

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Resolution to Authorize the Town Manager to Negotiate and Execute a Contract for Professional Planning Services for a Downtown Area Plan. To request that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to negotiate and execute a contract for professional planning services for the development of a Downtown Area Plan.

Department: Town Manager, Planning

What are the racial and equity impacts?

The Downtown Area Plan is a project implementing two strategies of Carrboro Connects (2022), Economic Sustainability Strategy 2.1 and Land Use Strategy 8.1. In the RFQ, the Town has communicated its interest in seeking ways to redevelop, beautify, and enhance the downtown area to create opportunities for more density, livability, and job creation. One of three of Carrboro's commercial areas, the downtown serves as the center of the Town's identity, a location for many businesses and organizations, and the services they provide, is served by extensive transit options, connects the Town to Chapel Hill and nearby the NC 54 corridor, and add to the diversified tax base via sales tax redistributed by Orange County. Engagement with the community in this planning effort will utilize varied strategies to ensure representative participation as well as focused participation by those historically less involved. Consultant responses included information on their experience in this type of engagement and the selected consultants have demonstrated their understanding, capacity, and relevant previous experience.

Who is or will experience community burden?

The consultant teams not selected for this work will not receive business from the town. Town staff will have responsibilities in project management with the selected team and the planning activities. All the stakeholders may be experiencing some burden of needing to spend time on this versus another activity. The process may not yield outcomes that satisfy the interests of all, and some stakeholders may experience a burden because none of the participation and engagement options are available to them. In addition, some stakeholders may prefer the Town's funds are spent on different projects or saved to offset or limit tax burdens in future years.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

The town and community members will benefit from the expertise of the planning and design team, from the opportunity to examine existing conditions and to identify how and what can and should be done to achieve the stated purpose of this project. The planning and design team will benefit from the contract with the Town for these services and especially for completing work under the interests and conditions regarding racial equity and sustainability which are foundational to the Town's values.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Root causes of inequities are subconscious bias that has led to discrimination and intentional and unintentional acts at individual, institutional, and governmental levels to limit or prevent access to education and knowledge, leadership, decision making, and opportunity. Inequity in governmental service, longevity, wealth, and other areas have resulted with disproportionate effects among Black populations and other populations of color. Working individuals and families may find it difficult to attend public meetings, may be reticent to speak in a public setting and may have an overall distrust in government, and by association, in governmental activities and events related to planning for areas of Town.

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

The results of the planning process might not meet some stakeholders' needs and interests. Some ideas for the downtown may be determined to be infeasible. The time and effort spent on this project could prevent action on a project that had greater potential benefits.

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

The department will continue to review and modify the ways in which planning processes are scoped and carried out. The department will work with Communication and Engagement and other departments so that there are not disparities in participation based on race and seek opportunities to better disseminate information about how to engage meaningfully, how to ensure that a diversity of perspectives is incorporated into the planning process. The department will continue to evaluate the environmental justice and equity tools used in these processes for selecting and proceeding with projects and programs in relation to the racial equity lens.