

Winning on Climate: Case Studies of Cities Centering Economic Inclusion



Presentation based on: *Winning on Climate: Case Studies of Cities Centering Economic Inclusion*, By: Dr. J. Mijin Cha, Aria Devlin, and Jack Conroy (Occidental College), With: Dr. Denise Fairchild and Daryl Wright (Emerald Cities Collaborative), Sonrisa Cooper (The Greenlining Institute), and Jeremy Hays, Manisha Rattu, and Minna Toloui (Upright Consulting Services)



Winning on climate requires shifting the mainstream frame of thinking

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires addressing racial and economic equity.
- Success is much more than economic growth.
- Equity is the central pathway, not an add-on or ideal.
- Cities are leading the way.

Key Elements



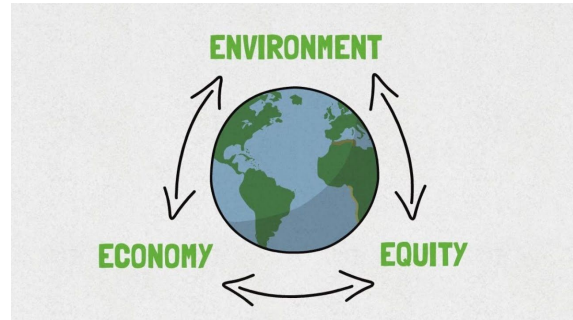
- The 3 Es Framework - Equity, Economy, Environment
- What is Equity?
- Case Studies: Cities Leading By Example
 - Boston
 - Portland
 - Denver
 - Washington, DC
 - Minneapolis
 - Oakland
- Where we go from here

The Current Context

- The climate crisis is here now.
- An assault on voting rights, racial justice efforts, and civil liberties is underway.
- Wealth continues to be concentrated among only a handful of individuals.
- Exclusionary policies and racist planning processes and systems have created disproportionate environmental burdens in communities of color and poor communities. These communities are least responsible for the climate crisis, yet are already bearing the brunt of the harm.

Environment, Equity, and the Economy

- Investment in our clean energy future brings a major investment infusion that creates jobs and economic opportunity.
- Centering racial equity and economic inclusion strengthens climate policy by building a broad base of public support to help these comprehensive policies pass.
- Equitable approaches are required so that our clean energy future does not repeat the exploitative and extractive practices of the fossil fuel based economy.



What is Equity?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to equity; nevertheless key principles hold true:

1. Equitable policy **addresses the legacy of discrimination**, exploitation, and extraction that has led to the current moment.
2. Communities that have borne the brunt of these practices must be meaningfully engaged so that they bring their **expertise and lived experience to co-create policies** meant to address the harms they face.
3. Economic inclusion and opportunity are fundamental to equity - without ensuring resources are invested according to need, the new economy will repeat the exploitative and extractive practices of the fossil fuel economy.

Cities Leading by Example



Boston: Building an Inclusive Green Economy

After mounting pressure by Boston residents, the city conducted an official study revealing an architecture of disparity in the city. The Mayor soon issued an executive order to promote economic development for minority and women-owned businesses. Emerald Cities Collaborative created the Boston Contractor's Academy (BCA) to provide free contractor training to people of color, women, and disadvantaged contractors.

Boston reduced procurement and contracting barriers for MWBE contractors and MWBE contractors were trained for *existing* opportunities.

Emerald Cities Collaborative helped facilitate networks of city and community stakeholders to pave the path to more inclusive opportunities.

[Read the full story here!](#)

Portland: Advancing Equitable Climate Investment

The Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF), organized by frontline communities, created a climate fund through a tax on large retailers, which centers the advancement of racial and social justice. The fund has raised more than \$60 million per year for clean energy and climate investments. The ballot measure passed because of the hard work of over 200 organizations and 16 neighborhood associations led by BIPOC organizers.

Forty to sixty percent of the PCEF's funding areas are dedicated to clean energy programs, and an additional 10 to 15 percent is dedicated to green infrastructure and regenerative agriculture. Several approved projects focus on making Portland's stock of old buildings more energy efficient, addressing homelessness, and other critical intersectional issues.

[Read the full story here!](#)

Denver: Voters Advance Climate Equity through the Climate Protection Fund

The Denver Climate Protection Fund (CPF) is an improved version of an energy tax that failed to pass due to its lack of focus on centering racial equity. The CPF engaged 26 different community groups to create the fund, which now generates \$35-\$40 million annually through a .25% sales and use tax.

Half of all of the CPF funds are required to directly benefit communities most affected by climate change. The CPF designated six categories as acceptable uses of funding: (1) job creation (2) increased investments in renewable energy (3) environmental and climate justice programs (4) adaptation and resiliency programs (5) affordable transportation programs, and (6) energy efficiency upgrades. These categories promote equity through social, economic, and environmental impacts.

[Read the full story here!](#)

District of Columbia: Solar for All

The District of Columbia's Solar for All Program partners with organizations to equip low income households with solar panels. In 2019, the program provided 8,600 households with nearly 7 megawatts (MW) of solar energy.

Solar For All collaborates with local solar companies to bring money and jobs into the community rather than outsourcing for labor. In partnership with Solar Works DC, they offer community members solar installation courses and pathways to jobs in the solar industry. Participants earn industry-relevant skill certificates by demonstrating competency in solar installations.

Solar For All provides critical home upgrades and energy bill reductions that many families need, as well as stable, local jobs that help increase economic security and neighborhood stability.

[Read the full story here!](#)

Minneapolis: Addressing Racial and Climate Equity in Green Zones

The city of Minneapolis created two Green Zones in areas of the City that have historically endured the most environmental harm. The city's Green Zone task forces direct funds for climate projects to these communities and work to hold the City accountable in implementation.

The Green Zones program uses a multi-prong approach to decrease disparities. The Green Zones have numerous initiatives and projects underway for environmentally conscious economic development that achieves the following goals: 1) green job creation, 2) improved air quality, 3) improved housing quality and affordability, 4) decreased soil and water contamination, 5) area greening through increased vegetation and use of clean energy, and 6) increased access to healthy food.

[Read the full story here!](#)

Oakland: Transformative Climate Communities

The city of Oakland, in collaboration with grassroots and neighborhood based groups, received funding from California's Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program. The TCC work in Oakland shows how states and cities can work together, with the state providing resources that would not be possible with city efforts alone.

The funds support community-driven climate solutions and are focused in historically marginalized communities. The project showcases minimum equitable investment standards community-centered projects that include building community capacity, emphasizing anti-racist solutions, and establishing paths towards wealth-building.

[Read the full story here!](#)



Where we go from here



Equity is a pathway

Cities must strive for equitable outcomes and approaches throughout their efforts to serve the public. Individual actions, processes, or policies – no matter how “good” - do not alone address inequities.

Key approaches necessary to ongoing equity work include:

- Data gathering and visualization
- Meaningfully engaging and sharing decision making power with communities
- Making governance processes transparent; shedding light on power
- Community wealth building and decreasing cost burdens

Cities are Leading the Way on Equitable Climate Policy

- For stronger climate action, cities need policies that center the our most vulnerable communities.
- To maximize emissions reductions and address critical issues, cities need to target resources and investment where they are most needed.
- Cities around the country are demonstrating that equitable policy can be transformative for our society and planet.