

## **Marlene Odia, 2023 EDI Fellow for the City of Evanston, Illinois**



**Project Overview and Role (1-2 Paragraphs):** OBJECTIVE As the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Fellow of the City of Evanston Sustainability and Resilience division, I primarily worked on the Environmental Equity Investigation (EEI), an outcome of the Resolution to Support Environmental Justice ordinance that was passed in 2020. I gathered narratives from Evanstonians of color and connected their lived experiences with data related to their environment, with a focus on environmental justice. These data include life expectancy, tree canopy cover, surface temperature and Homes Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC). I

conducted a geographic information systems (GIS) analysis to understand the correlation between land surface temperature, tree canopy cover, and HOLC grades, revealing how historical redlining policies continue to shape present-day environmental inequities in Evanston. The GIS analysis demonstrated how historically redlined areas in Evanston are the hottest compared to areas that we graded higher in the HOLC maps. In summary, my role was to amplify the voices of marginalized Evanston residents, shedding light on environmental injustices while contributing to the city's broader sustainability and equity goals.

### **What did you learn from the project?**

- I learned the significance of community engagement to connect with and empower residents. It's in the best interest of the city to be more intentional about informing, consulting, involving and collaborating with all residents, particularly marginalized communities.
- Effective collaboration across various departments and disciplines is essential to tackle complex sustainability and equity challenges.
- Engaging and communicating with diverse stakeholders including elected officials, city staff, and community organizations, is crucial for garnering support to advance climate and resilience goals.
- Addressing inequities perpetuated or created by city governance is integral to achieving climate resilience.

- Successful climate and resilience actions require the involvement of everyone from local communities, different departments within local governments, educational entities to businesses.

**What was the impact of your work?**

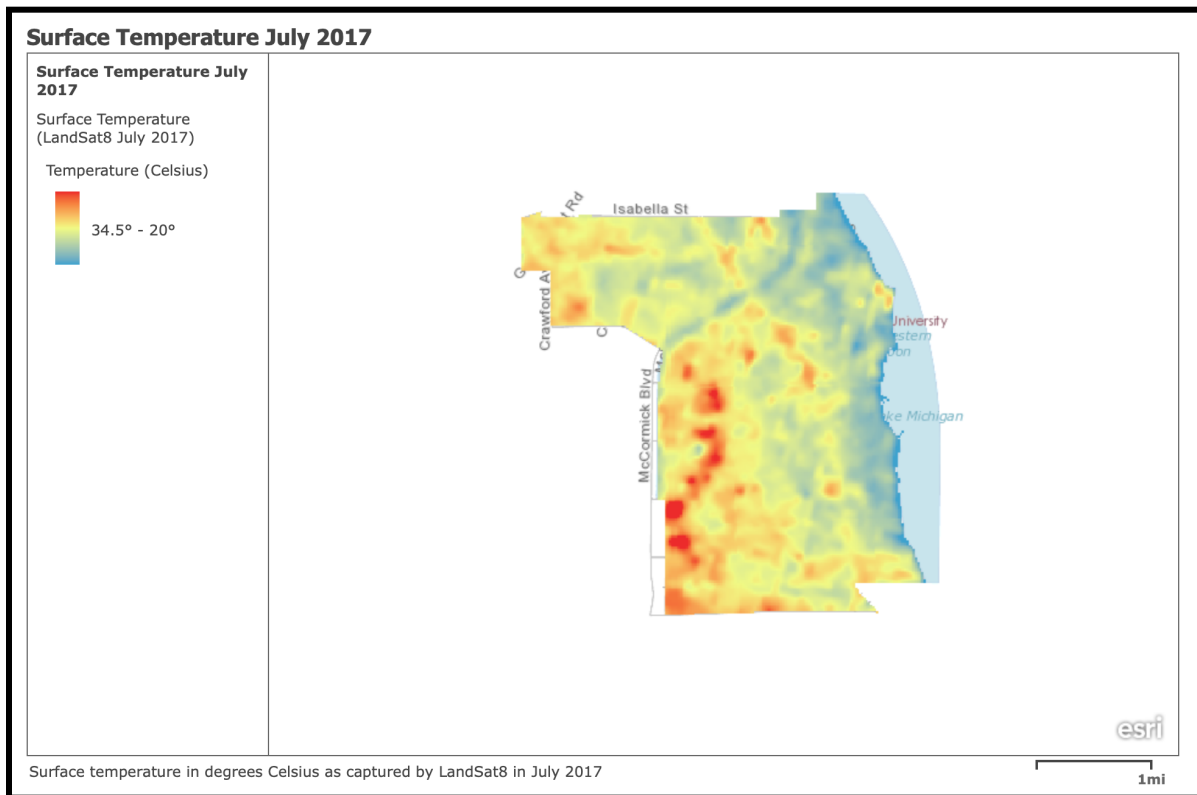
The analysis of the relationship between heat, tree canopy cover and health can foster greater awareness and understanding of climate-related issues among residents, and serve as:

- A baseline for citizen science campaign to inform the public on the impacts of climate on their communities.
- An educational tool accessible through the Sustainability’s dashboard.

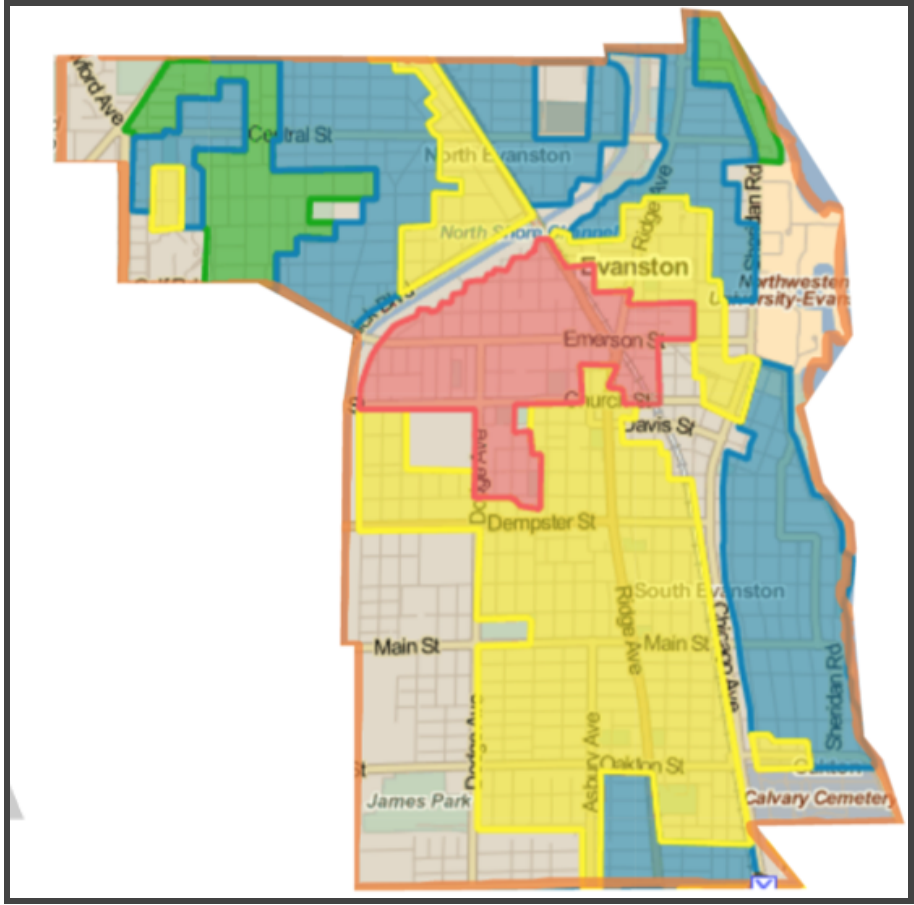
**Any links to project deliverables?**

Narrative storytelling -

<https://storymaps.com/stories/ea49529046fc4b98aecb1bbc37bf9b23>



This is a GIS map illustrating heat distribution across Evanston.



This is an illustration of the HOLC maps of the city of Evanston.