

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Watershed Restoration Residential Assistance Program

Department: Public Works

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Residential property ownership is a requirement for participating in this program. White residents are more likely to own residential lots than BIPOC residents, so there is an intrinsic impact.

From a general perspective, it is not uncommon for BIPOC and low-income residents of a town or city to be housed in areas that are more susceptible to flooding and stormwater management problems. However, this has not been proven nor disproven to be the case in Carrboro. Regardless of the potential inequity, it is the homeowners with lower household incomes who will qualify for the cost-share component of this program. Because of this, and because this program is available to homeowners throughout the Town of Carrboro (versus a specific chosen watershed or district, for example), no negative environmental impacts are anticipated for BIPOC or other marginalized communities.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Those who own property with impervious surface, whether it be residential, commercial, or other, will have an increase in their stormwater fee to support this program.

From a general perspective, it is not uncommon for BIPOC and low-income residents of a town or city to be housed in areas that are more susceptible to flooding and stormwater management problems. However, this has not been proven nor disproven to be the case in Carrboro. Because of this, and because the rate applies throughout the Town of Carrboro municipal limits (versus a specific chosen watershed or district, for example), a more specific burdened community has not been identified.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Residents will have the opportunity to apply to have a qualified professional visit their property and offer technical assistance at no charge to the homeowner. This technical assistance will recommend practices that may help homeowners with stormwater issues they may be experiencing. In addition, homeowners who qualify for cost-share per the program design may have up to 100% of implementation covered through the cost-share.

Implementation of practices on private property may create more stormwater resilience for downstream properties and the Town as a whole. Additionally, Carrboro and downstream communities will benefit from the overall goal of mitigating stormwater runoff impacts and improving water quality in local watersheds.

What are the root causes of inequity?

In the context of this program, inequity in ownership may be due to income discrepancies among different races as well as redlining, generation wealth and access to resources and information regarding home ownership and assistance program.

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

As this program is directed to people who own properties in residentially zoned areas, an unintended consequence could be the suboptimal participation from interested renters who are unable to get the owner to apply. This may be offset by the fact that renters are less likely to be, at least directly, paying an annual stormwater fee. Additionally, social, and cultural barriers may prevent homeowners from participating if these concerns are not addressed.

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

Stormwater staff have been communicating with the Town's Race and Equity and Communications staff along with external organizations over the past year who can assist in ensuring that appropriate outreach to typically underserved residents occur. Most recently, staff have reached out to Empowerment, Inc. to seek assistance in planning for eventual program implementation and engagement with historically underrepresented residents. Upon the implementation of this program, efforts to connect with BIPOC and underserved residents will be ongoing. The goal is to foster resources and activities to overcome language barriers, cultural differences, and geographical obstacles. This may include targeted education and outreach, strategically located community meetings, and enlisting the assistance of external resources with common goals.