

PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

Equity is a practice more than a prescription — a practice that requires continuous commitment, learning, iteration, and improvement. Contributors to the Buildings and Equity Framework identified these twelve Principles of Practice to help cities center equity in their buildings policies and programs. These principles underpin the framework and wider building and equity practice. See the additional resources by leading organizations highlighted through the Equity and Buildings Framework and in the Appendix on Page 54 for more information.

- 1. Make impacted communities, which are continuing to lead equity and building work nationwide, central to planning and projects.** Communities have lived experience, knowledge, and expertise that is critical to designing equitable building outcomes. Deep collaboration with community groups and members ensures that more equitable policies and outcomes are truly accountable to those who are most impacted.
- 2. Build stronger policies by actively centering equity.** Making community priorities central builds broader support for bolder policies. Focusing on equity does not undermine climate urgency but rather enables policy development that produces stronger outcomes.
- 3. Understand the people ('the who') of buildings.** Look at buildings as places where families live, learn, play, socialize, work, and rest. This perspective reveals opportunities to improve peoples' lives by creating understanding of how communities interact with the built environment, and what their priorities are.
- 4. Collaborate across departments and disciplines to produce policies and programs that better address equity issues.** Working across silos allows policies to move beyond solely focusing on buildings' greenhouse gas emissions to also providing critical health, resilience, environmental, and economic benefits for communities.
- 5. Address root causes.** Conduct analyses to understand existing or past policies that hinder progress on equity in the built environment, such as redlining, zoning, infrastructure investments, and procurement practices. These structures may be under the jurisdiction of different city departments, but their impacts may need to be addressed in building work.
- 6. Prioritize reparations over reducing additional harm for deeper healing and better outcomes.** Equity work acknowledges the systems that have created current inequities and suffering. Effective policies specifically address the persistent harm of such systems and improve the lives of those most affected by large-scale, long-term investments.
- 7. Shift funding and financing structures to directly support increased capacity in impacted communities.** Sustainable resourcing prioritizes community capacity and decision-making power. Direct investments in disenfranchised communities allow for deeper collaboration in the design of bold climate and building policies. Sustained investments are required to build relationships and achieve equitable outcomes.

8. Share data and information transparently. Open and transparent resource sharing is a powerful avenue for creating equitable policies. A lack of access to data can cause roadblocks and deepen inequities in accessing power and self-determination. Data should be made available between city departments, community partners, and the public so it can be leveraged to support existing community leadership.

9. Orient work and goals around shifting power and self-determination. Advancing equity requires shifting power and correcting power imbalances. Shifting decision-making power and control to communities requires existing power holders – individuals and institutions in local government – to understand the power they possess.

10. Prioritize making economic opportunities work for marginalized communities. All climate policies have economic implications. It is important to ensure that people who have historically been left behind benefit from these policies' positive economic impacts. Policies or programs should set high-road job creation, community ownership, and wealth building as explicit goals.²

11. Lay a foundation of equitable decision-making processes and transparent accountability measures. The purpose of engaging impacted communities is to make informed decisions that best address urgent issues. Community engagement should be designed on a scale suited to each point in the policy process while ensuring that government is accountable to impacted communities.

12. Tie success directly to equity. A successful building policy or program should improve both sustainability and equity. Local governments must work with the community to develop and track meaningful equity metrics to be used alongside traditional environmental indicators.

² High road refers to social and environmental responsibilities. Supporting policies focus on over labor quality and not just cost.