission structure, reducing time spent creating a new charge and successfully coordinating the consolidation of the two commissions.

What are the root causes of inequity?

American political, social, and financial systems have worked to actively marginalize many different groups. This has often come in the form of denying rights or access to systems and institutions that greatly benefit one’s livelihood, education, and health. For hundreds of years, intentional actions have been taken to deny humanity, wealth, and equitable education and employment to BIPOC, women, and disabled people, creating cycles of poverty and social marginalization. This has resulted in large disparities in educational opportunity, wealth and asset accumulation, housing status, and social mobility. Disparities have been created and

widened through government sponsored intentional racism and marginalization in the form of enslavement, forced displacement and loss of homeland of indigenous peoples, Jim Crow era policy, redlining, restrictive zoning ordinances, predatory and barrier-ridden lending practices, the American Credit System, over-policing of communities of color, the lack of protections for disabled people, the lack of rent control in NC, and white power structures' lack of willingness to address, and explicit desire to maintain, racial disparities.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Commission members could become uninterested if their special interest is not the primary focus of the commission.

Commission members may experience some confusion in the blending of the subject matters, decreasing their ability to effectively contribute to technical review and policy recommendations.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

The department continues to engage with jurisdictional peers and community partners to advance affordable housing, education, and health in the community and to address racial inequities in housing and human services under the guidance of the One Orange Countywide Racial Equity Framework and the Town's Office of Race and Equity. Since this department was formed our work has been increasingly focused on racial disparities in housing, preservation of Black neighborhoods, and increasing housing options for extremely low-income households, who are disproportionately BIPOC. Additionally, we have prioritized providing human services funding to nonprofit agencies that deliver programming and resources that equitably promote education, health, and livelihood. This lens is vitally important in all aspects of the Town's work, and especially in housing where there are blatant disparities along racial lines. Additionally, we will monitor the committee and its structure closely, ensuring that members' time and energy are respected.