

Race Equity Pocket Questions

Title: Application for FY25 CDBG-NR Competition

Purpose: *To approve an application submission to the FY25 CDBG-NR grant competition for funding critical repairs for low-to-moderate income homeowners and for park improvements at Town Commons and Simpson St. Park.*

Department: Housing and Community Services (HCS) and Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Programming (RPCP)

1. **What are the root causes of inequity in Carrboro and/or overall as it pertains to this subject area?**
 - a. Critical Repair - A mix of **government sponsored and de-facto racism, sexism, and classism**, as well as the **expansion of UNC-Chapel Hill** and **gentrification** throughout Orange County ([Carrboro Connects Plan \(Pg. 21\)](#)), have led to rates of housing burden much higher for those already living at the margins: **BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low-income, and disabled people.** ([NCHFA - Housing Cost Burden](#))
 - i. By the **1930's housing racial segregation was visible in Chapel Hill and Carrboro**, with most Black residents from Chapel Hill being pushed to neighborhoods that straddled the edge of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and **Black Carrboro residents being pushed** further to the perimeter of the town, concentrated **around current day E. Main St. and Jones Ferry Rd.** ([Carrboro Connects Plan \(Pg. 21\)](#))
 - ii. In 2025, over **18% of Orange County homeowners were cost burdened. That number rises to 38% for Black households in North Carolina, and between 54% and 87% for low- to- moderate income households.** ([NCHFA - Housing Cost Burden](#)) The disproportionate burden of high housing costs is, unfortunately, unsurprising when we look at income data. The **median owner income in Orange County is over \$119,000** ([NCHFA - NC Median Incomes](#)), and the median income for a **Black household in North Carolina is around \$43,000**, indicating a clear racial discrepancy in ownership rates as well as affordability. ([NC Commerce - Racial Wealth Gap](#))
 1. This encourages a cycle where low- to- moderate income and/or BIPOC households may deprioritize repairs and maintenance, leaving room for dangerous health hazards, decreased energy efficiency, and, in some cases, even condemnation of the unit; a truth that has been reinforced time and time again by the needs expressed in our affordable housing funding applications.
 - b. Park Improvement - **BIPOC households are also less likely to live in areas proximate to high quality parks and playgrounds, leading to a lower standard of living and potential adverse health outcomes.**
 - i. BIPOC Americans access parks, playgrounds, outdoor recreational spaces, and public natural areas at a much lower rate than their white counterparts. While **white Americans make up around 60% of the general population, a 2020 survey showed they made up over three-fourths of those visiting national parks** and participating in recreational activities. ([Meet the BIPOC groups working to make the outdoors accessible | Cascade PBS](#))

- ii. This result stems from a mix of **government-sponsored housing segregation, as well as other racially restrictive policies, that manifest in a lack of accessibility to outdoor spaces and public lands**, like national parks and forest. It has only been a little over 60 years (following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act) that BIPOC Americans have even been able to legally enter these spaces. ([Breaking Down the Lack of Diversity in Outdoor Spaces – National Health Foundation](#))
 - 1. **Employment outcomes and lower wages** for BIPOC residents also contribute to a lack of access and utilization of these spaces, **as travel to, as well as recreational activities themselves, can sometimes be costly**. Additionally, **financial stress can reduce the time and energy** that one has for engaging in outdoor recreational activities. ([Meet the BIPOC groups working to make the outdoors accessible | Cascade PBS](#))
 - iii. The **white-washing of history and land ownership has also contributed to the lack of access to these amenities for BIPOC communities**. Government officials and academics alike have deliberately **erased the history of Indigenous land ownership and stewardship**, creating a narrative that outdoor recreation was created by and for white people. ([Breaking Down the Lack of Diversity in Outdoor Spaces – National Health Foundation](#))
 - 1. For example, in 2012 a park in Houston faced backlash after prohibiting the use of pinatas in the park. Residents pointed out how this was a cultural attack and made people of color, specifically Latino residents, less likely to utilize the park space. ([Meet the BIPOC groups working to make the outdoors accessible | Cascade PBS](#))
 - iv. Lastly, research has been conducted to confirm the **positive outcomes of being in nature, including better physical health, mental well-being, and social cohesion**. However, access to those benefits is not equitably distributed and can lead to worse health outcomes for BIPOC. ([A Right to Nature: Addressing Disparities in Green Space Access](#))
2. **Who is experiencing community burden now? Who will experience community burden if this action is passed? Will others experience community burden if this action is NOT passed?**
- a. Current Burden:
 - i. Critical Repair - Low- to- moderate income Carrboro homeowners who are unable to make necessary repairs to their homes to age in place.
 - ii. Park Improvements - Carrboro residents in the QCT whose main park(s) access currently does not meet safety requirements or ADA guidance.
 - b. Burden IF PASSED:
 - i. Critical Repair - Residents receiving repairs who may be inconvenienced by construction occurring in or around their home.
 - ii. Park Improvement – Residents who rely on Town Commons or Simpson Parks as their main outdoor recreational spaces will be unable to access them as improvements take place. Presumably, many LMI residents are served through these parks as they are either in, or straddle, the QCT.

c. Burden IF **NOT** PASSED:

- i. Critical Repair – LMI Carrboro homeowners may not be able to access repair funds, forcing their homes into possible disrepair.
- ii. Park Improvement – Some residents with physical disabilities may not be able to fully access the park, and children and families could become injured if the playgrounds are not brought up to safety code.

3. **Who is experiencing community benefit now? Who will experience community benefit if this action is passed? Will others experience community benefit if this action is NOT passed?**

a. Benefit:

- i. Critical Repair – LMI residents in need of critical repairs may benefit in the very short-term, by not taking on the additional stress of coordinating repair efforts.
- ii. Park Improvements – Fully able-bodied residents who are currently able to access the park at Town Commons and Simpson St. Presumably, many LMI residents are served through these parks as they are either in, or straddle, the QCT.

b. Benefit IF PASSED:

- i. Critical Repair – LMI Carrboro homeowners who will receive financial assistance to complete necessary repairs to allow them to age in place
 - 1. The surrounding neighborhood will benefit from the beautification of the neighborhood, if repairs also contribute to aesthetic improvements.
 - 2. The Town of Carrboro and Orange County at large, who benefit from the preservation of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing in the communities.
- ii. Park Improvement – Carrboro residents, many of whom are presumably LMI considering the location of the parks, who will benefit from safety improvements to the park.
 - 1. Physically disabled Carrboro residents, who will benefit from increased access to the park through ADA improvements.

c. Benefit IF **NOT** PASSED: There is little benefit to be gained from not pursuing the grant to fund these projects. This is because the projects both create net positives, since negatives are either short-term or mitigated through careful implementation by staff and contractors. Any benefit that may come to the surrounding communities through not passing a resolution to apply for the grant funding would be centered around the lack of environmental pollutants that would be created through the foregoing of the critical repairs and/or park improvements. These are more so unintended consequences of not pursuing the grant funding, rather than community benefits.4. **What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?**

- a. Possible **noise pollution**, as well as **pollution caused by construction** and **the creation of solid waste**.
- b. Critical repairs could contribute to **a rise in property value of the particular home**, as well as the surrounding area. This is positive if the owners hope to sell the home at some point and can receive greater equity from its purchase. However, this could produce a negative effect, leading to an eventual property tax increase.

5. **What steps has your department taken to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences? What strategies might your department take to address these in the future?**

NOTE: This does not reflect a formal commitment by the Town of Carrboro.

- a. Critical Repair:
 - i. Ensuring the community voices are heard through a formal public hearing process.
 - ii. Clear guidelines around eligibility and selection of households for repairs.
- b. Park Improvement:
 - i. Working closely with Rec and Parks to ensure that the park improvements are **carried out quickly and with little effect on the surrounding community**.
- c. IF NOT PASSED:
 - i. Critical Repair - Working with households, as well as nonprofit partners, to **identify additional funding sources** to complete critical repairs.
 - ii. Park Improvement – Rec and Parks will be responsible for creating a strategy to address improvement needs at the Town Commons and Simpson St. Parks.
- d. Future, Critical Repair - Engaging with jurisdictional peers and community partners to advance equitable affordable housing development **and preservation** in the community.
 - i. Pursuing additional funding opportunities for various preservation efforts.
- e. Future, Park Improvement: Rec and Parks will be responsible for future strategies to address burden and inequities for the parks and playgrounds.