

Racial Equity Pocket Questions - Renewal of Annexation Boundary Agreement

What are the racial impacts? The agreement seeks to provide predictability and uniformity related to where and how the Towns of Carrboro and Chapel Hill can expand their municipal boundaries, in conjunction with the principles of comprehensive and orderly growth and development. Local government authority for annexation in North Carolina has been modified in recent years, significantly limiting likely annexations to voluntary, rather than involuntary annexation, with specific provisions pertaining to voluntary annexation by property owners in high poverty or distressed areas. The known qualified census tracts and Reinvest areas in the vicinity are located within the Town limits. Renewal of the resolution establishing entranceway principles of protection seeks to protect the University Lake watershed by emphasizing the character, visual and natural conditions and maintaining a two-lane section along Smith Level Road. Research is needed to evaluate past annexation actions as intentionally exclusionary or having caused racially disparate outcomes.

Who is or will experience burden? Annexation itself can be seen as a burden, since it results in property owners having an additional tax responsibility, commensurate with the Town services made available. Incorporation into the Town limits may also increase development potential or result in increased escalation of property value. The associated tax impact can be burdensome. Continuation of the two-lane Smith Level Road section emphasizes the 15-501 corridor as the principal travel route between Carrboro/Chapel Hill and Chatham County. Travellers on Smith Level may experience some congestion at peak times or delays due to cyclists sharing the roadway and will need to travel more slowly due to horizontal and vertical curves, lighting, surrounding uses, et cetera

Who is or will experience benefit? The beneficiaries of the renewed annexation boundary agreement and resolution are the Towns and the community, current and existing residents and businesses and property owners due to the predictable and uniform expectations related to how and where annexations would occur and how the Smith Level Road corridor would or would not change over the 20-year agreement term.

What are the root causes of inequity? Root causes of inequity related to governmental actions like annexation include overlooking the interests of historically Black communities/communities of color that may have been located on land considered to be of lower value/development potential or desirability and/or land where less desirable land uses – e.g. large industrial, large commercial or transportation with associated negative environmental impacts – have been allowed to develop; barriers to participation in planning processes, such as access to meeting scheduling and content, lack of BIPOC representation amongst decision makers, and lack of transportation.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy? The aim of this process is to provide for clarity of communication and expectations about the orderly growth and development of the Towns. Unintended consequences may be precluding or slowing a change in land use that could otherwise be beneficial to residents who have experienced disparate impacts because of race and related education and/or employment opportunities and experiences. Some areas are not eligible for urban services or development and this may limit the growth in value of legacy properties, should families wish to convert them to more intensive uses and add wealth.