



Mecklenburg County's Efforts Toward Environmental Justice

Environmental Leadership Policy

- ▶ Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners passed an Environmental Leadership Policy and associated Action Plan in March 2021. The Action Plan requires the County to draft an Environmental Justice Action Plan.
- ▶ The Policy requires the County to embrace justice through equal protection and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations to include using the County's Racial Equity Toolkit (RET), when implementing the Environmental Leadership Action Plan, and during environmental decision-making at large.
- ▶ The County defines racial equity as the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. The County strives to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups within its institution, by outlining policies, practices, and procedures that haven't served all communities equally.
- ▶ The County is committed to preventing structural racism: the history and current reality of institutional racism across all sectors combining to create a system that negatively impacts low-wealth neighborhoods and communities of color.
- ▶ Environmental injustice is experienced as both place (e.g., forced exposure to unsafe roads and toxic air) and process (e.g., power to choose what kind of industries and pollution, if any, to allow).
- ▶ Low-wealth neighborhoods and communities of color are often overburdened due to historic displacement (redlining) and ongoing systemic racism that impacts where people live and the quality of the communities where they reside.
- ▶ Environmental injustice both compounds and reflects the racial, social, and economic injustices that low-wealth neighborhoods and communities of color experience in Mecklenburg County.
- ▶ The Environmental Justice Action Plan will be informed through working with the community to better understand how climate change is impacting communities of color and low-wealth residents living in Mecklenburg County.

Environmental Leadership Action Plan

- ▶ The Environmental Leadership Action Plan is a guide for the activities of the County government so that the County can take results-oriented steps in decisions and operations to support current and future pollution reductions, resource conservation, and preparedness initiatives.
- ▶ The Plan is a collective call for action that connects with health and recognizes innovation is holistic in nature.
- ▶ The Plan is committed to justice and recognizes resilience, while advancing equity and calling on collective expertise.
- ▶ The Plan considers minimum standards, factors in climate change and current response as well as highlights past policies.

Environmental Justice Action Plan:

- ▶ **Informs** through working with the community to better understand how climate change is impacting and will impact communities of color and low-wealth people living in Mecklenburg County.
- ▶ **Establishes** an advisory board which will include underrepresented populations, representing the diversity of the County and offers a variety of perspectives.
- ▶ **Collaborates** with our surrounding communities to gather accurate baseline data. That baseline health and environmental data is associated with information to determine where current and ongoing racial and environmental inequities lie.
- ▶ **Develops** and shares prioritized environmental justice recommendations, rooted in health and environmental data as well as feedback from the community within the context of racial equity. These recommendations should provide a flexible roadmap to address the racial inequities resulting from environmental injustices experienced by Mecklenburg County residents.
- ▶ **Guides** the County to draft a racially equitable Environmental Justice Action Plan, intended to hold Mecklenburg County accountable. This measure of accountability is inclusive of assessing the ways the environment disproportionately impacts people by race and outlines remedies to the impacted communities. The goal is to guide future county-community partnerships, programmatic decisions, and accountability from the County.
- ▶ **Applies** the Racial Equity Toolkit, (a tool designed to integrate explicit racial consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs and budgets); the EJSCREEN tool (an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators); and other frameworks to County policies, procedures, and practices.
- ▶ **Uses** best practices for community engagement to ensure all affected community members, particularly low-wealth and communities of color, have access to information and the opportunity to provide input to the Environmental Justice Action Plan.