



Welcome to *The Current*, the North Central Region Water Network's Speed Networking Webinar Series

Equity and Green Infrastructure: 2PM CT

1. Submit your questions for presenters via the chat box. The chat box is accessible via the purple collaborate panel in the lower right corner of the webinar screen.
2. There will be a dedicated Q & A session following the last presentation.
3. A phone-in option can be accessed by opening the Session menu in the upper left area of the webinar screen and selecting "Use your phone for audio".

This session will be recorded and available at northcentralwater.org and learn.extension.org. For the best user experience we recommend using Google Chrome.





Today's Presenters:

- **Carla Walker**, Founder and CEO, think BIG Strategies, LLC
- **Tony Heath**, Civil and Environmental Engineer and Urban Planner, Fishbeck, Inc.
- **Yordanose Solomone**, Director of Equitable Engagement, Metro Blooms

Follow @northcentralh2o and #TheCurrent on Twitter for live tweets!





Carla Walker

Carla has advised elected officials, non-profit and business leaders at home and abroad for nearly 20 years. In 2010, she founded think BIG strategies, a boutique consultancy that provides strategic council and public relations initiatives for not for profit, start up and public sector clients. She specializes in projects that are in the environmental space and those that have a global reach or impact. Carla is a board member for Ohio Citizen's Action and in 2018, she was appointed by the Mayor of Cincinnati to serve on the Cincinnati Environmental Advisory Council. Carla holds an M.P. A. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, an M.S. in Environmental Science & Engineering from the University of Florida and a B.S. from the University of Cincinnati.




An Equity Lens on Green Infrastructure

THE CURRENT
AUG. 12, 2020

Carla Walker
carla@thinkbigstrategies.com





SEEDS OF WISDOM

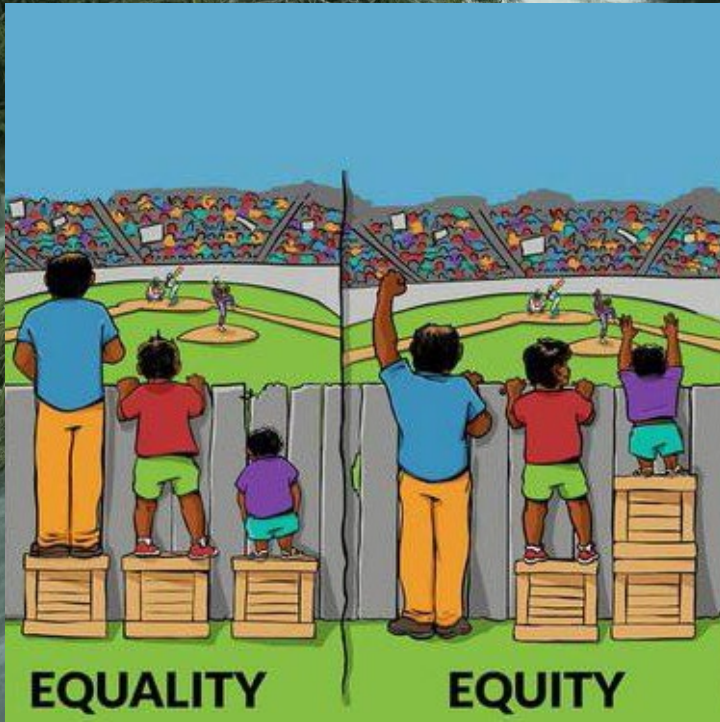
"Smart infrastructure can provide cost-saving ways for municipalities to handle both infrastructure and social needs. And we want to shift the systems that open the doors for people who were formerly tax burdens to become part of the tax base."

MAJORA CARTER

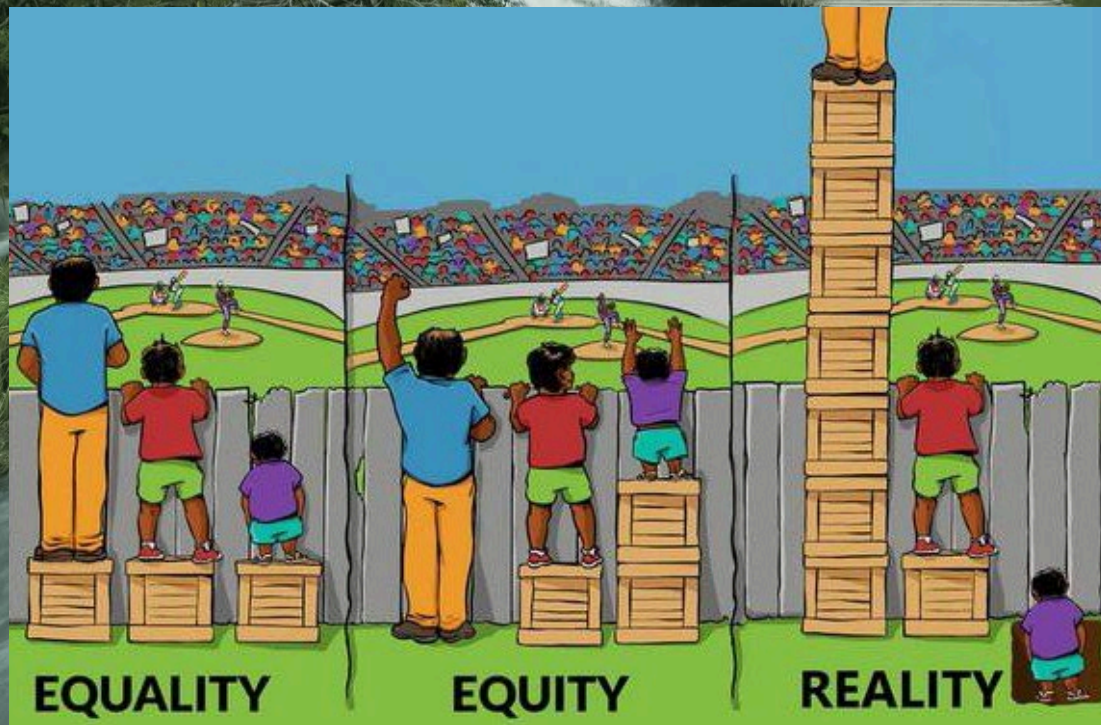
CONCEPTS, CONTEXT & FRAMING



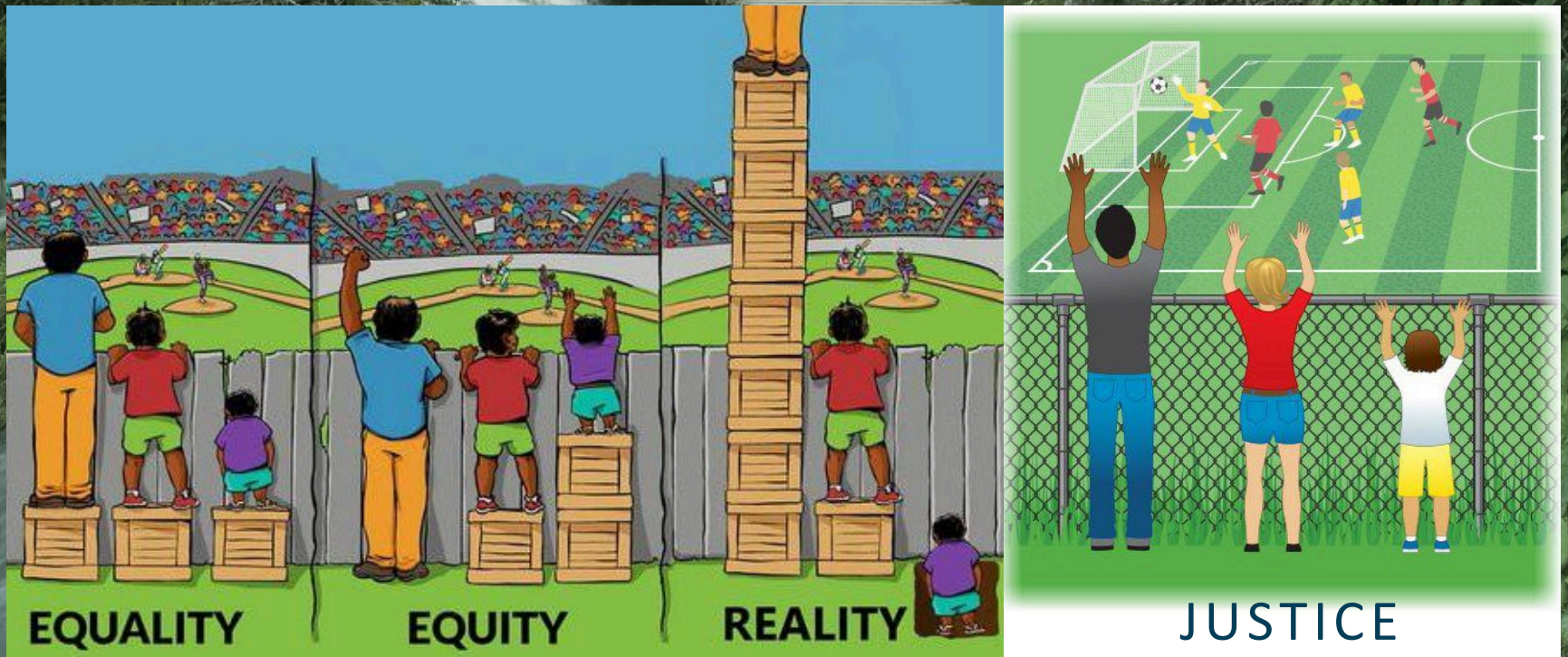
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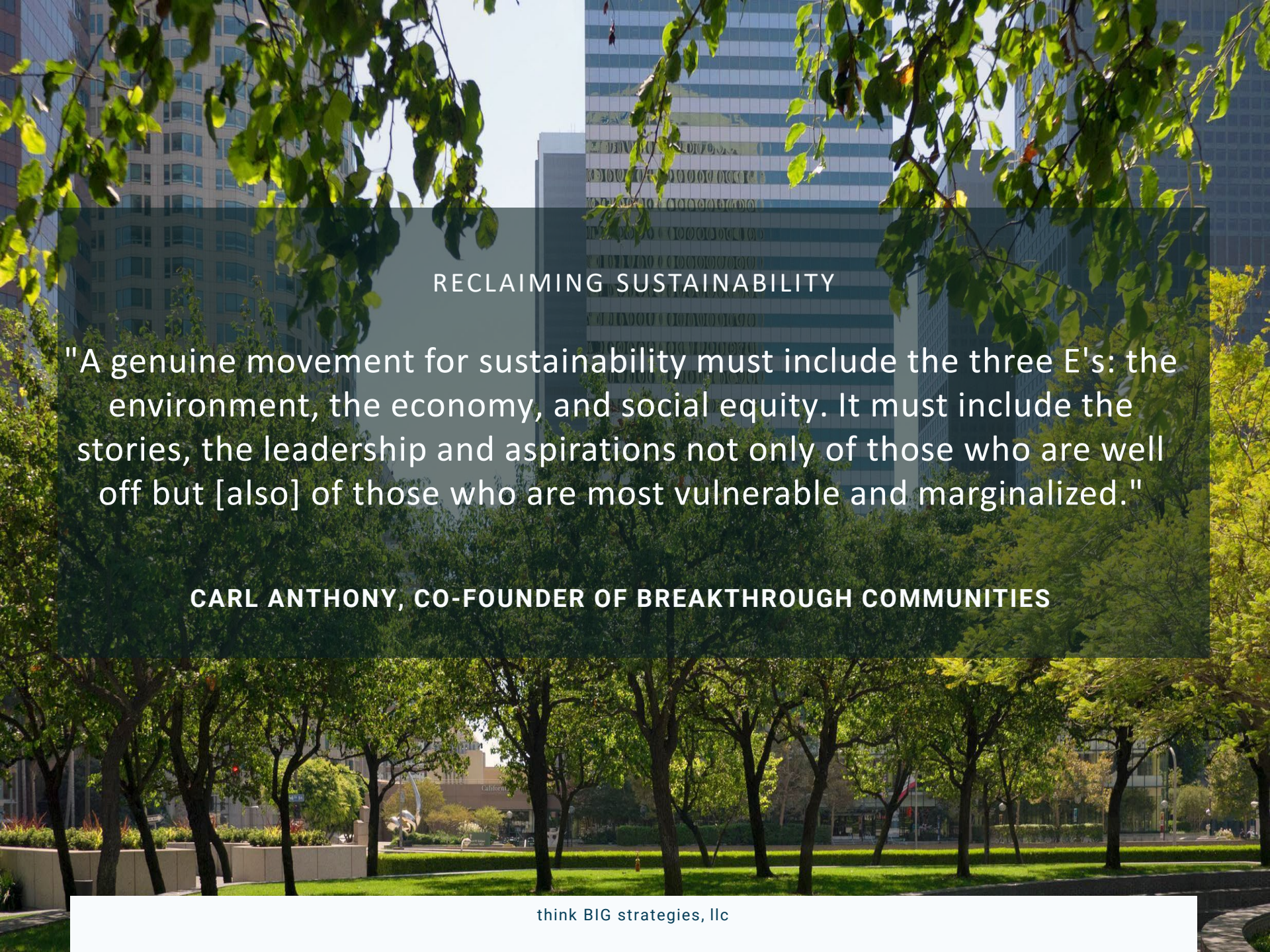


CONCEPTS, CONTEXT & FRAMING



CONCEPTS, CONTEXT & FRAMING





RECLAIMING SUSTAINABILITY

"A genuine movement for sustainability must include the three E's: the environment, the economy, and social equity. It must include the stories, the leadership and aspirations not only of those who are well off but [also] of those who are most vulnerable and marginalized."

CARL ANTHONY, CO-FOUNDER OF BREAKTHROUGH COMMUNITIES



Social Equity

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

“the fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract, and
the fair and equitable distribution of public services, and
the fair and equitable implementation of public policy, and
the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy.”



Unintended Consequences

ECO GENTRIFICATION

The seemingly progressive discourse of urban sustainability is used to drive up property values and displace low-income residents.

Unintended Consequences

The New York Times

Free Trees? Many Detroit Residents Say No Thanks

It's not that residents don't like trees, a recent study found. They just don't quite trust the city to take care of them.



Download The New York Times app. Keep the facts close.

DISENGAGEMENT

Disconnected from the project as it is planned, implemented, or maintained.



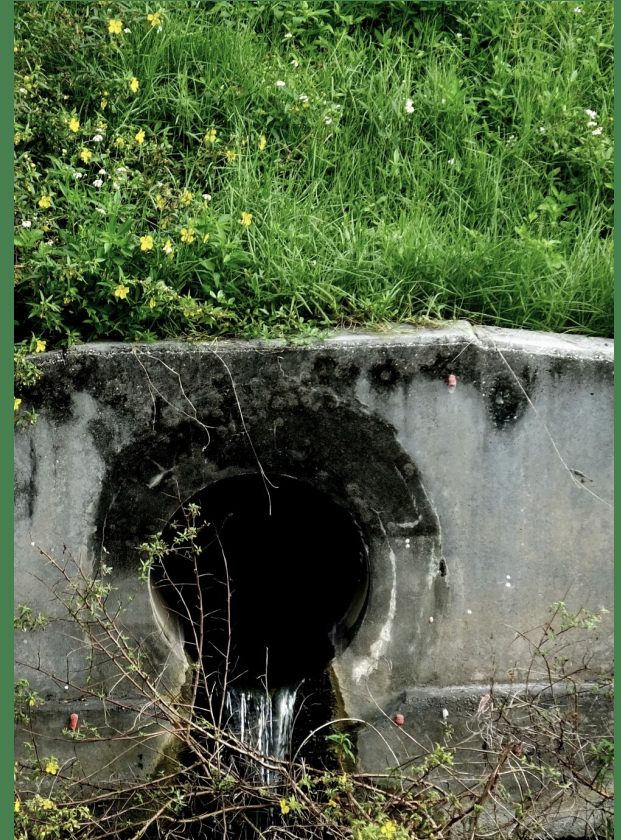
Cities, Climate, Equity

2015 PSU STUDY

"relatively few U.S. cities were making social equity goals an important component of their climate and sustainability plans."

2018 THE GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT

The opportunity to include equity considerations in climate plans to address the experiences of marginalized citizens and vulnerable communities disproportionately burdened by climate change.





Cities, Climate, Equity

2017 NLC CONFERENCE

100+ elected officials signed letter to the President reiterating the role of cities to affect climate change.

2020 CAREY INSTITUTE STUDY

"Cities treated equity as an aspirational goal and included no "mechanisms for assessment or enforcement".

LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE PLANS

US Mayors have crafted local or regional climate action or sustainable action plans to uphold the Paris Accords.

Cities, Climate, Equity

**C40
MAYORS'
AGENDA
FOR A
GREEN
AND JUST
RECOVERY**



Equitable Green Infrastructure

2010 HISTORIC RAIN EVENT

nearly \$32 million in damages

more than 4,000 incidents of basement backups

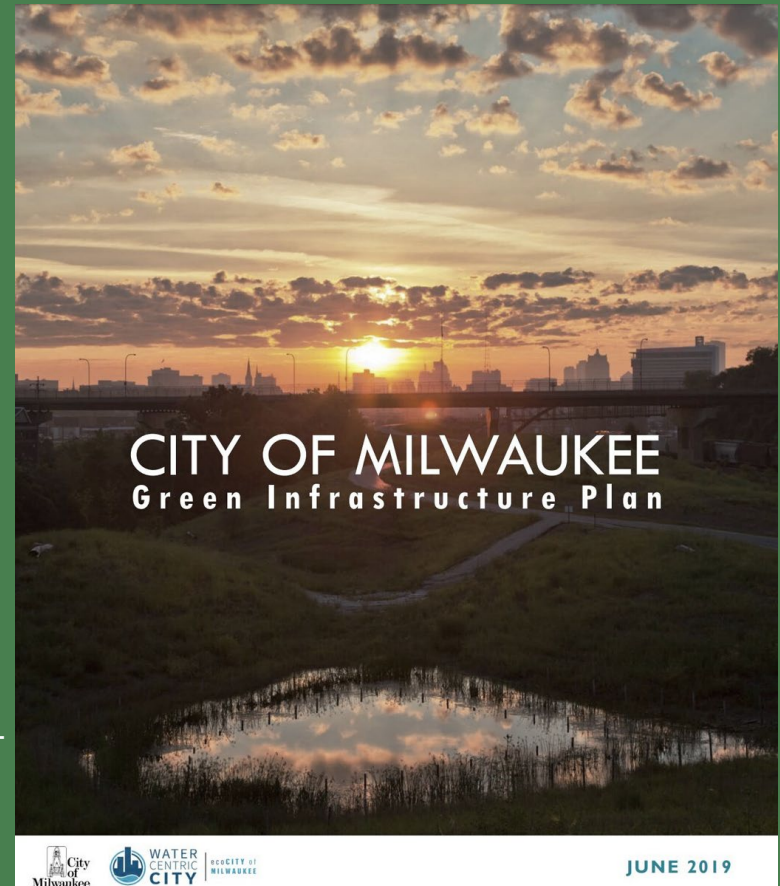
2019 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

requires GI on all large developments through ordinance

prioritizes training and job opportunities

a policy to create a diverse and equitable green workforce

partnership between the city and a local community-based non-profit



PERSPECTIVE



"This whole question of environment, economics, and equity is a three-legged stool. If the third leg of that stool is dealt with as an afterthought that stool won't stand.

The equity components have to be given equal weight.

But racial and economic and social equity can be very painful topics: people get uncomfortable when questions of poor people and race are raised."

DR. ROBERT BULLARD



CARLA WALKER

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Tony Heath

Tony Heath is a civil and environmental engineer and urban planner who specializes in green infrastructure planning and design with Fishbeck in Grand Rapids. He holds a engineering bachelor degree in civil and environmental engineering from Vanderbilt University and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from University of Illinois. Tony's work includes civil engineering site design using traditional and green stormwater practices across the Midwest and Southeastern U.S., third party review of low-impact-development design plans for Metro Nashville, and storm water planning for campus and community areas. He was the lead engineer on the Red Oak Rain Garden Renovation on the Illinois campus in 2019.



Workforce Development & Equity through Green Infrastructure

Lessons Learned from Community
Listening Sessions

By: Tony Heath, P.E.

What is Green Infrastructure?

- Green Infrastructure (GI) is a variety practices which restores or mimics natural systems
- From a hydrologic perspective, GI improves water quality and reduces flooding at a lower long-term cost than traditional “grey” systems
- GI practices can include rain gardens, permeable pavements, constructed wetlands and more

Need for this Study

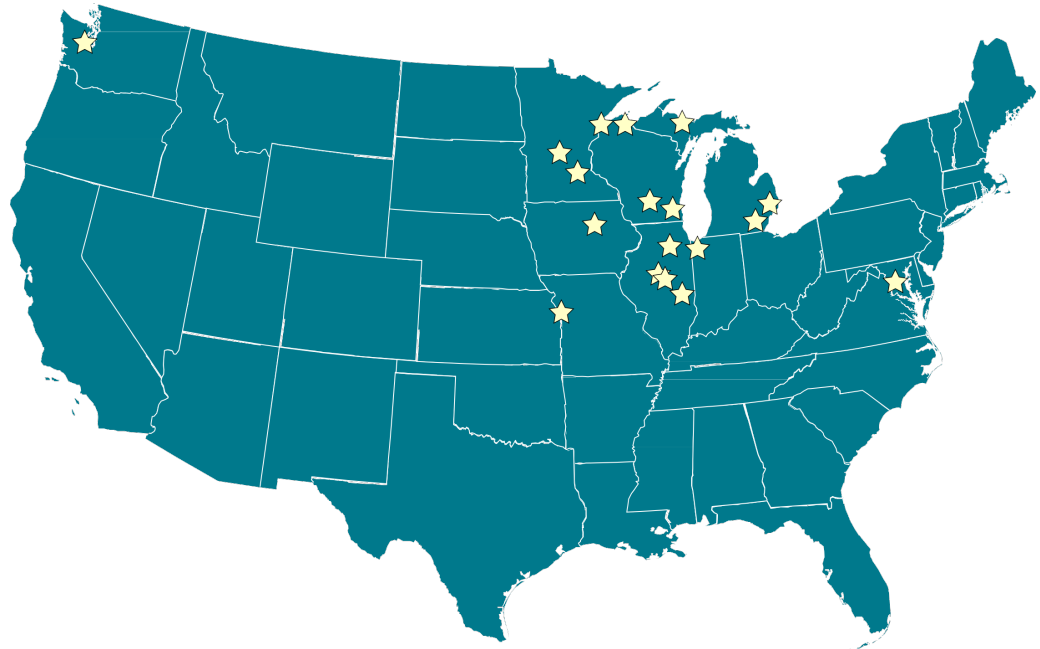
- Cities across the US are turning to green infrastructure (GI) to **update aging systems**
- As GI becomes widespread the number of **related jobs will continue to grow**
- The co-benefits of GI can be a **tool for social justice**
- However, lack of institutional knowledge and formal guidance have led to a **highly-localized approach**

Listening Session Overview

18 listening sessions across 9 states representing more than 30 communities.

3 Main Themes:

1. How are communities using GI to address equity issues?
2. How are communities using GI as a means for workforce development?
3. What other barriers exist for communities to implement successful GI and how can we help address them?



Listening Session Locations

Discussion Questions

1. Tell us about the GI in this community.
2. Beyond stormwater management, are there any other goals or benefits you hope to come from your GI projects?
3. What are the factors that determine where GI is installed in this community?
4. What are the considerations for design and maintenance when incorporating GI in your community? Is there potential for workforce development?
5. Have there been any other equity programs that you've implemented or other major challenges that you've faced when incorporating GI in this community?

Green Infrastructure & Equity

- Stormwater management is an equity issue.
- Residents in flood prone areas are often marginalized in other ways
- GI has unique potential to not only address flooding but also long-standing social inequities such as pollution and lack of access to green space through derived co-benefits

A Co-Benefit Mindset

“We never want to do anything for just one reason, we always look at the triple or quadruple bottom line.” -Lisa Sasso, Milwaukee MSD

- GI is a **tool for community improvement, not just stormwater management**
- Funding is tight. Ask what else this project can do and **get more for your money**
- Despite this potential, communities preferred technical approaches to avoid the appearance of bias but **technical approaches are not neutral**
- Institutional biases mean that if equity is not an explicit part of the decision-making process, projects will **continue to deepen existing inequities**
- **What are we hoping to achieve with this project? Who is this going to benefit?**

Case Brief: City of Peoria, IL

- City of Peoria is under an EPA Mandate to address combined sewer overflow (CSO) issues
- CSO area is in the **oldest area of town, which is also one of the poorest areas** of town
- City leaders **saw this as an opportunity** to both address stormwater management and invest in their community
- Since 2013 Peoria has employed a GI-based approach to stormwater management that includes **education and job-training** programs

“We’re mandated to do it because it’s in the CSO, but we were very cognizant of assigning those co-benefits so that we improved those areas of disinvestment and of poverty. **That way we can leverage that mandated stormwater management into a community improvement.**” - Jane Gerdes, Peoria Public Works

GI & Workforce Development

- As GI becomes more widespread the number of related jobs will continue to grow
- GI provides an opportunity new skilled jobs for underserved communities
- **Incidental** WD is the natural diffusion of skills as practices becomes more widespread
- **Deliberate** WD is when communities take a programatic approach to growing the industry

Deliberate Workforce Development

3 Main Approaches:

1. Training & certification programs
2. Pathway to employment programs
3. GI incubators



Workforce Development Challenges

- Existing programs have had **mixed results**
- Programs successfully disseminate skills but **fail to provide pathways to long-term GI careers**
- Lack of demand, seasonality, and low wages make GI installation an **unattractive career path**
- Move away from GI jobs and **focus on GI careers**

Case Brief: Rainwise, Seattle, WA

- GI incubator program launching in 2021
- Aimed at under-represented communities
- 0-100 training with hard and soft skills training



RainWise



Seattle
Public
Utilities



King County

Next Steps for Workforce Development

- How do we create green infrastructure careers, not just jobs?
- How do we reach underserved communities and grow the pool of green infrastructure contractors?

Top 5 Lessons Learned & Best Practices

1. Keep it simple
2. Emphasize co-benefits
3. GI careers, not jobs
4. Education at every level
5. Build relationships & establish partnerships



With Special Thanks to:

- Lisa Merrifield
- Listening Session Facilitators: Kathie Brown, Kara Salazar, Karina Heim, Lissa Radke, Martha Gerig, Meaghan Gass, and Shahram Missaghi
- Everyone who participated!

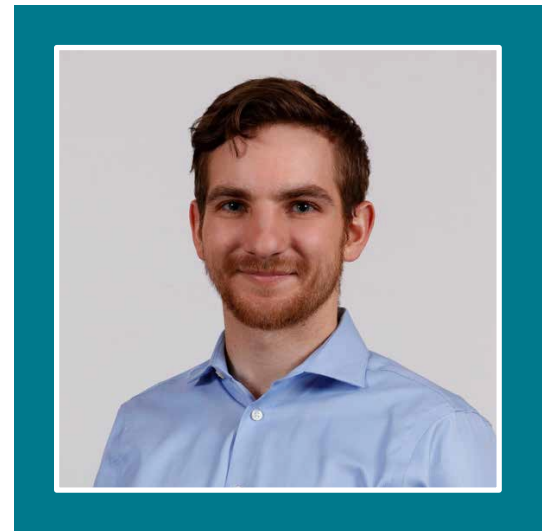
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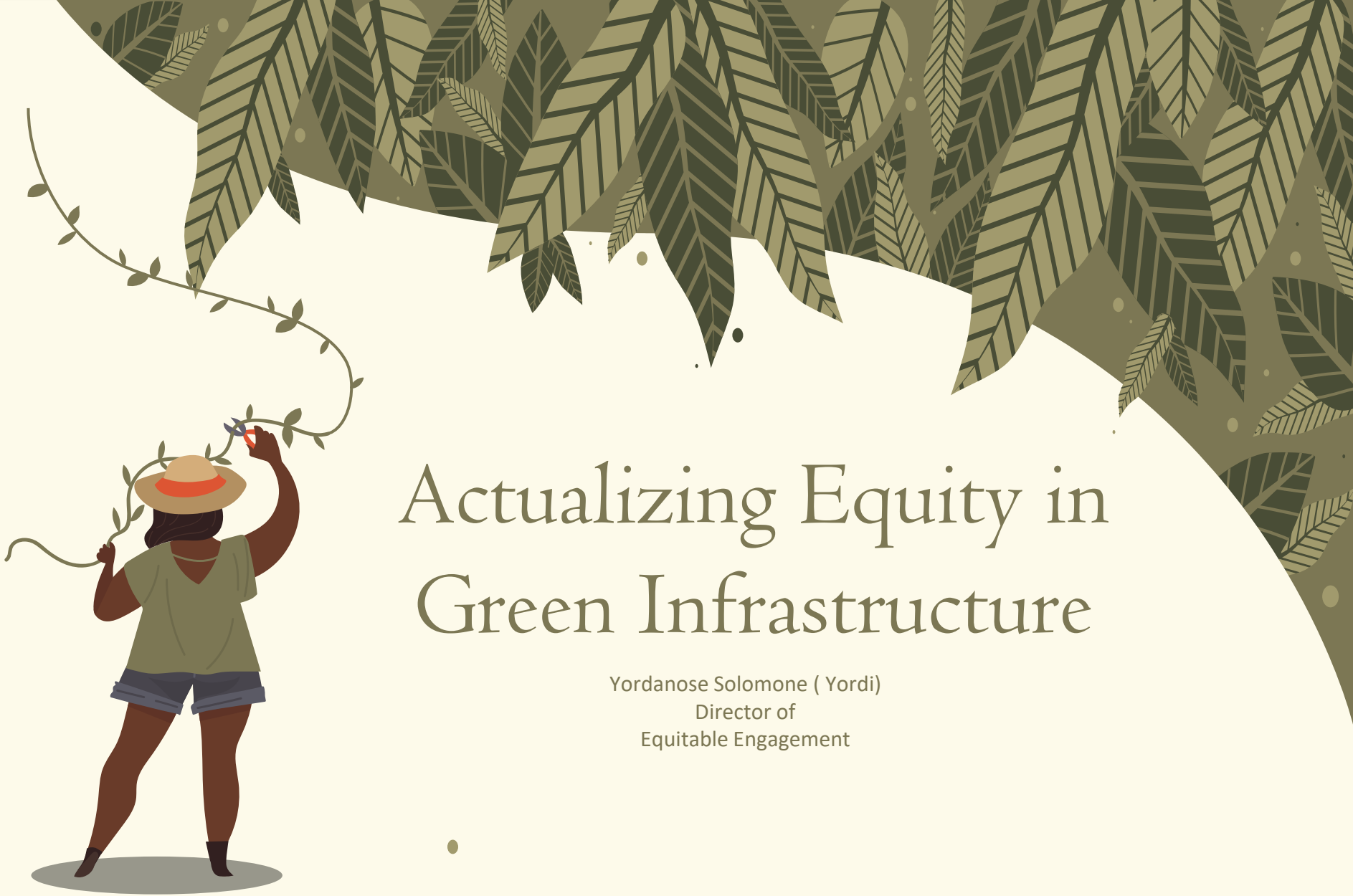
Tony Heath, P.E.



Yordanose Solomon

Yordanose is a Minneapolis transplant from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is the Director of Equitable Engagement and works at Metro Blooms on stormwater management and facilitating engagement of Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in water and climate change efforts. She has been facilitating anti-racist centered community organization since she was 16 years old. She is currently serving on the Heart of the Beast's MayDay Council in Minneapolis and is also a freelance artist that equitably serves Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) businesses and artists in the metro area. She is really passionate about how to meaningfully understand the multiple benefits and opportunities that environmental and art initiatives provide when equity, empowerment, and/or social justice lens is used to meaningfully involve vulnerable and underserved populations in our city. Yordi grew up in a multinational low-income immigrant household and uses she/they pronouns.





Actualizing Equity in Green Infrastructure

Yordanose Solomone (Yordi)
Director of
Equitable Engagement

A little about me

- Currently the Director of Equitable Engagement (as of yesterday) at Metro Blooms
- Community organizer
- Artist (dancer, digital artist, transformative justice enthusiast)
- BS, UMN in Environmental Science Management and Policy
 - Training in Ethiopia, Kenya + Uganda, East Asia, Middle East around social justice/intersection with the land, water and the our surrounding
 - Climate Reality Trained in 2019 (under Al Gore)



01

What is Metro Blooms?

A little about my organization

03

Our Projects

a little sneak peak

02

Lens used for GI approach

Some fun lenses to think about
our framing

04

Revisioning + Refining

Where do we want to be?

Metro Blooms

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that partners with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds, embracing the values of equity and inclusion to solve environmental challenges.



BlueThumb

Metro Blooms also coordinates the Blue Thumb program, a partnership between contractors, landscapers, nurseries and local governments promoting ecologically functional landscapes to improve water quality and create habitat





Workshops

Ideas to help you build a more resilient yard, including information on raingardens, native planting, creating habitat for pollinators, turf alternatives, healthy soils and more

Consultation

Visit with a landscape designer to identify issues and talk about opportunities

Equitable
Engagement

Education

Consultation

Maintenance

Design +
Installations


Maintenance (care for the land)

Onsite maintenance services to keep your resilient landscapes functioning and beautiful.

What do we do?



Metro Blooms



At Metro Blooms, we define **Equitable Engagement** as the intentional participation of a community, with emphasis on those most impacted or underserved (renters, people of color, low-income or otherwise marginalized) by green infrastructure projects and those most often underrepresented within environmental improvement projects.



Community members planting a raingarden at Riverside Plaza after months of planning

Photo credit - Aleli B., Metro Blooms reporter



Where are we doing Equitable Engagement ?

Affordable Housing Communities

- Autumn Ridge
- Riverside Plaza
- Brook Gardens and Brooks Landing

Organizations + Associations

- Tenant organizations
- Neighborhood orgs

Environmental Justice Neighborhoods

- North Minneapolis (Harrison pilot)
- Phillips and American Indian community
- Community organizers

Consulting Partnerships

- Sierra Club

PURPOSE

PEOPLE

Who is positively and negatively affected (by this issue) and how?

How are people differently situated in terms of the barriers they experience?

Are people traumatized/retraumatized by your issue/decision area?

Consider physical, spiritual, emotional and contextual effects

PLACE

How are you/your issue or decision accounting for people's emotional and physical safety, and their need to be productive and feel valued?

How are you considering environmental impacts as well as environmental justice?

How are public resources and investments distributed geographically?

ISSUE/ DECISION

PROCESS

How are we meaningfully including or excluding people (communities of color) who are affected?

What policies, processes and social relationships contribute to the exclusion of communities most affected by inequities?

Are there empowering processes at every human touchpoint?

What processes are traumatizing and how do we improve them?

POWER

What are the barriers to doing equity and racial justice work?

What are the benefits and burdens that communities experience with this issue?

Who is accountable?

What is your decision-making structure?

How is the current issue, policy, or program shifting power dynamics to better integrate voices and priorities of communities of color?

Equity and Empowerment Lens

Equity and Empowerment Lens

People: Who is impacted?

Place: How are resources distributed geographically?

Process: How are we designing the process itself?

Power: What are obstacles to do this kind of work?



Office of Diversity and Equity

Revised March 24, 2014

Affordable Housing Communities (as an example) Framing for effective GI



1. Project benefits those most impacted – the residents.
Project provides measurable benefits for the community



2. Building Community Capacity and Resilience WITH Affordable Housing Stakeholders



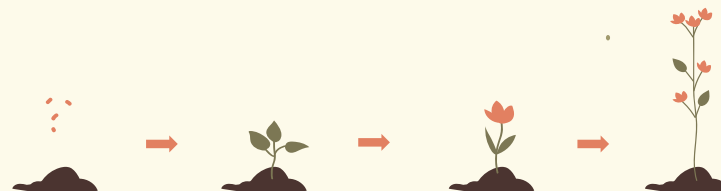
3. Affirm that our work does not contribute to displacement of existing residents

4. We acknowledge that we cannot address climate work without addressing racial equity.

Engaging & Empowering Residents

Resident project stewards are a valuable component of success.

Goal to foster grassroots leadership and increase agency among residents as part of engagement and stewardship strategy



Resident Meetings

Building trust between partners, tenants and property managers, facilitating conversations and co-creating a shared vision of a healthier environment

PRACTICAL EXERCISE





Leadership Training

Project stewards participate in leadership training focused on equitable engagement and environmental justice. Project stewards take a leadership role in their community.

Facilitated by local groups with established relationships in the community (ACER, etc.).

Stewards committed to leading engagement of fellow residents and receive equitable compensation for each engagement event they assist with.





Clean Water Picnics


Resident project stewards lead engagement activities at clean water picnics to share information about resilient landscapes, activate underutilized outdoor spaces, and gather feedback for landscape design.






Site plan with renderings for Autumn Ridge Apartments


Created by Rich H



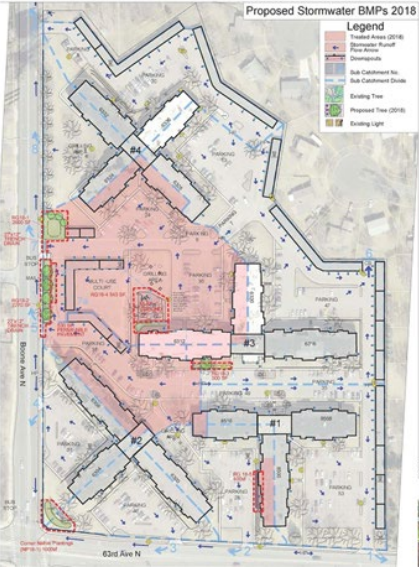
Bus Stop Entrance - Raingarden 1/Trench Drain




Mail Box Area - Raingarden 2 / Bench

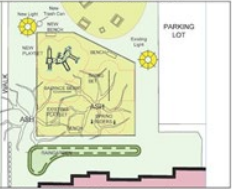


Erosion Areas - Raingarden 3





New Playground Equipment




Reconfigured Playground

Pollution Reduction from 2018 Projects

Treated Areas - 4.47 acres
Captured Runoff* - 2.67 Million Gallons
Captured Total Solids* - 4,418 Pounds
Captured Phosphorus* - 14.7 Pounds
*Annual Precipitation of 31.44"

2018 Raingardens will capture 8 acre-feet of runoff in 1 year, enough stormwater to fill the Multi-Use Court Area to 30-feet!



Multi Step Design Process

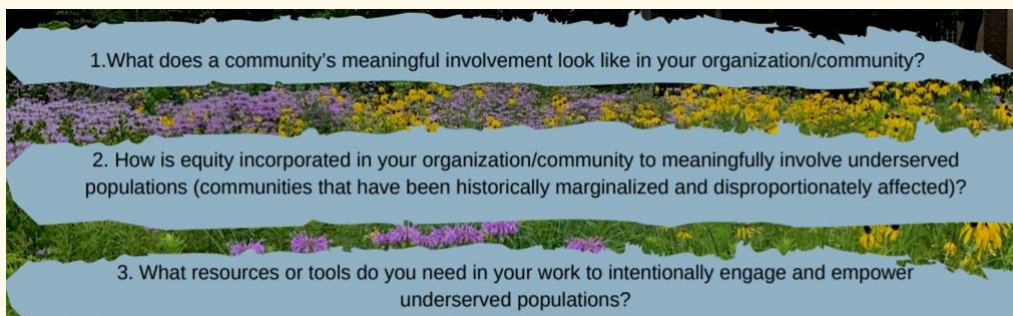
Resident Planting



Sharing

Stories from residents rather than trying to quantify impact

Sharing with our partners: Equity Hub development



Guiding principles for doing this intentionally

We acknowledge that we cannot address climate work without addressing racial equity which is inextricably tied to economic equity.

What does transparency look like?

- In affordable housing communities
 - What does the legacy of the project look like?
 - Addressing the limitation of the project head-on
-
- What does co creation look like in each community?
 - How are you supporting the community beyond project installation?
 - Agency
 - Leadership roles
 - Equitable Compensation
 - Hiring residents to install projects and keep economic investment within the community



Consulting with Masjid Al Hijrah Executive Director
Wali in Riverside

Photo credit - Yordanose S, Metro Blooms

Thanks

Does anyone have any questions?

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THANKS





Question and Answer Session

We will draw initial questions and comments from those submitted via the chat box during the presentations.

Today's Speakers

Carla Walker – carla@thinkbigstrategies.com

Tony Heath – theath@fishbeck.com

Yordanose Solomone – yodanose@metroblooms.org





NORTH CENTRAL REGION
WATER NETWORK

Thank you for participating in today's *The Current*!

Visit our website, northcentralwater.org, to access the recording and our webinar archive!

Upcoming Webinars

North Central Climate Collaborative: *August 24th 1 PM CT*
Weather-Ready Farms: An Extension Resilience Resource

Register at <https://northcentralclimate.org/>

Soil Health Nexus: *August 26th 2 PM CT*
Crop Rotations Effect on Soil Health

Register at <https://soilhealthnexus.org/>

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