

Energize Denver Task Force – Meeting #2 (Equity Workshop)

February 18, 2021 – via Zoom

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

Meeting in Brief

The Task Force had its second meeting, focusing on what it means to *advance racial equity* in developing a Building Performance Policy to transition existing Denver buildings to Net Zero Energy by 2040. Dr. Dwinita Mosby Tyler led the Task Force through discussions about the history, context and meaning of racial equity, and what it means in the context of a building performance policy and for the work of this Task Force.

Click [here](#) for the Task Force Charter and membership, a video recording of the meeting, future meeting announcements, and other materials.

What Do We Mean by Racial Equity and a Racial Equity Lens?

The Energize Denver Task Force is charged with developing a building performance policy for existing commercial and multifamily buildings that advances equity and racial justice. Katrina Managan grounded the discussion in the City's various efforts to address racial equity in Denver, the project schedule and equity-related questions to be answered, and an initial sense from the Equity Workgroup about what racial equity means for Denver's building performance policy.

Dr. Mosby Tyler led a discussion of the history, context and meaning of racial equity, and what it means to adopt an equity lens in solving problems like decarbonizing buildings. The Task Force then met in small groups to brainstorm *questions that are most important to have in a Racial Equity Lens* to guide the work of the Task Force. The small group discussions are summarized below.

The compiled presentations by Katrina Managan and Dr. Mosby-Tyler are available [here](#).

What does racial equity mean to us? Task Force members brainstormed the following in small groups:

- End users of this policy are represented, including tenants (commercial and multi-family residential) as well as building owners and operators.
- Working hard to reach and benefit people of color. (E.g, in electrifying buildings, ensure we don't leave behind those that can't afford to make the switch and are left with high gas rates or outdated systems, impacting folks of color).
- Starting with a race-first approach, don't require solutions to be one size fits all.
- Focus on racial equity, thus identifying barriers that apply to other historically disadvantaged groups.
- Examining how policies will affect different groups, focusing on housing and health.
- Thinking about human beings rather than sectors; prioritizing folks with the least opportunities historically.
- Educating end users; prioritizing people of color, especially those struggling most (e.g., single moms).
- Focusing on equity rather than equality (in terms of process and impact).
- Trying our best to reach all stakeholders.
- Prioritizing those most impacted by extreme weather events and historic racial injustice.
- Reckoning with the past, not brushing it under the rug; creating a shared understanding of our racial history so we can repair it and ensure all racial groups are able to thrive.

- Ensuring race is not a barrier to accessing opportunities; understanding that removing historic barriers may require treating groups differently.
- Begin with respect and appreciation for someone's background and as an individual.
- Recognizing the systems we can control, and those we cannot.
- Recognizing real systems change is uncomfortable.
- Recognizing that what we can accomplish may be limited, but it is still an accomplishment.

In small groups, members brainstormed a long list of questions to include in a Racial Equity Lens. Those questions will be refined by the Equity Work Group and shared back with the Task Force. They include, for example:

- Are the **voices** of people of color and other historically marginalized groups/communities at the table or are they being consulted? Who's **missing**?
- How will our decision **impact** people of color and other marginalized groups/communities?
- How will the decision be **perceived** by people of color and other marginalized groups/communities?
- Does the policy **advance** racial equity? Are we anticipating and avoiding downstream **consequences**?
- Have we built in flexibility to **evaluate** outcomes and **improve** policies based on what is working and not working?

The small groups then applied the equity lens questions to a real-world scenario, to see what insights arose and what questions were missing, and to begin to think about operationalizing the lens. Take-aways included:

- We need to be intentional about the 'racial' part of 'racial equity' as we apply the questions above.
- In discussing potential policy impacts on people of color and other marginalized groups, we should consider the cost of inaction and alternative approaches.
- We need to question assumptions and ensure we define the terms we are using.
- Potential impacts on affordability include many different facets (e.g., housing cost, rent, utilities).
- We should consider how cost and impact varies by building (e.g., potential rental increases for communities of color, trickle-down impact in buildings that haven't been maintained as well or don't have a modern system).
- We need to consider how to empower tenants and get them excited about landlords doing the work; education will be key for creating energy and excitement to participate.
- This should be discussed as an inclusive team effort, involving building owners, tenants, workers, neighborhood groups, and others.
- Helping owners comply will benefit tenants (e.g., preapproving vendors that come from and work with communities of color; assisting owners through technical assistance and financing).
- The policy roll-out should include diverse forms of communication, training and resources, including communicating the benefits to communities of color, in addition to the broader community.
- Looking at health and housing data, e.g., asthma rates, types of housing, foreclosures or evictions, building ownership by race/ethnicity, will help illuminate equity issues and determine intervention points where the building policy can make a difference.
- We should set racial equity goals before identifying barriers or opportunities to advance racial equity.
- We should prioritize folks experiencing racial inequity now; if we focus on benefitting and not harming people of color, 'all ships will rise.'

Finally, in discussing what **success** might look like from a racial equity perspective, Task Force members shared the following:

- Achieving Denver’s carbon goals while providing health and economic benefits, as well as avoiding and mitigating potential harm, for people of color and historically marginalized groups, including tenants, workers, and neighborhoods.
- Laying a foundation that we can adapt, grow and change over the upcoming years.
- Co-creating and co-implement solutions with communities that have historically and are currently experiencing injustice.

The Equity Workgroup will meet on March 4 to advance today’s discussion by developing a draft Racial Equity Lens for Task Force consideration. The Equity Workgroup will propose a process going forward to refine and apply the Equity Lens to policy options being considered by the Task Force.

Wrap Up & Next Steps

Katrina Managan reminded the group of the Equity, Workforce and Climate Solutions Workgroups that were created after the January Task Force meeting, including the composition and current tasks of each. Those slides are included at the end of the presentation referenced above and are available [here](#).

The Task Force will meet on Thursday, March 18 at 1-4pm to review relevant building performance policy approaches and resources, and to shape the policy-development process. A pre-meeting substantive briefing will be held Monday, March 8 at 10:30am for Task Force members.

Meeting Attendees

The meeting was attended by the following Task Force members, City staff and consultants:

City of Denver – Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resilience

Grace Rink, Executive Director
 Katrina Managan, Buildings Team and Task Force lead
 Liz Babcock, Climate Action Team Director
 Amber Wood, Energy Program Administrator
 Jan Keleher, Building Electrification Lead
 Maria Thompson, Buildings Program Administrator
 Jarrett Vigil, Buildings Intern

Dr. Dwinita Mosby Tyler, The Equity Project (workshop lead)
 Jeremy Hays, equity and climate consultant (through US Climate Alliance)
 Ryan Golten, Consensus Building Institute (facilitator)

Task Force Members

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|--------------|------------|-----------|---|
| Present | | | |
| x | Arellano | Frank | LBA Realty |
| X (by phone) | Barstnar | Kathie | NAIOP Colorado |
| x | Brinker | Christine | Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) |
| x | Buerge | Jon | Urban Villages |
| x | Bustamante | Eddie | LiUNA! Local 720 |
| x | Cappelli | Jonathan | Neighborhood Development Collaborative |
| x | Cizik | Celeste | Group 14 Engineering |
| x | Clark | Jolon | Denver City Council District 7 |
| x | Cordova | Sergio | Pipefitters Local Union No. 208 |

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|---|-----------|----------|--|
| x | Dyers | Monique | Ensign Energy Consulting, LLC |
| x | Fletcher | Angela | Denver Housing Authority |
| x | Gonzales | Jennie | IBEW 68 |
| x | Gonzalez | Ariana | Natural Resources Defense Council |
| x | Gremmert | Jennifer | Energy Outreach Colorado |
| x | Knaizer | Sam | BPX Energy, BP America |
| x | Kruger | Mike | Colorado Solar and Storage Association (COSSA) |
| x | Martinez | Aaron | Urban Land Conservancy |
| x | Mayhew | Amie | Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association |
| x | Morgan | Steve | Rocky Mountain Association of Energy Engineers |
| x | Muccio | Peter | Apartment Association of Metro Denver |
| x | Pace | Lori | Denver Metro Association of Realtors |
| x | Prestidge | Scott | Colorado Oil and Gas Association |
| x | Smith | Tyler | Xcel Energy |
| x | Shephard | Stephen | Denver Metro BOMA |
| x | Wilford | Jenny | Colorado Sierra Club |