



CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE IN PLANNING FOR URBAN FLOOD RESILIENCE

PRINCIPLE #1 | FOCUS ON ROOT CAUSES

Header photo by Rikin Katyal on Unsplash

Urban flood resilience plans and policies should address root causes of racial injustice, such as poverty, racial segregation, income and wealth inequity, and loss of social capital and cohesion. Today, minority communities face higher levels of urban flood risk as a direct result of discriminatory housing, land use, and infrastructure policies. Adopting an anti-racist approach to flood adaptation will ensure that racial injustice is not perpetuated or worsened in the pursuit of resilient cities.

Urban planning in the United States has a checkered history of creating and upholding environmental racism. Today, minority communities face higher levels of urban flood risk as a direct result of discriminatory housing, land use, and infrastructure policies. In order to correct these disparities, those past harms must be confronted head-on.

Putting this Principle into Action

Local governments and their planning departments can:

- Incorporate root causes identified by frontline communities into agency strategic or action plans
- Commit to hiring locally
- Commit to awarding a percentage of contracts to minority-owned businesses
- Host or support training and skill building programs for under-employed residents
- Host or support training and skill building programs for formerly incarcerated populations

Example from the Great Lakes

Cleveland, Ohio's 2018 Climate Adaptation Plan provides an example of how cities can gear their planning practices to focus on the root causes of disparities in climate vulnerability. The city developed

the Racial Equity Measuring Tool for its updated 2018 Climate Adaptation Plan, which is paired with a Community-Wide Vulnerability Assessment Template to address histories of harm by government planning officials and agencies, as well as ongoing inequities in the planning process.

This toolkit provides a system-based resource for coalitions of communities, organizations and city agencies to identify an equitable standard of vulnerability rooted in acknowledgement of past harm.

USEFUL TOOLS AVAILABLE

Bounce Forward: Urban Resilience in the Era of Climate Change is a strategy paper released by Island Press and the Kresge Foundation in 2015. The paper provides an Urban Resilience Integrated Framework which can be used as a guide for making equitable decisions in the initial stages of flood adaptation planning and continuously revisited.