

## Town of Carrboro

301 W. Main St.  
Carrboro, NC



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### Report to Inform Town Direction Regarding Equity

## Definition of Terms<sup>i</sup>:

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In order to begin/continue a discussion on any topic, it is important to come to the table with a common understanding of terms. The following is the commonly used vernacular when discussing social equity issues.

### Equality

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*Equality is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities. For example, an organization aiming for racial equality would be one that promotes similar treatment and equal rights to individuals of all races.*

### Equity

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*Equity is justice according to natural law or right; specifically the freedom from bias or favoritism. Social equity is not based on treating all persons or communities the same. Instead, it is giving the same opportunities to all and although through social or economic conditions there might be an imbalance in who can receive those benefits, it is an equitable distribution.*

### The Difference between Equality and Equity

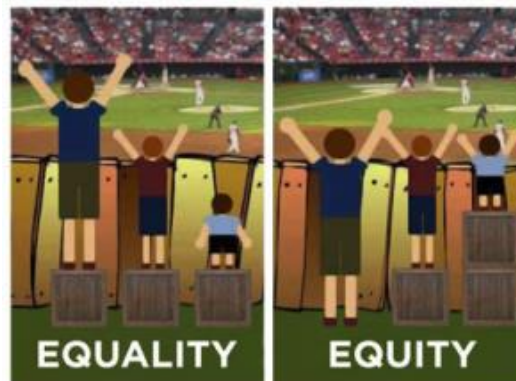
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*According to Mary Guy and Sean McCandless of the Public Administration Review, “the difference is one of nuance: while equality can be converted into a mathematical measure in which equal parts are identical in size or number, equity is a more flexible measure allowing for equivalency while not demanding sameness.”<sup>ii</sup> While equity deals with an adjustable quantification, it also deals with fairness and justice on a societal level.*

*Equity is giving everyone what he or she needs to be successful. Equality is treating everyone the same.*

*Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. Equity appears unfair, but it actively moves everyone closer to success by “leveling the playing field.”*



## Inclusion

*The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive Town promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its citizens.*

## Social Justice

*Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. More specifically, “Social justice is the virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to collaborate with others, at whatever level of the “Common Good” in which we participate, to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development.”<sup>iii</sup>*

## Privilege

*Privilege is a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people.*



*Privilege is when we make decisions that benefit enough people, but not all people. Privilege is allowed to continue when we wrap it up with actions of equality.*

## Oppression



*Oppression is the systemic and pervasive intentional or unintentional mistreatment of individuals in a disadvantaged group. Institutional imbalances in power contribute to this mistreatment.*

## Racial Equity

*The Center for Social Inclusion defines Racial Equity “As both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. As a process, we apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.”<sup>iv</sup>*

## Background:

The notion of equity has been important to the community and Board of Aldermen for some time. More recently, the topic was discussed during several Board Retreats and Work Sessions:

February 15, 2015: Retreat – the Board discussed values and decision-making strategies including the alignment around the concept of justice. .

October 20, 2015: Work Session – the Board reviewed Carrboro’s Vision 2020 plan and discussed its usefulness in guiding decision-making, particularly in relation to social impact/equity.

February 16, 2016: Work session – the Board looked at local government examples, identified questions, and additional resources that would best inform the retreat activities. A closer examination of the local government

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experience was identified as a way for the Board of Aldermen to see how equity as a community value has been examined, prioritized, and integrated into local government's operations. The focus of a staff presentation was primarily the experiences in Seattle and King County, Washington.

February 28, 2016: Retreat – the Board received clarification of what equity can mean in the context of leadership and local government. Triangle J COG gave a presentation about progress and disparity in Carrboro and Orange County. The Board was presented with a set of concrete tools that could be used at the department and municipal level to advance equity in operations and policymaking.

On January 9, 2018 and April 10, 2018 the Board also considered equity and social justice in discussions about a future comprehensive plan.

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## Current Town Programs/Tools/Projects

The following documents were designed with inclusivity, social justice and community needs as focal points through the years:

1. Facilitated Small Area Plan for Carrboro's Northern Study Area (adopted 5/26/1998). This document incorporates the consensus of a two day facilitated conference including Town of Carrboro, Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County under the terms of the joint planning agreement. The plan is unique because it incorporated the needs and desires of the Town of Carrboro, Citizens of Carrboro and the residents of the unincorporated areas to produce a policy document that was adopted by the participating jurisdictions. The document guides future land considerations within the Carrboro's northern growth area, referred to as the Northern Study area.
2. Carrboro's Vision 2020 (adopted on 12/5/2000). Vision2020 is a policy-making document designed to help shape the future. It is a caretaking tool, as well, designed to preserve the Town's history and qualities in an atmosphere of desirable growth. The Town invited the community to participate in a facilitated, citizen-based brainstorming session about programming, services, amenities, development, economic development, transportation, environmental protection, promotion and housing.
3. Downtown Carrboro: New Vision (adopted 3/21/2002). This report was developed as a result of a downtown community visioning process. Citizens and staff had multiple opportunities to voice concerns and contribute their ideas to define a vision of the future for the downtown core. Diversity and inclusiveness were identified as top values. Other values also surfaced - live in a friendly place that is green, walkable, safe, and beautiful, art, music and a sense of community.

Participants defined downtown development priorities as well such as building heights, traffic, business diversity and green spaces.

4. Community Climate Action Plan – the Board of Aldermen accepted the plan on 1/24/17. It recommends integrating climate actions and social/equity initiatives into the community, for example lowering utility bills to increase affordability of housing. It provides for future presentations that will lay out the town’s responsibilities as measured through a social equity lens and the urgency of CO2 reduction per the latest science.
5. Policing Equity Report – This report was given to the Board of Aldermen on 4/17/17. The report provided an update on the Police Department’s efforts as it relates to bias-free policing. The department has been collecting data on racial discrimination in policing practices since 2012. Using the “veil of darkness” hypothesis the Town was able to conduct a racial profiling study. The veil of darkness suggests that police are less likely to know the race of a motorist before making a stop after dark than they are during daylight. The results did not suggest racial disproportionality in traffic stops within Carrboro.
6. The Economic Sustainability Plan - (adopted 11/28/17). The plan includes social justice in the purpose statement and equity as a guiding principle. The document uses quality of life measurements to represent principles that guide the Town’s economic sustainability work. The plan uses the Racial Equity Tools’ definition of Equity As the *goal to which we aspire where one is race, gender, age, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression or economic status is not a predictor in how a person fares in life. We will practice social justice as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.*

In addition to the above plans and reports, the Board of Aldermen and town departments continue to create a welcoming and inclusive environment that enhances the overall social, physical and mental well-being of our community. Here are examples of what that looks like:

- Town-wide Initiatives:
  - Mayor Lavelle is a member of Governor Cooper’s Commission on Inclusion.
  - Town Clerk is the LGBTQ Issues Liaison to the Board of Aldermen.
  - The Town participates in the Human Rights Commission Municipal Annual Equality Index Ranking.
  - Various dates in 2016/2017: Staff participated in an Organizing Against Racism training as per Board direction.
  - The Town provided additional opportunities for employees or Advisory Board members to attend Racial Equity Institute training.
  - Have a diverse group of employees attend job fairs, high school career days, etc.
  - Have a diverse panel during promotional and hiring processes.
  - Provide broad-based marketing to ensure community is reached.
  - When possible, provide Spanish speaking personnel or language translators during community events, such as child passenger seat installs and smoke alarms, completing paper work and public education events.

- Provide inclusive options for staff– respecting dietary needs, etc.
- Provide written, verbal information and emergency notifications in languages prevalent in the community.
- Deliver supplies to the community (for example water during the OWASA water crisis).
- Vacant town building spaces are used by community group gatherings when needed.
- Provide safety messages and other notifications when needed including senior facilities.
- Provide programs for all populations, including free opportunities with meals for seniors.
- Utilize handicap-accessible van.
- Collaborate with many agencies and businesses in the community to assist with including all citizens and provide comprehensive, inclusive, educational, lifestyle driven opportunities.
- Fire Department staff:
  - Fire Chief serves on the Human Relations Committee for the International Association of Fire Chiefs, which is charged with making the recommendations for the diversity and inclusion efforts of the IAFC.
  - Restructure department in October to create a Community Risk Reduction division dedicated to community and inclusive outreach.
- IT Department staff:
  - Partnered with Chapel Hill Carrboro City School system to connect schools located in Carrboro through fiber optic cabling providing unlimited data and bandwidth between schools to keep in pace with current and future technology based learning initiatives.
  - Partnered with CHCCS and Orange County to address digital divide – a). Install, maintain and support office lab and Wi Fi (RENA) computer systems at the Rogers Road Community Center; b) The Next 2018 showcase – brought together students of diverse backgrounds to educate and entertain; and c) find solutions to address limited internet access for families of students living in apartment complexes.
  - Collaborated with UNC to connect various off campus programs to campus resources. This removes significant ongoing monthly expenditures. The savings are redirected to core missions. For example – UNC TEACCH Autism Program, UNC Horizons Program and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.
  - Collaborating with the NCCU School of Law to bring Virtual Justice Program to Carrboro.
  - The Town of Carrboro has maintained a free and widely accessible public Wi-Fi service for over a decade.
  - Collaborating with CASA Affordable Housing in Carrboro to explore and offer alternate no-cost internet option to residents.
- Police Department staff:
  - Attend Strategies to Improve Law Enforcement Interactions and Relationships with Minority Youth.
  - Attend in-service state mandated training designed to heighten sensitivity and inclusivity.
  - Attend Equality in Policing training.

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- Attend Communication Skills with Persons in Crisis – De-escalation Techniques training.
- Participate in Faith ID drives.
- Yearly analyze bias free policing data and create procedures to address any findings.
- Recreation and Parks Department:
  - Staff patterns activities and opportunities around mission statement and community inclusion statement emphasizing a welcoming atmosphere to the community.
  - Offer affordable programs and services.
  - Offer Financial Assistance Program for families to participate in recreation and parks activities.
  - Strive to provide accessible parks, facilities and programs.

## Resource Programs

Many non-profit, private, government based, and university organizations provide specific opportunities to help the community. Some municipalities have tools in place to ensure equity in the planning, implementation, and analysis of public policy. Here are two tool-based programs that could help shape the direction of the Town of Carrboro's Equity Toolkit.

## Social Justice Goal Impact Review Tool – Orange County, North Carolina

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Orange County uses a Social Justice Goal Impact Review Tool to assess government policies and procedures. On September 02, 2010, their Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) unanimously adopted five social justice goals. The goals are intended to provide a framework for the BoCC, County government employees, as well as local residents and other stakeholders, to ensure that social justice is paramount in decision- and policy-making. To ensure common understanding of what social justice is, the Orange County Human Relations Commission has defined social justice in Orange County as a **community that actively seeks to eliminate oppression and create equal opportunity; where individuals may sufficiently provide for their physical and mental needs and the needs of their dependents; where individuals live in physically and mentally safe communities; where the environment and economy are sustainable and where all are able to participate civically.**

The five goals are:

- 1. Foster a community culture that rejects oppression and inequity:** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race or color; religious or philosophical beliefs; sex, gender or sexual orientation; national origin or ethnic background; age; military service; disability; and familial, residential or economic status.
- 2. Ensure economic self-sufficiency:** The creation and preservation of infrastructure, policies, programs and funding necessary for residents to provide shelter, food, clothing and medical care for themselves and their dependents.



**3. Create a safe community** the reduction of risks from vehicle/traffic accidents, childhood and senior injuries, gang activity, substance abuse and domestic violence.

**4. Establish sustainable and equitable land-use and environmental policies:** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and decisions. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.

**5. Enable full civic participation:** Ensure that Orange County residents are able to engage government through voting and volunteering by eliminating disparities in participation and barriers to participation.

The SOCIAL JUSTICE GOAL IMPACT REVIEW TOOL (SJGIRT) is both a process and a tool to identify, evaluate, and communicate the potential impacts – both positive and negative – of a new Orange County policy, program, project, or the modification/revision to an existing policy, program, or project. The Town of Carrboro could use this tool as a template in the creation of a similar model.

COST: FREE

## Government Alliance on Race & Equity Toolkit

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Collaborating with GARE is another consideration that provides a multi-layered approach for maximum impact. The initial focus is on racial equity.

*Taking an excerpt from the resource guide - **Why race?** Race is complicated. It is a social construct, and yet many still think of it as biological. Racial categories have evolved over time, and yet many think of race as static. Race is often “on the table,” and yet fairly rarely discussed with shared understanding. More frequently, it is the elephant in the room.*

*Race, income, and wealth are closely connected in the United States. However, racial inequities are not just about income. When we hold income constant, there are still large inequities based on race across multiple indicators for success, including education, jobs, incarceration, and housing. For us to advance racial equity, it is vital that we are able to talk about race. We have to both normalize conversations about race, and operationalize strategies for advancing racial equity.*

*In addition, we must also address income and wealth inequality, and recognize the biases that exist based on gender, sexual orientation, ability and age, to name but a few. Focusing on race provides an opportunity to also address other ways in which groups of people are marginalized, providing the opportunity to introduce a framework, tools, and resources that can also be applied to other areas of marginalization. This is important, because to have maximum impact, focus and specificity are necessary. Strategies to achieve racial equity differ from those to achieve equity in other areas. “One-size-fits all” strategies are rarely successful.*



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*A racial equity framework that is clear about the differences between individual, institutional, and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities, has applications for other marginalized groups. Race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together. An approach that recognizes the inter-connected ways in which marginalization takes place will help to achieve greater unity across communities.*

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. The Alliance is a joint project of the new Race Forward and the Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society. The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, City of Asheville, City of Raleigh, City of Durham, and Durham County are current members.

The Alliance believes that “developing a network of governments focusing on racial equity is critically important to getting to different outcomes in our communities. The goal must be beyond closing the gaps; we must lift up overall outcomes, focusing efforts on those who are faring worst. Deeply racialized systems are costly and depress outcomes and life chances for us collectively. To advance equity, government must focus not only on individual programs, but also on policy and institutional strategies that are driving the production of inequities.”

A racial equity tool through GARE:

- proactively seeks to eliminate racial inequities and advance equity;
- identifies clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes;
- engages community in decision-making processes;
- identifies who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision, examines potential unintended consequences of a decision, and develops strategies to advance racial equity and mitigate unintended negative consequences; and,
- develops mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact.

The following six strategies are critical:

**1. Use a racial equity framework:** Jurisdictions use a racial equity framework that clearly articulates racial equity, implicit and explicit bias, and individual, institutional and structural racism.

**2. Build organizational capacity:** Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation so that impacts are sustainable. While the leadership of electeds and top officials is critical, changes take place on the ground, and infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government is necessary.

**3. Implement racial equity tools:** Racial inequities are not random; they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. Tools must be used to change the policies, programs and practices that are perpetuating inequities. New policies and programs must also be developed with a racial equity tool.

**4. Be data-driven:** Measurement must take place at two levels – first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals and measure progress towards goals. Use of data in this manner is necessary for accountability.

**5. Partner with other institutions and communities:** The work of local and regional government on racial equity is necessary, but it is not sufficient. To achieve racial equity in the community, local and regional government needs to work in partnership with communities and other institutions to achieve meaningful results.

**6. Operate with urgency and accountability:** While there is often a belief that change is hard and takes time, we have seen repeatedly, that when change is a priority and urgency is felt, change is embraced and can take place quickly. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms via a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public will to achieve racial equity.<sup>v</sup>

**COST:** Minimum package - \$1000/Year to become a Core Member (provides access to tools, resources, webinars, and opportunities to learn from peer jurisdictions).

GARE operates nationwide and is a well-respected organization facilitating change in local governments. They offer the basic membership described above, plus the option to engage in a more intensive training program, priced according to need.

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<sup>i</sup> Definitions adapted from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://patimes.org/social-equity-strengthen-dont-understand-meaning/>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.cesj.org/learn/definitions/defining-economic-justice-and-social-justice/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/our-work/what-is-racial-equity/>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/about/our-approach/>