Developing Your Community's Sustainability Strategy: Exploring and Understanding Community Assessment Tools

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Evanston, Illinois

- Founded in 1863
- Population 73,000+
- Immediately north of Chicago
- Home to Northwestern University
- 4-STAR Community Rating

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Overview

- Operationalizing Equity and Empowerment in City Strategic Planning
- Creation of Evanston's Equity and Empowerment Office
- Climate and Resiliency Plan Development
- Measurement of equity and empowerment

Strategic Plan – Adopted in 2006

Strategic Plan Leads to Livability Initiative in 2014

Evanston's Strategic Plan:

"Creating the Most Livable City in America"

STAR COMMUNITIES — Sustainability Tools for Assessing & Rating Communities

Performance Measurement System

with 7 Focus Areas

City's Livability Initiative:

"Creating the Most Livable City"

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Livability Training

75 staff
per session

13 total
session

6.5 minute
video

31 presenters

6 TED Talks

3.5 hours each

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Creation of Equity & Empowerment Office

- STAR Rating – Equity & Empowerment 57.4/100

- City Staff Equity Working Group

- 2017 Budget Created Equity & Empowerment Coordinator

- Evanston hires E&E Coordinator

- E&E Plan Presented to City Council

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STAR : Equity & Empowerment

- 2014 STAR Rating in Equity & Empowerment was 54.7 points out of 100.
- Areas Measured:
  - Civic Engagement (10.6/15)
  - Civil & Human Rights (4/10)
  - Environmental Justice (6.2/15)
  - Equitable Services & Access (10.9/20)
  - Human Services (11.7/20)
  - Poverty Prevention & Alleviation (14/20)

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EE: Civic Engagement

- Purpose: Citizens and residents improve community well-being by participating in local decision-making and volunteering with community organizations

Example Actions Measured:

- Adopt a policy to encourage diversity in local government appointments to advisory boards and commissions.

- Provide young people with opportunities to participate in civic activities.

- Adopt inclusive public engagement guidelines for local government agencies and departments.

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EE: Civil & Human Rights

- Purpose: Respect, protect, and fulfill the civil and human rights of all members of the community.

Example Outcomes/Actions Measured:

- Demonstrate that all police-related civil and human rights complaints in the past 3 years have been investigated and violations redressed in a timely manner.

- Establish an independent civil and/or human rights commission to ensure access, equity, and inclusion.

- Operationalize the local government's civil and human rights polices in programs, services, and operations.

- Establish an office within the jurisdiction with the authority and capacity to investigate civil and human rights complaints.

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EE: Environmental Justice

- Purpose: Ensure no neighborhoods or populations are overburdened by environmental pollution.

Example Outcomes/Actions Measured:

- Conduct a comprehensive environmental justice assessment.
- Adopt an environmental justice or social equity plan that includes strategies to reduce negative impacts and burdens to low-income populations and persons of color.
- Incorporate environmental justice criteria and priorities into zoning, land use planning, permitting policies, and development of new projects.
- Implement projects to reduce exposure to contaminants and risks associated with environmental justice sites.

EE: Equitable Services & Access

- Purpose: Establish equitable spatial access to foundational community assets within and between neighborhoods and populations.

Example Outcomes/Actions Measured:

- Adopt an equity plan that evaluates current conditions in the community and establishes targets to improve equitable access and proximity

- Provide advanced equity, inclusion, or cultural disparity training for local government staff.

- Publicize efforts to improve equitable access and proximity to community facilities, services, and infrastructure.

EE: Human Services

- Purpose: Ensure that essential human services are readily available for the most vulnerable community members.

Example Outcomes/Actions Measured:

- Adopt a human services plan designed to guarantee that basic human needs are met in the community.

- Support the provision of high quality, priority human services in coordination with non-governmental service providers.

- Upgrade existing facilities or build new facilities to better provide needed human services.

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EE: Poverty Prevention & Alleviation

- Purpose: Alleviate the impacts of poverty, prevent people from falling into poverty, and proactively enable those who are living in poverty to obtain greater, lasting economic stability and security.

Example Outcomes/Actions Measured:

- Adopt a community-wide plan to reduce poverty.
- Establish or support programs that reduce the costs of basic needs for low-income households.
- Create programs to improve employment opportunities for low-income individuals by strengthening hard and soft work skills.
- Provide child development programs for children living at or near the local poverty line.

Equity & Empowerment Plan & Equity Lens

- Equity & Empowerment Plan Implementation

- Health Equity Work

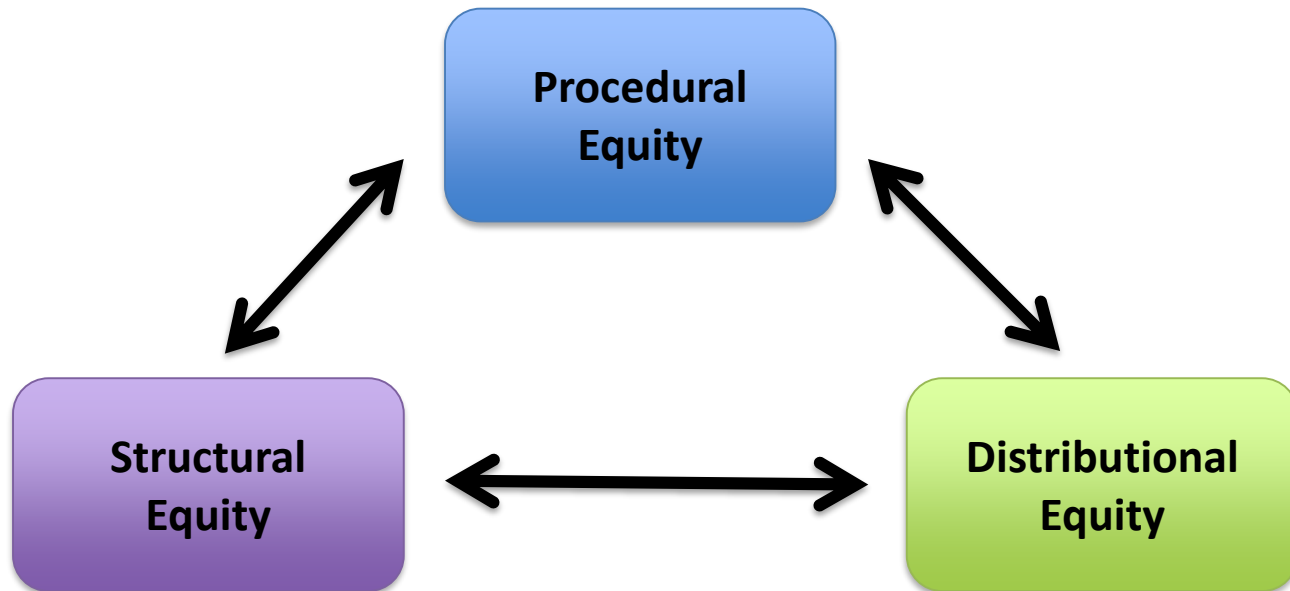- Climate Action & Resilience Plan Development

Equity & Empowerment Plan

- Create an Equity & Empowerment Commission

- Establish Equity as a Goal for City Council

- Conduct Equity Training

- Community Engagement around Equity

- Community-wide Equity Education

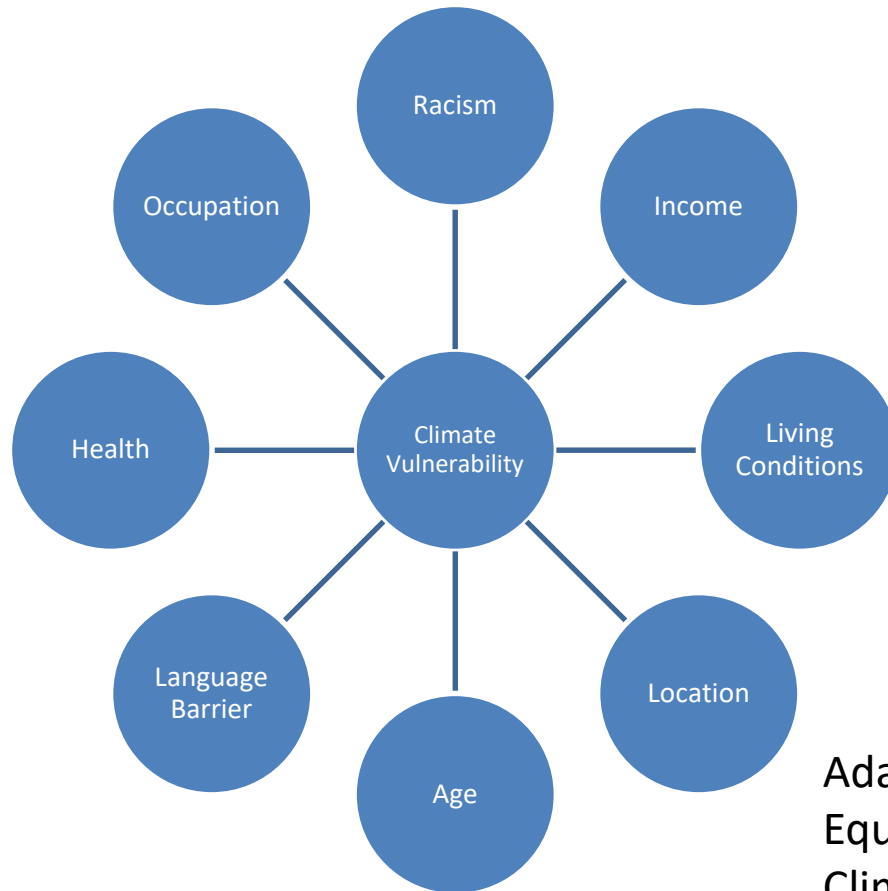- Create Equity Toolkit

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Health Equity Work

- Identify trends driving inequalities in health
- Promote policies that remove causes of disease
- Evanston examples:
  - Rethink Your Drink
  - Increase Age to Purchase Cigarettes to 21
  - We're Out Walking

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New Climate Action & Resilience Plan Development

Equitable Engagement for Climate Action & Resilience Plan Look Like

Adapted from USDN's Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning

Measuring Equity in Sustainability

- STAR provides a framework for measuring aspects of equity across the community

- Key components are:
  - Decide what you want to measure
  - Set targets
  - Evaluate
  - Repeat

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Contacts

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