

City of Ann Arbor - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

The ***District Geothermal Design and Deployment to Equitably Decarbonize Low Income Neighborhoods in Ann Arbor (project)*** team focuses on rectifying structural and institutional racism and injustices experienced by frontline populations bearing the first and worst impacts of climate change and ensuring that frontline populations benefit first and most from our climate solutions. To make this a reality, the project team works with frontline residents in the Bryant neighborhood of Ann Arbor, Michigan to co-design a community-geothermal system that centers their realities, direct needs, and aspirations with a deep recognition that all climate policies have economic, social, and cultural implications. **To do this work with integrity and purpose, we are framing our work firmly in procedural, distributional, structural, transgenerational, and transformational equity and justice.**

PROCEDURAL equity is about ensuring all voices are included in project creation, design, implementation, and decision-making by working to ensure that the project is accessible, authentic, and involves representation and decision-making authority from all. In this project, procedural equity and justice will be realized through:

- **Accessibility:**
 - Provision of (free) childcare at all meetings and training sessions.
 - Preparation of all materials (including web-based content, print materials, and digital materials) in English, Arabic, and Spanish, plus options for on-site interpreters and/or language-specific presentations.
 - Hiring of 2 engagement interns from the neighborhood - ideally proficient in Spanish and/or Arabic - to ensure engagement activities are accessible to all community members.
 - Incentives for participation in requests that take in excess of 20 minutes.
 - The sharing of all meeting materials in advance so that folk can process before the meeting.
 - Nourishment provided during engagement activities and events.
- **Prioritization:** centering Black and Brown and low-income residents in every element of the project and giving them decision-making authority on program design, project development, implementation, and evaluation via community-led design charettes.
- **Responsiveness:** Continuous focus on process and, based on the lessons learned identified during regular evaluation and engagement with residents, a willingness to pivot for maximum inclusion and effectiveness.
- **Accountability:** a commitment to regular public engagement and maintaining a presence in the community.
- **Visioning:** public engagement events that enable discussions and visioning sessions to examine “buildings as places” where families live, learn, play, socialize, work, and rest. This perspective reveals opportunities to improve peoples’ lives by creating an understanding of how communities interact with the built environment and their priorities. Feedback from these sessions will be integrated into the engagement plan,

energy models, and designs.

- **Transparency:** open and transparent resource sharing is a powerful and necessary tool for creating equitable and just policies while simultaneously empowering self-determination. Too often, collected data and research is held as “proprietary” and blocks sustainable transformation while also creating information silos that disable broad collaboration. Data and content generated by this project will be made available on the City’s website, at Bryant Community Center, and in print format to anyone that requests it. In addition, the team will create a special project-based bullet board at the Bryant Community Center where individuals can get real-time updates on project activities.
- **Cooperation - breaking the silos:** increasing the cooperation between involved agencies, providers, and the public allows both the leveraging of established talent and the development of new talent. This project brings together many disparate agencies/providers to stack services and leverage resources in new ways to advance geothermal designs and deployment, decarbonize a low-income neighborhood, advance quality of life, address climate change, and stabilize neighborhoods without causing unintentional gentrification.

DISTRIBUTIONAL equity and justice will be centered in the project by ensuring that people who have historically been underserved and systematically disadvantaged benefit from the positive economic benefits of the proposed geothermal system and will experience minimal burdens. This means a prioritization of those with the greatest need while ensuring that the costs of activities are not unfairly distributed to one group or another, especially those most unable to bear those costs. A constant focus for this project is the delivery of significant, enduring, co-defined benefits for frontline communities that lead to greater prosperity for the long term through:

- **Workforce development:** prioritizing high-road job creation, community ownership, and wealth building opportunities for marginalized members of the Bryant community. This includes:
 - The elevation and capacity building of existing BIPOC and women-owned service providers as service delivery partners.
 - A workforce development plan including community benefit to quantify pathways that include equity and economic inclusion.
 - Roundtable discussions with service providers, trades organizations, and community members to discuss barriers to high-road employment opportunities and workforce retention.
 - Round table discussions with community members to discuss challenges to employment access, barriers to career development, fair-wage opportunities, and cultural work-force barriers.
 - Development of a workforce development strategy that includes jobs training and registered apprenticeships, utilizing existing community partners, as well as job fairs and job shadowing opportunities for residents.
 - Recruitment of youth into the green jobs field through outreach to Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Public Schools.
- **Targeted Universalism:** Bryant is located in the south of Ann Arbor and is one of the City’s largest low-income neighborhoods. Of the 262 households, about 75% are considered low-income, 50% are owner occupied, and the majority of residents are People of Color.

When seeking solutions to equitably address the climate crisis, we are committed to working directly with our frontline and fenceline populations to find solutions that work for them and then scaling those solutions in a contextually relevant way throughout the City and County. That is why this project is exclusively focused on Bryant but allows the benefits, such as workforce development, community design processes, and district geothermal solutions, to be leveraged by everyone.

STRUCTURAL equity and justice will be advanced by ensuring decisions are made with a clear understanding and recognition of historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for others. Inequities manifested/manifesting in this community include its location next to a City landfill, poor tree canopy coverage, high rates of flooding, poor air quality, and an exceptionally high energy burden. This project is intrinsically about structural equity, centered in a frontline neighborhood that is regularly left out of decision-making considerations, and seeks to repair this historic, systemic disadvantage by:

- **Listening and following the lead of residents:** listening with an intent to repair harm being done by following the lead of residents. To date ideas articulated by residents have guided our program design and we will continue to maintain this practice.
- **Inclusion:** ensuring residents have a voice at the table, including responsiveness to logistical barriers that have made this practice previously impossible. This includes creation of a resident-designed public engagement strategy and resident centered design charettes where residents will have decision making authority and direct input into the project. This also includes the hiring of residents to lead engagement activities who are proficient in the languages commonly spoken in the neighborhood - thereby ensuring cultural representation. Finally, we will conduct regular public engagement activities, some new and some leveraging existing community activities, to engage with the public and gather their thoughts, feedback, and desires into the project.
- **Addressing systemic/root causes contributing to a lack of representation:** Conduct analyses to understand existing or past policies that hinder progress on equity in the built environment, such as redlining, zoning, infrastructure investments, procurement practices, and process issues such as meeting time and location. Structural issues will be openly named and discussed and, where possible, solutions sought to rectify structural barriers (i.e., varying meeting times and locations, stacking funding resources to lower upfront costs to participation in the geothermal system once designed).
- **Re-direct funding** by shifting resources and financing structures to directly support increased capacity in impacted communities. Sustained investments are required to build relationships and achieve equitable outcomes which is why this project will pay people for their time, hire people from the neighborhood to help administer the project, and create workforce development opportunities specifically for BIPOC and women residents.
- **Internal/institutional:** continue or scale-up initiatives within participating organizations to advance equity and address structural racism including regular equity training, participation in learning cohorts (e.g. Urban Sustainability Directors Network trainings on economic inclusion and workforce development), organizational implicit bias training,

and a requirement that all project partners participate in the United Ways 21-Day Equity Challenge.

TRANSGENERATIONAL equity is about ensuring that activities and, ultimately decisions, factor in generational impacts and do not result in unfair burdens on future generations. It is also about ensuring that equity is built and transferred generationally to stabilize families and communities. This project will advance transgenerational equity through:

- **Engagement Specialists:** the hiring of interested individuals to serve as engagement specialists, with a focus on hiring individuals with diverse language skills, cultural knowledge, and commitment to the neighborhood.
- **Education:** develop geothermal models and educational materials to share during public engagement activities. Use these materials to help engage residents in co-designing the proposed geothermal system, making sure resident needs, concerns, and opportunities are centered in the design-process.
- **Social cohesion and visibility:** inviting the “book-ended” community in particular – teens/young adults and older adults to connect through storytelling and game nights that are part of the community-driven public engagement plan.
- **Energy Burden Alleviation:** Designing a geothermal system that significantly reduces if not eliminates the energy burden for families, thereby ensuring more financial resources are available to support other core needs and/or can be saved to foster intergenerational wealth.

TRANSFORMATIONAL equity is defined by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network as the distinct notion that communities (internally) have the indigenous capacity to govern and sustain themselves and that communities (externally) have voice, influence, and agency in regional, state and/or national affairs. To ensure this effort is transformational for the community, we will:

- **Vision:** together, we will collectively identify the benefit and vision possible if this work is wildly successful. Visioning is integrated into the community-driven public engagement plan.
- **Inspire:** by elevating stories of resident’s experience through in-person networking and storytelling, and through the creation of a case study that highlights the experience and processes used in the project.
- **Act:** Create paid and volunteer opportunities for community members to be involved in each step of the project, as well as what comes next. This includes the hiring of at least 2 engagement specialists to assist with broad public outreach and engagement.

SMART Milestones

- By the second month of the project, two community members will be hired to support public engagement activities.
- By the second month of the project, a detailed public engagement strategy will be developed that centers the ideas and desired engagement activities of residents.
- By the fourth month of the project fourth month of the project, at least 40 Bryant residents will have provided input into the project, with an emphasis on desired benefits,

techniques to overcome barriers, and other actions needed to advance the meta goal of creating America's first fully decarbonized existing low-income neighborhood.

- By the end of the fourth month, a series of resident-created metrics of project success will be generated and shared with all project partners.
- By month six, a workforce development strategy will exist that includes details about community benefits, workforce agreements, techniques for recruiting BIPOC residents into the clean energy field, and strategic next steps to expand diversity the local contractor workforce.
- By month eight, ten high school students have engaged in roundtables focused on green job and apprenticeship opportunities.
- By month eleven, a geothermal design(s) has been created based on resident input and technical expertise that residents agree to. The model would reduce heating and cooling demand by 75%, eliminate energy burden, and improve indoor air quality by 40%.
- By month twelve, a case study has been created highlighting the processes, experiences, and outcomes from the project.