

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Town Manager's Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this agenda item is to present to Council the 2024-2025 FY Recommended Budget. The budget includes recommend strategies and actions related to Council priorities outlined in the Council Retreat, explains budget considerations for FY 2024-2025, and provides the Town Manager's recommendation for the adopted FY 2025 budget.

What are the racial and equity impacts?

The Town of Carrboro budgeting process involves input from all departments and service delivery areas and requires specific, departmental questions surrounding race and equity. The responses are diverse, but should recognize equitable practices in hiring, operations, vendor inclusion, and resident access. The processes in place are being evaluated through the REAL to ensure equitable outcomes for all. Racial impacts could be witnessed by stakeholders that do not have access to published documents or a voice to speak out about needs in the community.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Overall, the budget process attempts to be transparent and deliberate, with public meetings, work sessions, public display of the proposed budget for a minimum of 10 days, and a Council vote. Equitable distribution and implementation of Town's revenues is crucial to minimizing community burdens, addressing systemic inequalities and closing gaps of disparity. Efforts to engage with and support marginalized communities directly can help ensure that the Town's revenues are distributed equitably. It is not anticipated anyone in the community will feel any community burden as a result of the budget process. Although we try to reach all town residents, some may not have the opportunity to participate and express community needs. One of the goals is to reach people where they are.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

The Town as a whole – residents, Council, and staff benefit by a vetted budget process that is well assembled and presented. The approach the Town takes in development of the budget ensures multiple touch-points and familiarity by all staff leaders. A goal of the finance department is to assemble departmental budgets and present the numbers as holistic guidance for the coming fiscal year. The department plans to present the adopted budget to staff management and other interested stakeholders. The budget resides for multiple years on the Town's website and is available for residents or anyone interested. Having the budget in place promotes transparency and accountability for the staff and Council.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Root causes of inequity as it relates to the budget includes access and interpretation of the document produced, not hearing from resident voices most impacted in the community and funding to address community needs. It is therefore a goal of the finance department to provide as concise and clear documentation that is available. The town relies heavily on the processes in place to address the causes of inequity and ensure appropriate considerations are being taken into account while building departmental budgets.

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

Unintended consequences in a budgeting process include not having adequate funding to address community needs, ignoring macro-economic trends and not being adaptable or flexible for situations that occur outside the Town's sphere of influence. Not being able to adapt to weather impacts, recessionary conditions, health emergencies, or other broad disasters could have negative impacts on a current year operating budget. The Town accounts for these scenarios by establishing a financial buffer, frequently monitoring financial patterns, and using third party advisors and auditors to further help the finance department govern the Town's financial activities.

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

The finance department, town staff, Council members take the ability to recognize biases, burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences as the highest priority of the budget process.

The finance department has implemented directives to staff and Council to produce the budget for the Town of Carrboro:

- Transparency and Accountability through identification of operating and personnel needs, identification of capital projects, and clear, periodic financial reporting
- Community engagement / support through development of departmental budgets with focus on race/equity and climate
- Spend dollars equitably and deliberately in the coming Fiscal Year, while monitoring long-term sustainability
- Commit to programming to foster inclusion and opportunity for town residents

The town does its best to recognize needs of the community that are fiscally achievable; knowing that staff will not always be able to address all the community needs in a given fiscal year.