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## An Equity-focused Assessment of the City of Richmond's RVAgreen 2050 Planning Process

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# An Equity-focused Assessment of the City of Richmond's RVAgreen 2050 Planning Process

May 2021

Report Prepared By:

URSP 637: Sustainable Community Development

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Virginia Commonwealth University



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## Executive Summary

### Prepare to Center Equity

The City of Richmond and the Office of Sustainability's (OOS) efforts to create an equity-informed climate action plan is key to promoting resilient communities. To ensure equitable outcomes, the OOS is prioritizing the needs of historically-marginalized communities through their direct involvement in the planning process. Therefore, preparing all of those involved (city staff, consultants, and community participants) to center equity is vital to the success of this plan. Through our evaluation of the "prepare to center equity" indicator and its four assessment areas (*local government and community readiness, community partners, shared definitions, and budget*), we found both areas of strengths and opportunities for improvements.

Through our evaluation, the OOS and the other involved parties had a clear understanding of the plan, its purpose, and its importance. Their efforts thus far align with the plan's values and show their commitment to producing equitable outcomes. However, we determined opportunities for next steps that the OOS may want to consider throughout the remainder of their planning process. The following recommendations highlighted in this assessment includes:

#### Recommendations

1. Provide continued and up-to-date equity and climate action planning (CAP) training and education to ensure diverse and inclusive planning processes.
2. Diversify working groups, incorporate youth engagement, and attend existing community meetings to retain newly established frontline community partnerships.
3. Create a checklist for equity self-evaluation to focus on realistic, actionable goals and promote open avenues of communication.
4. Introduce and build capacity for participatory budgeting, as well as supplement budget with grants and philanthropic partnerships.

### Capacity Building and Resourcing

We have assessed RVAgreen 2050's climate resilience and community equity vision and implementation in terms of Capacity Building and Resourcing. The United Nations defines capacity building as "the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world."

To assess this indicator, we drew from best practices and criteria published in the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) *Community Engagement to Ownership* guide and the *Centering Equity in CAP: Best Practices and Examples*. After analyzing the data on the RVAgreen



2050 process to date, we made the following major recommendations to improve the process moving forward:

### **Recommendations**

1. Through the utilization of outside funding sources, increase community outreach and the process of finding and building community resources - while maintaining existing processes with the Roundtable Members.
2. Maintain existing facilitators and trainers beyond existing contract and enhance the Working Groups with their own dedicated facilitators and trainers to expand capacity building beyond the Roundtable members.
3. Expand upon the equity and sustainability training program founded for the Roundtable community as part of the community outreach mentioned above to spread awareness in disadvantaged communities.
4. Compensation of the facilitators, Roundtable Members, and planned for the Ambassador programs should be expanded to further community outreach trainers and resource finders.

### **Frame Mission**

Preparing to center equity and capacity building represent the preparation work for the planning process and set the stage for the next phase, which is the framing of the mission. For RVAgreen 2050, the framing of the mission is especially important given the focus on equity. Given this focus, different factors, such as community involvement and incorporation of co-benefits, are necessary for the planning process to create meaningful change with respect to narrowing the equity gap.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the team assessed the following factors - equity commitment, co-develop with community, prioritization of co-benefits, and reduction of disparities.

Overall, the Office of Sustainability (OOS) has made great strides in incorporating equity into the RVAgreen 2050 planning process. Among the many positives is the inclusion of the community in the planning process with community-based organizations providing perspective on community priorities and the Racial Equity & Environmental Justice Roundtable (RT) providing the resident and equity lens. It is also notable that the OOS is having this mid-point equity assessment done so that it can further improve its processes. Along the lines of improvement, we also have identified areas of opportunities for the OOS to consider, and they are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2017). *Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. <https://www.usdn.org/products-climate.html#GuideClimate>

### **Recommendations**

1. As part of outreach efforts, the OOS may want to consider re-engaging with community-based organizations to ensure sufficient engagement with frontline communities.
2. The OOS may want to consider highlighting to the public the broader equity focus throughout the government and consider creating a cross-departmental group to keep equity efforts going after this planning process.
3. The OOS may want to consider surveying RVAgreen 2050 participants, especially city staff, in order to determine the equity knowledge that was gained from the process.
4. The OOS may want to consider creating a charter that outlines the Roundtable's roles/responsibilities with respect to the remaining phases of the process.
5. The OOS may want to consider quantifying co-benefits in order to focus on the strategies that will have the greatest impact.

### **Equitable Decision-making**

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) identifies *equitable decision-making* as an essential step in the process of community empowerment over the planning process, and calls for a “clear and transparent decision-making process” that cultivates power sharing, transparency, and accountability between the community, government actors, and experts.<sup>2</sup> It is rooted in the premise that decision-making power should be enjoyed by those who will be affected by the decisions that are made, and is a way to clearly recognize that all values and interests are important. In other words, it is “planning *with* stakeholders rather than *for* stakeholders.”<sup>3</sup>

We find that overall, city staff, facilitators, and community Roundtable members appear to have similar expectations for how decisions are made for RVAgreen 2050. Our assessment of the RVAgreen 2050 process finds that equitable decision-making in planning is supported through the consideration of three assessment indicators: power sharing, transparency and accountability. The Office of Sustainability has made public commitments to honor community priorities and include community perspectives in the planning process, which creates a shared and transparent framework. The public commitments also ensure that the Office is accountable for centering equity for the duration of the plan's development. Even having a dedicated

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<sup>2</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network, p.14.  
[https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Roseland, M. (2000). Sustainable community development: Integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives. *Progress in Planning*, 54(2), 73-132. p. 107. DOI: 10.1016/S0305-9006(00)00003-9

Roundtable, and granting it a key authoritative role within the process, highlights the Office's commitment to a shared-decision making model. However, based on our interviews, document analysis, and best practices in equitable climate action planning, we suggest that the Office of Sustainability implement the following recommendations to ensure continued centering of shared decision-making in RVAgreen 2050:

### Recommendations

1. Continue to share decision-making power with stakeholders throughout the plan adoption and implementation phase in 2022 and seek ways to **engage new citizen-participants in this process** that represent new demographics, geographies, and social networks (e.g., beyond existing relationships)
2. Collaboratively develop and publish strategies to address how the Office plans to continue to train and support Roundtable members during the engagement phase and how they will **catalog and communicate** this community feedback
3. Define and publish a series of **equity-related indicators** to center the plan's implementation around continued equity, particularly given that no such set of evaluation criteria exist for the planning process

### **Build Support**

Building public support for the plan throughout the planning process pushes city staff to better understand the community they are working with. As has often been the case in planning, power can be disproportionately in the hands of resourceful developers and industries who do not hold the same values for the community as do residents. Working with the community to elevate their voices is of great importance, as "trusting relationships translate ideas into action and grease the wheels of change" according to the USDN, thus building momentum for community focused, equitable progress.<sup>4</sup>

RVAgreen staff have addressed the need for community trust and support through the implementation of a Roundtable of community members specially trained in equity and sustainability. This effort by the city has been evaluated based on six assessment indicators: mutual learning, participant needs, setting a realistic timeline, transparency, diversity, and engagement. The Roundtable members were tasked with being representatives of their community, teaching and learning from staff and facilitators to best understand how to

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<sup>4</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network, p.19.



approach equity centered sustainability in Richmond. The members are demographically reflective of their community and were selected primarily based on their ability to meaningfully interact with their neighbors. While the planning process thus far has resulted in new information and ideas for the city from Roundtable members, there are possible improvements for the future. Because of this, the following recommendations have been provided:

**Recommendations:**

1. As RVAGreen2050 starts to reach out to community members to build support throughout the community, consider alternative ways of reaching community members where they are and building relationships with well established community leaders.
2. While equity was understood to be a priority by the Office of Sustainability, Facilitators, and Roundtable members, that was not always the case with working group members. Greater equity training for working group members would prevent ideas incongruent with the concept of centering equity in the plan from slowing down the process while also promoting higher quality ideas.
3. The RVAGreen2050 team should develop an additional Climate Equity Implementation guide that provides a framework for evaluating the actions in relation to the objectives that were developed.



## Section I: Introduction

### Centering Equity and RVAgreen 2050

In response to growing concerns of damaging effects caused by climate change, the City of Richmond's Office of Sustainability (OOS) is developing the RVAgreen 2050 plan. Building on the city's sustainability plan adopted in 2012, RVAgreen 2050 takes an equity approach and aims to center historically marginalized communities of color.<sup>5</sup>

The OOS recognizes how Richmond's history of racism and structural inequalities have exacerbated climate concerns for largely Black and Latinx communities.<sup>6</sup> Historic planning often excluded vulnerable groups from decision making processes, having lasting adverse effects still being felt today. In recent years, planners have recognized the importance of including community members through thoughtful engagement processes.

Given the historic inequities in urban planning, the OOS understands the importance of involving impacted community members throughout the entire decision making process. One way to ensure that planning processes are inclusive is through the creation of the Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Roundtable (RT). The RT consists of 13 City of Richmond residents, with varying demographics and backgrounds. The RT members utilize their expertise to advocate for marginalized communities and help to guide the planning processes to ensure they are equitable.

### Scope of Work, Approach and Limitations

The RVAgreen 2050 staff requested that the Virginia Commonwealth University Sustainable Community Development Spring 2021 service learning course complete an external equity assessment of the process to date. The evaluation will assess the equity of the current engagement processes and to make recommendations for improvement.

The evaluation is informed by RVAgreen 2050 documents, as well as evidence gathered from interviews of City Staff, Facilitators/Trainers, and Resident Roundtable Members. Additionally, this assessment often refers to the Urban Sustainability Directors Network's (USDN) framework for community engagement, which recognizes the exclusivity of past planning practices by encouraging processes to shift towards community ownership to close equity gaps.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> City of Richmond. (n.d.). What is RVAgreen 2050? RVAgreen 2050. <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/what-is-rvagreen-2050>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)



Additionally, this report separately evaluates the contributions of city staff (RVAgreen 2050 Community Engagement Coordinator Kendra Norrell and Sustainability Coordinator Brianne Fisher), third-party facilitators and trainers (Ebony Walden, Ebony Walden Consulting and Matthew Freeman, Dialectix Consulting), and anonymous Roundtable residents in terms of these assessment area.

## Section II: Indicators and Assessment

### A. Prepare to Center Equity

In response to growing concerns of damaging effects caused by climate change, the City of Richmond’s Office of Sustainability (OOS) is developing the RVAgreen 2050 plan. Building on the city’s sustainability plan adopted in 2012, RVAgreen 2050 takes an equity approach and aims to center historically marginalized communities of color.<sup>8</sup>

In this section, we evaluate how the OOS *prepared to center equity* throughout its approach to climate change planning thus far. To do so, we identify four different assessment areas: **1) local government and community readiness, 2) community partners, 3) shared definitions, and 4) budget.** We analyzed these four criteria to better understand how the OOS can build on what is currently working and to determine opportunities for next steps.

#### Overview of Assessment Indicators

To ensure that the outcomes of the RVAgreen 2050 plan represent the needs of frontline community members, it is important that all participants are prepared to center equity. This preparation requires government and community readiness, strong community partners, clear understanding of shared definitions, and adequate and properly allocated funding sources. All four indicator assessment areas are necessary to promote equitable outcomes.

Assessment Indicator	Definition
<b>Government and Community Readiness</b>	<i>Commitment from both government and community participants to work collaboratively towards addressing systemic inequalities as they relate to climate change concerns.</i>
<b>Community Partners</b>	<i>Community partnerships are collaborative relationships between willing entities formed to address shared objectives.</i>
<b>Shared Definitions</b>	<i>Shared definitions reinforce mutual understanding of the guiding principles in a planning process.</i>
<b>Budget</b>	<i>A municipal budget is the projected financial operating plan and accounts for expected revenues and allocates resources to particular expenditures.</i>

<sup>8</sup> City of Richmond. (n.d.). What is RVAgreen 2050? RVAgreen 2050. <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/what-is-rvagreen-2050>.

## Building on What's Working

### Government and Community Readiness

City staff members had a strong and consistent understanding of equity as it relates to climate change. Through their research, they found that climate change affects some more than others, and specifically, how low-income communities of color are disproportionately impacted by climate change. To understand how to involve frontline communities they pulled together best practices for centering equity in climate action plans.<sup>9</sup> After assessing these best practices they created the RVAgreen 2050 Roundtable (RT), working groups, and ambassador program. These groups represented Richmond residents and technical professionals, both equipped with specific expertise valuable to the planning process.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the OOS provided equitable community engagement and decision making training from Virginia Community Voice (VCV) to better prepare both government officials and community participants.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to hiring VCV, the OOS brought on facilitators/trainers with expertise in racial equity to provide guidance during meetings that included city staff, RT members. These experts helped the OOS develop criteria for the selection of RT participants, with city staff having the final word.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the facilitators/trainers had a clear understanding of their role as consultants and to help all those involved understand why equitable decision making is important and to prepare them to thoughtfully engage with underserved communities.<sup>13</sup>

RT members played a vital role in preparing local government officials and community members to center equity throughout the planning process. Members clearly understood their role as advocates for vulnerable community members.<sup>14</sup> In addition to their lived experiences, RT members received equity training, as well as additional reading/assignments from facilitators and trainers to ensure they were prepared to engage with underserved communities.<sup>15</sup>

### Community Partners

The USDN recognizes the vital role genuine community partnerships play in collaborative governance and the overall success of community engagement processes.<sup>16</sup> Given planning's historic pitfalls of excluding disadvantaged populations, these efforts are both extremely important and challenging. Trust is the foundation of any relationship and even more important for those who have felt their voices are often unheard. Unequal power dynamics have left the seemingly 'powerless' feeling underrepresented or misrepresented, having lasting effects on the

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<sup>9</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia Community Voice. (n.d.). Virginia Community Voice Blueprint. <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint>.

<sup>11</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>12</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview. Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview. Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview. Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>15</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>16</sup> USDN. (2019). *From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)



community.<sup>17</sup> The RVA Green 2050 plan aims to center community voices to promote equitable decision-making processes. The following section highlights how current community partnerships are centering equity in the plan, what is working, and what should be built upon for the remainder of the planning process.

The OOS has been rigorous in their efforts to center equity in the RVA Green 2050 CAP. The first contacts the OOS reached out to for guidance in community engagement were prior connections within community-based non-profits. The feedback OOS received from these organizations was that they needed to go directly to the community even during these initial steps<sup>18</sup>.

Since centering equity and Climate Action Planning are new to Richmond, the OOS enlisted Virginia Community Voice (VCV) to provide their racial equity and community engagement expertise to facilitate the pre-planning process and help recruit the community RT for racial and environmental justice<sup>19</sup>. The facilitators helped the OOS develop an application and identify residents in frontline communities for the RT. There was also an application process for recruiting for five technical working groups which included city workers and professionals in the fields of, transportation, environmental work, building and energy, waste, and community work. Thirteen RT members were selected and a total of 125 professionals were recruited for the five working groups<sup>20</sup>. VCV facilitated trainings with community experts (RT), technical experts (Working groups), and city staff on centering equity in CAP so that everyone understood that this was a community driven effort with particular attention to community voices that had been disenfranchised by past planning initiatives<sup>21</sup>.

The round table is the community contact and has the last say on proposed planning strategies put forth by working groups. The RT members are well connected in their communities and are passionate about speaking out for their neighbors and improving their part of the city. An example that came up in several interviews with RT members was that many RT members found they had to remind working groups to keep language clear for those who do not work in the field and are unfamiliar with sustainability terms. In addition, it is the RT members task to explain to their communities how climate change affects everyday life and why they should care<sup>22</sup>. For example, lack of trees and open space in low-income and inner city neighborhoods has resulted in the heat island effect, which can raise utility bills and decrease air quality.

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<sup>17</sup> USDN. (2019). *From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> RVA Green 2050 PLANNING Process: Richmond. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 2021, from <https://www.rva.gov/sustainability/rvagreengreen-2050-planning-process>

<sup>21</sup> Walden, E., & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). *RVA Green 2050 Interview* [Video].

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview. Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview. Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview. Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.



Another tool the OOS is using to increase community participation is the Ambassador Program which uses an online platform. Ambassadors are offered an online training and community engagement toolkit. They are encouraged to host at least three meetings with their communities and provide feedback to the OOS. This is beneficial in creating avenues for participation during the pandemic but can also be seen as exclusive to community members that do not have internet resources. The OOS has identified this issue in equity and provides a link for suggestions on how to improve the process<sup>23</sup>.

### Shared Definitions

Broken down by stakeholder group, this section gives an overview of what is working well in pursuit of RVAgreen 2050's goals as they relate to definitions of guiding terms for the process. Thus far, city staff have done a good job differentiating between types of equity and how they relate to sustainability planning in various respects. Staff identified procedural equity, distributional equity, and structural equity as three types of equity that the participants should consider as they work through the process.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the city staff have also promoted a definition of sustainability that goes beyond serving only environmental outcomes to consider wider interpretations of sustainability that include equity, environmental justice, and socially-oriented sustainability issues.<sup>25</sup>

The facilitators of the RVAgreen 2050 process are tasked, among other things, with helping participants, inclusive of city staff, form an equity lens and actually conduct the planning process in a way that is procedurally equitable. They have accomplished this through continuous equity training sessions and through encouraging reflection and self-assessment for equity among participants.<sup>26</sup> They aim to encourage participants, inclusive of city staff, to relate to one another in a way that is authentic and transparent, as well as promote mutual learning.<sup>27</sup> Authenticity, transparency, and mutual learning during the planning process all support the guiding principle of procedural equity. Furthermore, the facilitators have worked to avoid generalizations in representing issues specific to Richmond in the group. Rather than talking about participation numbers or vague sustainability issues, they have kept the conversation centered on potentially-transformative practices for sustainability in Richmond and raised issues for Richmond specifically, such as demographic representation in planning participation.<sup>28</sup>

Part of what RT members have done well is their continuous reflection on the process itself and whether it is being carried out in a way that is procedurally equitable. This sometimes means

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<sup>23</sup> Virtual ambassador program. (n.d.). Retrieved March 29, 2021, from <https://www.rvageen2050.com/ambassador-program>

<sup>24</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>25</sup> Agyeman, J. (2008). Toward a "just" sustainability? *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 22(6), 751–756; Roseland, M. (2000). Sustainable community development: Integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives. *Progress in Planning*, 54, 73–132.

<sup>26</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; USDN. (2019). *From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.; USDN. (2019). *From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)



that more confident participants step in to advocate for people who might not be as confident sharing their views in a group setting in order to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to voice their concerns.<sup>29</sup> In other situations, they might look to specific members to relate discussion topics to their lived experiences. Furthermore, the RT reinforces among its members the same view of sustainability that the city staff have emphasized as part of the plan, and they seek to use equity as a lens through which to evaluate sustainability and environmental justice.<sup>30</sup>

## **Budget**

To expand capacity and ensure the planning process is equitable and authentic, financial investment is necessary. It is important that the budget is inclusive of both city staff needs and fair compensation for participants. Thus far, city staff disclosed the OOS works within a total budget of \$50,000 for each fiscal year, with the forty percent of funding dedicated to RT member stipends<sup>31</sup>. Given the considerable amount of time and energy RT members put into this process, compensation practices should align with the plan's values of inclusion and equity.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, RT members can request further funding for materials necessary for participation.<sup>33</sup> Fiscal and managerial resources shape sustainability action in early stages and are essential to the implementation process. Lack of funding is especially detrimental to social equity initiatives.<sup>34</sup>

City staff's efforts to secure a \$10,000 grant to use toward racial equity training revealed their ability to prepare to center equity from the very start of their planning process<sup>35</sup>. In addition to these efforts, allocating these resources to hiring VCV, a community-based organization, aligns with the plan's values.<sup>36</sup> Allocating funds to hire racial equity experts (facilitators/trainers) and outside contractors to complete technical aspects (i.e., greenhouse gas modeling), the OOS actions were aligned with the plan's values.

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<sup>29</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>30</sup> Roseland, M. (2000). Sustainable community development: Integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives. *Progress in Planning*, 54, 73–132; Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>31</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, March 30). Personal Interview.

<sup>32</sup> USDN. (2019). From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

<sup>33</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>34</sup> Liao, L., Warner, M. E., & Homsy, G. C. (2020). When do plans matter? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(1), 60-74. doi:10.1080/01944363.2019.1667262

<sup>35</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>36</sup> Virginia Community Voice. (n.d.). Virginia Community Voice Blueprint. <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint>.

## Summary Table

<i>What is working well with respect to RVAgreen 2050's process in preparing to center equity?</i>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Government and Community Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged in pre-planning efforts that included research, data collection, and capacity building.</li> <li>Created the RT, working groups, and ambassador program all aimed to center equity.</li> <li>Provided equity training for all those involved with the planning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helped city staff develop the RT selection criteria to ensure members are representative of Richmond's demographics.</li> <li>Used their racial equity expertise to facilitate and train city staff and participants on racial and environmental justice.</li> <li>Guided discussions in meetings to ensure that all voices were being heard and considered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilized their lived experiences to advocate for the needs of historically marginalized groups more susceptible to climate change impacts.</li> <li>Received equity training to understand how to thoughtfully and effectively engage with low-income communities of color.</li> <li>Completed assigned readings and homework aimed to educate members on racial and environmental justice.</li> </ul>
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilized established community connections to spread the word about the RVAgreen 2050 plan and to make useful connections throughout the planning process.</li> <li>Formed the RT, working groups, and ambassador program all intended to work with community partners to center equity throughout the planning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directed the plan's goal of centering equity from the beginning by training RT community experts, technical experts, and city workers.</li> <li>Guided city staff and community members in engagement strategies and adaptive leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well connected in the City of Richmond and to specific neighborhood organizations in each city district.</li> <li>Utilized lived experience, as well as knowledge gained from training and meetings to engage with working groups.</li> </ul>
Shared Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledged varying types of equity: procedural, distributional, and structural.</li> <li>Took a holistic view of urban sustainability and featured equity as an integral component.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helped both city staff and RT members model, conduct, and assess for equitable community engagement practice through training sessions and reflection.</li> <li>Encouraged authenticity, transparency, and mutual learning between all involved parties as part of an equitable public process.</li> <li>Avoided generalizing in dialogues with staff and RT; speaking directly to Richmond's racist legacies and planning practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflected on whether processes and discussions conducted within the RT or working groups are carried out in an equitable way, using previously-established definitions of equity.</li> <li>Viewed sustainability issues through the larger lens of social justice and equity.</li> </ul>

Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocated the majority of the budget to RT member stipends.</li> <li>Secured a \$10,000 grant for equity training and hired Virginia Community Voice (VCV).</li> <li>Utilized funds to further engage with community members (i.e., yard signs, survey creation, and website creation).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budgeted funds to hire consultants/facilitators whose expertise were in racial equity training.</li> <li>Smaller consulting contracts were given for technical aspects of the plan (i.e., greenhouse gas modeling).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget included funds that compensated RT members for their efforts.</li> <li>Can request funds from city staff to pay for any additional material necessary.</li> </ul>

## Opportunities for Next Steps

### Government and Community Readiness

Given recurring comments made across all interviews regarding the lack of diversity within the working group,<sup>37</sup> it is important to consider how this will impact their planning process and overall government and community readiness. To ensure the next phase of community outreach efforts are authentic and equitable, we recommend that city staff consider continued education/training to help local government officials and community participants feel prepared and supported.<sup>38</sup> The Providence REJC (Race and Environmental Justice Committee) case study offered in the USDN framework highlights the important role racial equity training played in the success of their outcomes.<sup>39</sup> Through offering multiple trainings, the REJC was able to 1) build shared language and 2) support community members and staff.<sup>40</sup>

To do so, city staff should reassess their capacity to further engage with a diverse group of community members that are representative of Richmond’s most vulnerable residents. While expanding capacity does indeed require investment, to make structural changes and cultural shifts it is needed.<sup>41</sup> How will city staff expand capacity to further reach low-income communities of color? For example, city staff may want to consider their communication efforts (i.e., social media or advertisements), how it impacted their lack of diversity, and how to further reach frontline community members.

Through our interviews with RT members it became clear that tension between technical experts and community members was present in meetings. For example, one interviewee

<sup>37</sup>Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview; Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview; Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview; Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>38</sup>Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



referred to this tension as a push and pull between socially oriented language and technical language; they stated that in their experience the city preferred to use technical language that does not extend to everyone.<sup>42</sup> We recommend that facilitators/trainers provide further guidance to ensure that conversations are not dominated by a singular voice or approach to include lay people's terminology and limit technical jargon. Additionally, up to date equity training that is easily related to experiences in the city of Richmond is important.

RT members must be supported and empowered to share their unique perspectives and expertise. However, during our interviews with members they rarely referred to themselves as experts; one interviewee explained how they felt hesitant to take ownership of the plan and felt it was hard to give input when discussions were dominated by technical experts; specifically, they were dominated by white men.<sup>43</sup> We recommend that all RT and working group members are aware of the value of community participant's experiences to produce equitable outcomes. Concerns presented by lay people should be thoughtfully considered and addressed by technical experts.

### **Community Partners:**

From the start the OOS was determined to strengthen existing community partnerships and create new ones throughout the RVAgreen 2050 planning process. This was evident from their very first community outreach effort to better understand how the community felt about their approach and if it was equitable. However, given the major interruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, community outreach was relatively low in the pre-planning efforts. Given these barriers, it is important that the OOS is aware of potential equity concerns in their planning processes to better prepare for the remainder of their efforts. The following section provides insight on the various opportunities for next steps.

This report recommends finding avenues to retain RT members and new frontline community partners by connecting them to other city processes. This can foster leadership skills for long-term, equitable, and community driven planning outcomes. Examples of this include connecting community members to training opportunities and inviting them to participate in other municipal planning processes. The USDN case study of Seattle, Washington's Environmental Justice Committee (EJC) explains that the committee's role is to create leadership pathways for impacted community members. The EJC is clear in its goal to go beyond information sharing and creating a permanent bridge for their communities to effect municipal planning.<sup>44</sup>

Another recommendation is to build youth partnerships with public schools and existing local youth programs in frontline communities. Youth partnerships can play a critical role in

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<sup>42</sup>Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>43</sup>Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview.

<sup>44</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network.



sustainability efforts by helping to cultivate health, social, and environmental equity in future generations. The benefits include, greater exposure to green space, increased opportunities for social interaction and connectedness, mentorship, educational opportunities, a greater sense of self-reliance, and a favorable perception for control in life.<sup>45</sup> Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is an example of a partnership organization between the city of Boulder, the Boulder Valley School District, and the University of Colorado’s Community Engagement Design and Research Center (CEDaR)<sup>46</sup>. The Great Green Neighborhoods project came about when the city’s community planning and sustainability staff was considering child friendly affordable housing. The project focused on Athens’s Court, a low-income housing site across from Boulder High School that was in need of renovations and flood protection<sup>47</sup>. GUB recruited a local third grade class and Boulder High School students, some of whom lived in Athens Court. GUB coordinated field trips to one of Boulders award winning housing sites. The younger students were encouraged to draw, make housing models, and express their opinions through writing. High school students learned about sustainable housing design and flood mitigation and created a presentation for city staff<sup>48</sup>. The third graders wanted a variety of natural and built play spaces woven throughout the site as well as a variety of housing designs and colors. The high school students were interested in gathering spaces, affordable food spots, and expressed concerns for personal safety suggesting better lighting and car safety features. A University of Colorado course focused on green neighborhood design worked with students and city officials. The plan also included natural strategies for flood mitigation<sup>49</sup>. This project illustrates how youth partnerships can bring frontline community voices to inform equitable climate action planning.

Finally, facilitators have played an essential role in getting city workers, professional experts, and community RT members on the same page in centering equity during the pre planning phase of RVAgreen 2050. As new partners become involved in RVAgreen 2050 it would be invaluable to keep facilitators and consultants involved in the next stages so that they can continue to assess and improve strategies and keep everyone on the same page throughout the plan’s development and implementation.

## Shared Definitions

Broken down by stakeholder groups, this section gives an overview of opportunities for next steps in pursuit of RVAgreen 2050’s goals as they relate to essential definitions guiding the process. In the previous shared definitions section, we identified that city staff had been successful in reinforcing a wide view of equity and a view of sustainability that incorporates equity. This is a good start, but to improve, it would be beneficial to encourage the participants to assess equity, sustainability, and progress toward goals from their own points of view. To

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<sup>45</sup> Jennings, V., Baptiste, A., Osborne Jelks, N., & Skeete, R. (2017). Urban green space and the pursuit of Health equity in parts of the United States. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(11), 1432. doi:10.3390/ijerph14111432

<sup>46</sup> Our Team. GROWING UP BOULDER. (n.d.). <http://www.growingupboulder.org/our-team.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Great Neighborhoods. GROWING UP BOULDER. (n.d.). <http://www.growingupboulder.org/great-neighborhoods.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



accomplish this, city staff should consider working with facilitator/trainers and RT members to create an equitable planning checklist that represents the baseline goals for procedural equity in the planning process as well as progress toward implementation.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, once everyone works together to create this checklist, city staff should encourage participants to assess the process themselves using the checklist. If concerns are raised by participants, consider ways to revisit those concerns in group discussion.<sup>51</sup> Examples of a self-evaluation handout can be readily adapted from other cities' efforts.<sup>52</sup>

We have already noted that facilitators have been successful in setting the stage for equitable planning through continuous training and encouraging participants to have open and honest relationships with one another. However, the facilitators will be confronted with different issues and questions as the process moves forward through outreach phases and toward implementation phases. We suggest that facilitators encourage participants to recall learning from equity training sessions as they guide participants through development and implementation of best practices.<sup>53</sup> This recall process may already be the trajectory of the facilitators, who have stated that they try to ask how ideas from training sessions relate back to outreach that RT members are doing and how conversations about equity and sustainability play out on the ground.<sup>54</sup> We view this as essential to upholding consistent best practices, as defined earlier through training sessions.

Previously, we touched on the RT doing excellent work in assessing equitable procedure in the discussion groups and upholding views of equity and sustainability that are consistent with the goals of the plan. However, we also suggest that the RT members reflect on the behavior of participants and the discussion quality throughout the process. Some RT members have suggested that the quality of conversation has decreased due to certain agents dominating conversation or undermining equity discussions.<sup>55</sup> In a situation like this, we ask that RT members consider why discussion might have deteriorated and consult with facilitator/trainers and city staff to make a plan to bridge gaps.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, RT members we interviewed also suggested that there were situations in which participants may have had an idea to contribute but did not feel comfortable sharing with the group; in this particular scenario, another RT member advocated for them.<sup>57</sup> We ask that, in light of this, RT members generally reflect on

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<sup>50</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Partners for Places. (2018). *A Guide to Community-Centered Engagement in the District of Columbia* (p. 80). Georgetown Climate Center. <https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/CEG-TechnicalAppendix-10-2018-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>56</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.



other members' comfort levels and respectfully prompt them to contribute if they might have something to add.<sup>58</sup> These suggestions are aimed at upholding procedural equity as a guiding principle, as it has been identified and defined by the city staff.

## Budget

The OOS recognizes the important role budgeting plays in a successful planning process. Specifically, that sustainability plans rely on a sufficient budget to provide adequate resourcing for community engagement<sup>59</sup>. It is important to note that while under typical circumstances sustainability budgets are severely lacking in most cities. This lack of funding has been compounded further by the COVID-19 pandemic that has contributed to substantial loss of city revenue. We kept the extenuating circumstances of the global pandemic and how that impacted resources while forming the following recommendations for next steps.

We believe an opportunity for next steps includes supplementing budgets by continuing to research and apply for grants, as well as connect and establish long-term philanthropic partnerships to resource community organizational. Philanthropic and government partnerships are becoming more common and are aligning with an equity and inclusion approach<sup>60</sup>. The Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) is a state agency that connects localities to philanthropic organizations funding and grants for local jurisdictions<sup>61</sup>. Michigan has introduced a new equity centered philanthropic resource initiative called Truth, Racial, Healing and Transformation (TRHT). The foundation has connected grant funding to four cities one of which is Kalamazoo<sup>62</sup>. The Kalamazoo TRHT programming is led by a team of 15 community members<sup>63</sup>. So far, their initiatives include legal sector engagement and cultural awareness training for police cadets training to be local police officers. The training focuses on relationship building, reviewing discriminatory laws, criminal laws, and public policies, and recommending solutions to the just application of law<sup>64</sup>. The team also works with communities on housing issues funded by a grant from the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) and has created a coalition for inclusive communities using a grant from Community Foundation Leads (CFLeads)<sup>65</sup>. The OOS does not currently have a state agency to help connect with philanthropic partners and grants research but still many foundations seem eager to help resource local communities and government efforts to center equity.

Participatory budgeting, which allows community members to decide how to spend portions of the public budget should be considered to align with the city's stated values of equity and

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<sup>58</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Liao, L., Warner, M. E., & Homsy, G. C. (2020). When do plans matter? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(1), 60-74. doi:10.1080/01944363.2019.1667262

<sup>60</sup> Center on Philanthropy & Public Policy. (n.d.). *Los Angeles Urban Funders: Philanthropic Initiatives in the Aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest: Center on Philanthropy & Public Policy*. Center on Philanthropy Public Policy. <https://cphp.usc.edu/research/los-angeles-urban-funders/>.

<sup>61</sup> Strategic Framework. Council of Michigan Foundations. (2020, October 28). <https://www.michiganfoundations.org/node/205155/>.

<sup>62</sup> Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation. Council of Michigan Foundations. (2020, March 31). <https://www.michiganfoundations.org/trht>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



inclusion.<sup>66</sup> Greensboro North Carolina is a similarly sized city to Richmond that has introduced a form of participatory budgeting (PB) into their planning process. Residents from each city council district are allocated a budget of \$100,000 for community projects<sup>67</sup>. Each PB cycle lasts two years. During this time residents submit ideas, PB volunteers vet ideas and turn them into project proposals. Residents then vote on which projects to fund. This process is organized by the City's Department of Budget and Evaluation with various other city departments working to implement voter approved projects<sup>68</sup>. The program is funded by taxpayer dollars and through grants from five foundations including the Community Foundation for Greater Greensboro and the Fund for Democratic Communities. Winning projects include \$18,000 from each district for a downtown weekend trolley pilot program<sup>69</sup>. Other projects were specific to parks, recreation, environmental issues, and community priorities specific to each city council district<sup>70</sup>. Through a similar approach the OOS will reveal more effective ways to financially support those involved in the planning process.

Budget mapping creates an easy-to-understand graphic that transfers knowledge to the community and allows transparency in government spending. Portland, Oregon has a detailed equity focused budget mapping tool that divides the city into seven neighborhood coalitions and the central city<sup>71</sup>. These maps include a user guide, level of service maps, proposed, and adopted budget maps that all help to explain how revenue and expenditure are spread out through the city<sup>72</sup>. The service level maps are used to rate access to opportunities, rate crime, livability, percentage of parks, access to transportation and other services that can improve quality of life. Portland also tracks the flow of money and investment to different areas of the city and compares these flows over time<sup>73</sup>. Additionally, the city calculates how much money is spent per person in each district. For example, East Portland had the highest spending per person at \$161.93 and North West Portland had the lowest at \$77.09 per person<sup>74</sup>. Maps compare density, infrastructure conditions, and job availability in each area. All this information works to identify and explain equity issues in the city. Budget mapping could be a useful tool for the OOS moving into the next phases of the RVAGreen 2050 to further prepare to center equity through more transparency and knowledge of municipal resourcing from tax revenue or lack thereof.

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<sup>66</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

[https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Greensboro, NC. Participatory Budgeting | Greensboro, NC. (n.d.).

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/budget-evaluation/participatory-budgeting>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Budget Mapping*. Budget Mapping RSS. (n.d.). <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/54416>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

## Summary Table (Opportunities)

<i>What opportunities exist for RVAgreen 2050 to improve on centering equity?</i>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Government and Community Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue education/training to help local governments and community members feel better prepared to center equity.</li> <li>Reassess capacity to further engage with a diverse group of community members that are representative of Richmond's most vulnerable residents.</li> <li>Ensure that technical terms are not dominating socially oriented terms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure there is not a singular domination voice throughout meetings and that all members feel safe, included, and empowered to speak on their experiences and expertise.</li> <li>Provide the most up to date equity training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While RT members may not have formal training or technical experience, they should be reminded of their expertise vital to this planning process.</li> <li>RT members with technical expertise should listen to laypeople's concerns with their topic and work collaboratively towards addressing concerns.</li> </ul>
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain frontline community partners and connect them to other city processes,</li> <li>Incorporate youth engagement strategies especially in frontline communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize equity facilitators and consultants regularly to assess and continue to improve planning strategies</li> <li>Provide guidance to City Staff and RT members for continuing to strengthen/build relationships even after the planning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand RT to include neighborhood rather than district so that work is distributed and there are more direct lines to frontline communities' voices</li> <li>Incentivize RT members to continue working with the city on plans and in other capacities to elevate and embed communities' voices throughout all municipal processes</li> </ul>
Shared Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with facilitator/trainers and RT to create an equitable planning checklist for each phase of the process.</li> <li>Use the checklist as a prompt to start discussions with participants regarding how they view and assess progress individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that participants' learning about equity and sustainability translate into best practices for the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the quality of discussions in RT or Working Group settings has at any point deteriorated, reflect on why that might be and try to identify potential areas of compromise.</li> <li>Consider ways to advocate for participants who may have ideas but not feel comfortable sharing.</li> </ul>
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice participatory budgeting</li> <li>Supplement budget by continuing to research and apply for grants as well as</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget allocation for consultant on larger plans so that city staff is not over extended during certain planning stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide RT members with their own budget for community engagement</li> </ul>



	<p>connect and establish long-term philanthropic partnerships to resource community organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement an equity-based budget mapping tool for public use</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Build capacity of residents to advocate for voice in municipal budgetary”</li></ul>
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## B. Capacity Building and Resourcing

Capacity building describes the way individuals, groups, communities, and organizations bolster their skills, processes, situation responses, and resources. The goal of this is to increase the odds of organizational survival, as well as to encourage growth and well-being.<sup>75</sup> Resourcing is the process of sourcing and allocating what a project requires. This can be funding, raw materials, people, or other supportive assets.<sup>76</sup>

### Overview of Assessment Indicators

Using the USDN’s evaluative model given in its 2018 Community Engagement to Ownership guide as a basis,<sup>77</sup> and adopting the Centering Equity in CAP: Best Practices and Examples equity rating areas<sup>78</sup> as criteria, this section identifies both working strengths and areas of opportunity for RVAgreen 2050 in the following indicator assessment areas:

Assessment Indicator	Definition
<b><i>Establishing the Team</i></b>	Development and implementation of recruiting strategy for RVAgreen 2050 Roundtable, working group, and volunteer Ambassador teams.
<b><i>Co-Learning</i></b>	Collaborative, listening-driven knowledge-building, and pre-planning processes in which RVAgreen 2050 participates.
<b><i>Training</i></b>	Building technical, subject-area, communicative, and collaborative capacity among RVAgreen 2050 paid staff, volunteers, and community partners.
<b><i>Compensation</i></b>	Forms of compensation that RVAgreen 2050 offers participants for their time and labor.

### Building on What’s Working

**Establishing the Team:** RVAgreen 2050’s process for selecting the Roundtable (RT) members looked to successful case studies in other cities<sup>79</sup> and for precedents to inform the process of establishing the team.<sup>80</sup> To invite community members to have a say in the design of its climate resilience plan, RVAgreen 2050 aimed to have at least one member from each of Richmond’s

<sup>75</sup> Capacity Building. ramsthaler@un.org. (2014, April 1). Capacity-building [Text]. Retrieved March 22, 2021 from <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/capacity-building>

<sup>76</sup> RESOURCING (noun) American English definition and synonyms | Macmillan Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved March 22, 2021, from <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/resourcing>

<sup>77</sup> USDN. (n.d.). USDN From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

<sup>78</sup> Fisher, B. (2021). Centering Equity in CAP - Best Practices and Examples. RVAgreen 2050.

<sup>79</sup> Toronto Environmental Alliance, D. (2020). An Equity-Focused Review of the City of Vancouver’s Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan: August 2020 (p. 22). Toronto Environmental Alliance.

<sup>80</sup> Fisher, B. (2021). Centering Equity in CAP - Best Practices and Examples. RVAgreen 2050.



nine city council districts represented on the RT. In the cases of the city's most marginalized communities, they staffed the RT with two representatives from each of these districts.<sup>81</sup>

Though the applicant pool of RT residents was small, those who applied were highly engaged and interested in the equity aspect of community development. Many of these residents already had strong backgrounds in community organizing and local environmental issues reaching back decades.<sup>82</sup> This strong core of equity and social justice awareness served to anchor the more technically-minded working groups in a mission agenda that was continually mindful to include and to elevate underrepresented voices. Critically, the RT was tasked with synthesizing the working groups' recommendations into a singular, actionable plan.

**Co-Learning:** RT members worked with city staff and facilitators to create a space of intentional, mutual learning. Despite being unable to meet in person due to COVID constraints, a core group of RT residents has consistently shown up to online meetings. Members' regular attendance served as the foundation for a learning dialogue that reinforces attendees' understanding of equity in terms of its concepts, applications, and importance.

The RT's present transition to outreach and community engagement will present salient opportunities for collaborative partnerships with impacted community groups and through these additional co-learning opportunities. RVAgreen 2050's targeted universalism approach will be a critical framework to present program objectives in a way that educates and builds consensus among Richmond's diverse populations and communities. The diversity of the RT's residents stands to support these outreach efforts strongly.

Among city staff, there was a developed theoretical understanding of ecological mechanisms threatening community resilience and a keen sense of the need to relate relevant climate science to current community equity goals. A major part of this will be the incorporation of a climate equity index in metrics and analysis of the next phase.<sup>83</sup> As RT outreach efforts increasingly involve voices of community members most in need of being heard, the project will better be able to define actionable goals for its equity research and capacity building, as these goals will reflect actual needs in the community.<sup>84</sup>

**Training:** To further equip project staff with the awareness needed to center equity in their dealings with local communities, city staff instituted equity trainings for all RVAgreen 2050 staff.<sup>85</sup> Residents and city facilitators<sup>86</sup> used a common language when referring to the purpose and objectives of the RT: to listen to and promote the voices of marginalized community

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<sup>81</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>82</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>83</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>84</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>85</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>86</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview. [Zoom Call].

members.<sup>87</sup> This unified ethos reflected both the efficacy of the training and the team culture’s cohesiveness that emerged from this educational process. As the RT moves forward in actively engaging community members, this commonly-held sense of a mission will serve as a strong basis for specific actions to elevate stakeholders’ voices.

Ultimately, project outcomes may include building equity in impacted communities themselves, through educational outreach and possible expansion of access to critical resources that will help these communities stay informed as to climate threats and adaptive responses. In the meantime, city staff have voiced the hope that RVAgreen 2050’s current efforts will undo some of the harm that institutions have inflicted on these communities through systemically racist and inequitable policies and practices.<sup>88</sup>

**Compensation:** RT residents were paid for their work, and soft benefits additionally included skill development and professionalization opportunities ensuing from their involvement. RVAgreen 2050 enlisted the services of a City of Richmond grant writer to acquire funds for various project initiatives.<sup>89</sup> This included obtaining funding, for instance, to bring in Virginia Community Voice to provide equity training during the initial project phase.

While RT residents’ contracts specified a one-year term of employment, at least one of them expressed a sense that their work would continue beyond the end of this contract period through volunteer and/or advisory service.<sup>90</sup> Residents seemed to perceive the immediate value of their work, and this was reflected in their stated interest in future community development and engagement in such a capacity that would build on and extend their present accomplishments.

<i>What is working well with respect to RVAgreen 2050’s Capacity Building and Resourcing?</i>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Establishing the Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case-study approach identified strong precedents in other cities</li> <li>Well-conceived representational structure, with balanced recruitment of Roundtable residents from each of the nine city council districts, promoted diversity of team culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultants’ experiential and theoretical knowledge established appropriate personnel training goals and realistic equity research capacity building timeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong sense of civic engagement and community organizing experience among residents resulted in a high-energy, high-engagement team</li> <li>Diversity of Roundtable served to center equity and maintain working group alignment with overarching project ethos and mission agenda</li> </ul>

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>88</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>89</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, March 30). Personal Interview.

<sup>90</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].



Co-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior background in ecological sustainability research and practice bolstered efforts toward centering equity in the project’s climate resilience plan</li> <li>• Climate equity index incorporation in next-phase analytics will strengthen the bridge between ecological and equity frameworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-contextual fluency in equity-centered approaches, such as targeted universalism, guided and shaped the educational process of Roundtable residents and ensures a unified sense of purpose, namely to elevate marginalized community voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong attendance among majority of residents established robust co-learning dialogue</li> <li>• Diversity of Roundtable residents established an optimal foundation for forthcoming outreach and community co-learning opportunities</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instituted equity training for all staff</li> <li>• Scope of efforts included undoing of harm caused by institutions’ systemically racist and inequitable policies and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined terms and informed discourse that empowered Roundtable residents to take a proactive role in determining project direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity training and cohesive team culture resulted in shared ethical language and vision</li> <li>• Unified sense of purpose created a generative context for targeted community engagement during forthcoming outreach phase</li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully obtained funding for various project initiatives through City of Richmond-supplied grant writing service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided with professional development opportunities through project involvement at all participation levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensated for time and effort during one-year contract period</li> <li>• Expressed interest in possibility of continuing/extending work beyond term of residency</li> </ul>

**Opportunities for Next Steps**

**Establishing the Team:** At all levels there is a clear program to achieve partnership and coalition building. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the RVAgreen 2050 core staff is well established. However, there needs to be more corporate involvement at this level, bringing experience and ownership to the plan’s future business partners.<sup>91</sup> Further, their corporate sponsorship in the process will increase training and funding opportunities.<sup>92</sup> Each interviewee was explicit in saying that recently (February into March) there has been a definite transition into designing an outreach program. The background on that program and its purpose are necessary for further community outreach, inclusion, and training programs in the city.<sup>93</sup>

**Co-Learning:** The current program has highlighted that the outreach was a successful effort. However, certain groups are not represented and their voices need to be included; the literature notes that the absence of these perspectives can undermine the credibility of a climate action

<sup>91</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network, p.49.

<sup>92</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>93</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

plan.<sup>94</sup> As an example, the High School Representative on the RT cannot attend the regularly scheduled meetings due to school - erecting more barriers than they already face is counter to an inclusive program. RT community members have now been trained in outreach for the next stage in the planning process, and this is the logical and equitable next step. In parallel to those actions a strong community capacity building program will need to be inserted into disadvantaged communities through already established channels, with the ultimate goal of empowering impacted groups with ownership and oversight of these planning processes.<sup>95</sup>

**Training:** Recognizing the impacts of the pandemic, the expected depth of the training in Equity and Sustainability has been limited.<sup>96</sup> However, as the Ambassador program kicks off, the need to develop community skills, abilities, and common language as it relates to equity and sustainability principles remains the priority. Currently, the two RT facilitators switch hats between their facilitator and trainer roles - these momentary switches can lead to confusion.<sup>97</sup> By dividing these roles, the facilitators can better focus on 'hearing' the needs of the community members.

**Compensation:** As mentioned in previous sections, the need to continue outreach is paramount for the RVAgreen 2050 process to achieve success. City staff see community impacts being disproportionate for communities that have limited to no voice in government processes. Further commitment financially to the outreach to and training of these frontline neighborhoods is needed. Currently there is limited penetration of the skill-building related to equity and sustainability training in disadvantaged neighborhoods and populations. Funding these training seminars and outreach events is the next step to ensure that the RVAgreen 2050 document reflects clear understanding of those populations.

<b>What opportunities exist for RVAgreen 2050 to better foster capacity building and resourcing?</b>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Establishing the Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve more corporate partnerships for higher levels of funding for RVAgreen 2050 events<sup>98</sup></li> <li>Utilize outside funding sources for increased community outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More community members are needed to be funnelled through the Roundtable training</li> <li>Local seminars, training events, and related outreach are needed to ensure true</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to design and build outreach program within the Roundtable begun recently</li> <li>Utilize Roundtable members to resource local knowledge from each district to build further WG</li> </ul>

<sup>94</sup> Collaborating for Equity and Justice: Moving Beyond Collective Impact. (2017, January 9). Non Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/collaborating-equity-justice-moving-beyond-collective-impact/>

<sup>95</sup> Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>

<sup>96</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network, p.16-17.

<sup>97</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>98</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

		equity is reached for RVAgreen 2050 <sup>99</sup>	that better reflect Richmond's diversity <sup>100101</sup>
Co-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City planning processes did not fully integrate needed community voices in the design, with logistical hurdles impeding access to some groups<sup>102</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful community engagement phase will depend on facilitators providing clear cues as to what success looks like</li> <li>Hiring dedicated facilitators for each working group keeps discussions with on the main equity objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roundtable outreach phase needs to identify partners and allies in impacted communities in order to promote building greater capacity for these groups themselves<sup>103</sup></li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity and Sustainability trainings had limited reach due to COVID constraints; use Ambassador and Roundtable outreach efforts to build staff and volunteer capacity in these areas<sup>104</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dual role of facilitators also acting as trainers may send mixed messages; division of functions may provide clarity for trainees<sup>105</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary community outreach efforts were beset with obstacles to communication. A grassroots approach would better enable residents to level with peers in these communities.<sup>106</sup></li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community impacts are most severe for communities that have the least role voice in government processes; recompensing these marginalized groups is a priority among city staff<sup>107</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitators can mediate the service roles of Roundtable residents and Ambassador volunteers, ensuring their interests are served through monetary compensation and other benefits, such as skill development and professionalization opportunities<sup>108109</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity and Sustainability skill-building and training has yet to translate to measurable benefits for impacted communities themselves.<sup>110</sup></li> <li>Resident outreach efforts will require ongoing funding and clearly demonstrate value to community participants, to justify the time and effort spent<sup>111</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>99</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>100</sup> Anonymous (P1), Anonymous (P2), & Anonymous (P3). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>101</sup> Local Assets + Context.pdf: URSP-637-C91-SP2021—SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DVLPM. (n.d.). Retrieved March 22, 2021, from [https://viriniacommonwealth.instructure.com/courses/28121/files/2665115?module\\_item\\_id=1039341](https://viriniacommonwealth.instructure.com/courses/28121/files/2665115?module_item_id=1039341)

<sup>102</sup> Collaborating for Equity and Justice: Moving Beyond Collective Impact. (2017, January 9). Non Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/collaborating-equity-justice-moving-beyond-collective-impact/>

<sup>103</sup> USDN. (2017). USDN Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. Pg 28.

<sup>104</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>105</sup> USDN. (2017). USDN Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. Pg. 33. "Employ a Train-the-Trainer model..."

<sup>106</sup> USDN. (n.d.). USDN From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental & Racial Equity Committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. Pg. 61.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, Pg. 57. "Train and pay young adults to serve as outreach workers."

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, Pg. 30. "Host and conduct a community leadership training program."

<sup>109</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>110</sup> Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>111</sup> Engaging Community\_URSP 637.pdf: URSP-637-C91-SP2021—SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DVLPM. (n.d.). Retrieved March 22, 2021, from [https://viriniacommonwealth.instructure.com/courses/28121/files/2665128?module\\_item\\_id=1039344](https://viriniacommonwealth.instructure.com/courses/28121/files/2665128?module_item_id=1039344)

## C. Frame Mission

Governments have a history of originating and exacerbating inequities and often exclude the public from fully participating in planning processes that can address such inequities.<sup>112</sup> As such, appropriately framing the mission of these processes is as imperative to the success of equitable climate action planning as to the healing of broken relationships with the community. A clearly defined mission provides the groundwork for the rest of the process. Thus, it is important to ensure stakeholders have a clear understanding of the overall mission and where they fit within the process.<sup>113</sup>

### Overview of Assessment Indicators

Appropriately framing the mission of a planning process is critical, and it is particularly so with the RVAgreen 2050 process given the equity focus, which has largely been absent from the overall sustainability planning field until recently.<sup>114</sup> With this commitment to equity, community involvement is necessary. Specifically, communities that have suffered under racist policies need to be included in the planning process, as they will experience an increased risk to climate change.<sup>115</sup> Participation by these impacted communities needs to consist of more than just the government informing them of its plans; instead, there needs to be collaborative governance, which “is the co-definition of problems and the co-development of solutions among multiple sectors.”<sup>116</sup> Moreover, as part of the development of solutions, there needs to be emphasis on co-benefits in order to have a meaningful impact on reducing disparities.<sup>117</sup> Given such a framework is needed in order to narrow the equity gap, this section includes an assessment on how well the OOS has done with respect to the following areas - equity commitment, co-develop with the community, prioritize co-benefits, and reduction of disparities.

Assessment Indicator	Definition
<b>Equity Commitment</b>	A commitment to incorporating a racial equity lens throughout the entire planning process. <sup>118</sup> Specifically, the OOS has committed to transparency and inclusivity with the ultimate goal of starting to make an impact with respect to reducing

<sup>112</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2017). *Guide to equitable, community-driven climate preparedness planning*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. <https://www.usdn.org/products-climate.html#GuideClimate>

<sup>113</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). *From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Loh, C. G., & Kim, R. (2020). Are we planning for equity? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 0(0), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2020.1829498>

<sup>115</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>116</sup> USDN, 2019. p. 7. Op. cit.

<sup>117</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>118</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal interview.

	disparities. <sup>119</sup>
<b>Co-develop with community</b>	Co-developing with the community centers the voices and needs of the community in this project; a collaboration, instead of taking just a “consulting” or “informing” position. The <i>Virginia Community Voice Blueprint</i> <sup>120</sup> points out that community engagement activities that inform, consult or involve usually fall short of promoting ownership because they don’t give community members authority to make meaningful decisions. The advocacy of the community from a collaborative stance allows for the building of climate justice policies that are rooted in the community’s priorities. <sup>121</sup>
<b>Prioritize co-benefits</b>	Co-benefits are the beneficial outcomes that a community receives from taking climate actions that are not directly related to climate mitigation. For example, weatherizing homes and providing incentives for solar can reduce costs for renters and homeowners. Actions, such as increasing the amount of green space and active transportation infrastructure, can improve public health, increase safety, support economic stability, and increase biodiversity. <sup>122</sup>
<b>Reduction of disparities</b>	Focused on minimizing the issues explicitly mentioned by those in the planning process. These tend to be artifacts from past planning initiatives, this tends to hinge on redlining and other discriminatory practices. While these are referred to as artifacts the impacts of this are felt by communities to this day, these tend to include factors such as heat island effect, health disparities, and access to resources.

## Building on What’s Working

### Equity Commitment

The OOS has made a public commitment to centering equity in the RVAgreen 2050 process:

*“Due to historic and institutional racism, people of color are more likely to live in more marginal and exposed areas that are more susceptible to climate impacts. For these reasons, it is critical that the City of Richmond’s efforts to address climate change are carried out in a way that is inclusive of and protects our most vulnerable communities.”*  
*RVAgreen 2050 website - Overview page*

Given the heightened focus on equity from different angles, such as transparency and inclusivity, three positive aspects of the overall process are the inclusion of the Roundtable (RT) in the planning process and other city departments on the Working Groups,<sup>123</sup> along with the government’s broader equity focus under the Stoney administration.<sup>124</sup> These aspects of the

<sup>119</sup> City of Richmond. (n.d.). *What is RVAgreen 2050?* RVAgreen 2050. <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/what-is-rvagreen-2050>.

<sup>120</sup> Virginia Community Voice Blueprint. (n.d.) Virginia Community Voice.

<sup>121</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>122</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2017). *Guide to equitable, community-driven climate preparedness planning*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. <https://www.usdn.org/products-climate.html#GuideClimate>

<sup>123</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, March 30). Personal interview.

<sup>124</sup> City of Richmond. (n.d.). *Richmond’s equity agenda | Richmond*. <https://www.rva.gov/rvaequity>



process are particularly important, as research provides evidence that this type of approach - i.e., community participation and explicit equity goals - has led to greater equity outcomes. Moreover, collaboration with other city departments has shown to keep the momentum around implementation going past the initial development of the plan.<sup>125</sup> In addition, the inclusion of the RT is in alignment with what other American cities have done<sup>126</sup> and also aligns with the OOS' transparency and inclusivity goals.

### **Co-develop with Community**

From the beginning of this process, co-developing with the community has been a priority for the city staff, the facilitators, and the RT members. City staff emphasized removing the “one size fits all” mentality with community communication and engagement, and one staff member said that “it needs to be what resonates with them, not just what resonates with me.”<sup>127</sup> This approach can be seen through the website, which provides multiple opportunities to get connected, involved, and participate with RVAgreen 2050. Providing the necessary expertise on race relations and equity, while continually training through an equitable lens was no easy feat for the facilitators of this program. One facilitator described their role as “answering the so what, who cares” when it comes to conceptualizing where equity and the climate meet.<sup>128</sup> RT members also valued their role in this process -- one interviewee felt that it was “important to me to be part of the solution” and another wanted to “elevate those voices when we get to the decision making.”<sup>129</sup>

Another RT member gave insight to some of the concerns about how to collaborate with the community on issues such as climate change and equity, especially when it comes to the terminology about environmental issues. Their response to this concern in the interview is as follows: “And someone may say, well, why did they pick this? Why did you use this language? And I say, well, this is what we've been using. Likewise, I can also go back to the round group and say, Hey, so we use this word, we use the word (You know, we may say racial equality). And the working group may say no, let's not use that word, it is still not encompassing of everyone. Let's use this word. And so then I'll go back and I'll say so listen, we talked about this in groups - What do you think about this? They thought it was too harsh. They looked at the wording, maybe it was too thesis-like. Let's break it down. *We gotta keep it simple for everyone so that we don't have to have interpreters for the vision that we're trying to carry out.*”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Liao, L., Warner, M. E., & Homsy, G. C. (2020). When do plans matter? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(1), 60–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2019.1667262>

<sup>126</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>127</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal interview.

<sup>128</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal Interview.

<sup>129</sup> Anonymous (P1) & Anonymous (P2). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

<sup>130</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].



## **Prioritize Co-benefits**

For RVAgreen 2050, the City has taken steps similar to other cities that have used co-benefits as a driving strategy by collaborating with other agencies and organizations.<sup>131</sup> Collaboration with multiple stakeholders can help to increase the understanding of what the community priorities are and can help to address multiple challenges at the same time. The City has also developed the goals and strategies for RVAgreen 2050 holistically, by ensuring that climate action is incorporated across multiple sectors, such as transportation infrastructure and housing, which case studies have shown to be a highly successful method to address multiple issues at once.<sup>102</sup>

This process has been improved upon with the facilitators using a targeted universalism strategy, which ensures that frontline communities and those most heavily impacted by climate change receive the most benefit from taking climate action. The facilitators' educational role helped to establish why frontline communities should receive priority for receiving the co-benefits of taking climate action. The education provided by the facilitators helped RT members and working groups have a better understanding on their roles and how to prioritize potential strategies.<sup>132</sup> RT members work collaboratively with the WG's and both parties help to inform and educate the other on existing problems and create goals and strategies based on what the community priorities are.<sup>133</sup> This process helps to ensure that co-benefits are built into the planning process for RVAgreen 2050.

## **Reduction of Disparities**

The RVAgreen 2050 planning process has communicated clearly that climate change affects some members of our community more than others. One notable strategy is the creation of the Climate Equity Index, which identifies the communities in Richmond that are on the frontlines of the climate change crisis. Using this Index as a reference, the RVAgreen team has reached out to these frontline communities to engage in the planning process. The Climate Equity Index allows people to visually understand the culmination of factors that impact communities in the Richmond area, including socioeconomic factors such as health, education, and poverty, and climate factors such as tree canopy coverage or areas with high amounts of impervious surface. Together, these allow us to identify areas where there may be a disproportionate impact of climate change.

One of the most impactful actions to prioritize the reduction of disparities is the empowerment of the RT members. This has led to learning and a deeper understanding of climate change and the impacts on frontline communities. For example, one RT indicated that they now understand why there are differences in air quality between neighborhoods, specifically when comparing

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<sup>131</sup> The Co-benefits of Climate Action: Accelerating City-level Ambition. (2020). Tyndall Center. <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/73173>

<sup>132</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal Interview

<sup>133</sup> Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview

Jackson Ward to other parts of Richmond.<sup>134</sup> By empowering citizens and building positive relationships we are making strides towards community ownership.<sup>135</sup>

What is working well with respect to RVAgreen 2050's overall mission?			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Equity Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included the “racial equity &amp; environmental justice” community priority</li> <li>Established the Racial Equity &amp; Environmental Justice Roundtable (RT)</li> <li>Required the use of an equity evaluation tool</li> <li>Engaged local equity experts to serve as facilitators</li> <li>Engaged VCU for a mid-point equity assessment</li> <li>Broadened the equity focus in the government by including other city departments in the process, which ties in with Mayor Stoney’s broader Equity Agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided racial equity expertise to the OOS in relation to the design of the process</li> <li>Involved with supporting the RT by facilitating meetings and providing training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed to bringing the equity and resident lens to the overall process</li> <li>Committed to engaging with frontline communities and elevating their voices</li> </ul>
Co-develop with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided multiple opportunities to promote and enhance community collaboration on their website</li> <li>Removed the “one size fits all” mentality with community communication and engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trained for community engagement through an equitable lens -- Matthew Freeman: <i>“Adaptive leadership, adaptive change”</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepared for community engagement while ensuring that there could be collaboration, not just informing or consulting</li> </ul>
Prioritize co-benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with agencies to help strategize co-benefits, such as the Partnership with the Office of Community Wealth Building to strategize job growth and training programs, and working with citizens for neighborhood improvements</li> <li>Incorporated climate action strategies across a wide variety of City sectors</li> <li>Created strategies based on community priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used targeted universalism as a strategy method, ensuring communities facing the most impact from climate change, receive the most benefit from taking action</li> <li>Helped to frame why benefits should be prioritized to specific communities in Richmond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Served as a liaison for the community to understand specific needs and assets</li> <li>RT members and WG members educated each other on disparities and addressed potential strategies to provide benefits</li> <li>Community WG reviewed strategies proposed by other working groups and ensured that the strategies reflect community priorities</li> </ul>
Reduction of disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on a transparent process especially through use of their website and RT members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to equity training and education helps to provide an even jumping off point.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocated for their needs and wishes in the community to trainers and each other.</li> <li>Pointed out flaws in the ways</li> </ul>

<sup>134</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>135</sup> USDN, 2019. p. 26. Op. cit.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The creation of the climate equity index allows users to visualize the overlap of climate issues and aspects that could make people vulnerable.</li> </ul>		<p>of thinking, specifically the distinction between zip code and neighborhood other disparities have also been pointed out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many people in this group signed up to help identify and disparities in their communities.</li> </ul>
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Opportunities for Next Steps

**Equity Commitment**

RVAgreen 2050’s equity focus is on centering and elevating the voices of frontline communities. One way the OOS has sought to achieve this goal was by including a community group, specifically the RT, within the process. In our analysis of the RT application, the OOS sought residents from frontline communities, which for Richmond would generally consist of lower-income communities of color, which aligns with the focus on racial equity. However, the composition of the RT does not appear to be in full alignment with this definition, as the RT is roughly 50% White/Caucasian.<sup>136</sup> In regards to the income levels, it is difficult to determine, as low-income is not defined in the RT application, and in looking at the Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority as a proxy, the number of individuals in the household plays a role, and that data point was not collected.<sup>137</sup> Given the voices of frontline communities are central to this process and trust plays the largest role when reaching out to the community,<sup>138</sup> the OOS may want to consider re-engaging with certain community-based organizations in order to supplement RT outreach. Community-based organizations already have established relationships, which may help in getting quality feedback.

With the RT being a key stakeholder in this process, it is imperative that community members have a clear understanding of their role. A consistent theme that we heard from RT interviews was that responsibilities weren’t necessarily fully understood. RT members have an understanding of their role with respect to engaging the community and elevating frontline community voices; however, in certain situations, such as their role in the Working Groups, there has been a lack of clarity, especially in the beginning of the process. This theme is highlighted with the following RT member quote:

*“I’ve seen us kind of wrap our heads around it as a team. We are, you know, just members of the community. We don’t have any experience working in any sort of planning like this. So, we all have different backgrounds and everything...the way it has evolved is we’ve just gotten a*

<sup>136</sup> City of Richmond - Office of Sustainability. (n.d.). *Roundtable and working groups demographics report.* <https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/RVAgreen%202050%20Roundtable%20and%20Working%20Groups%20Demographics%20Report%2012.7.2020.pdf>

<sup>137</sup> Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority. (n.d.). *Public housing program.* <https://www.rpha.com/housing/public-housing/>

<sup>138</sup> Virginia Community Voice. (n.d.). *Virginia community voice blueprint.* <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint>.

*better understanding of what our role is. And as things progressed, it's kind of like you don't really get it until you jump in and really do it and see where your impact is."*

The USDN outlines that a charter can be helpful, as it can outline aspects such as “roles of partners, expectations, decisions to be made, levels of review and feedback required, and effective communication and outreach strategies.”<sup>139</sup> As a result, the OOS may want to consider creating a charter for the remaining phases of the planning process. Washington DC’s *Technical Appendix* provides an example,<sup>140</sup> which can serve as a starting point. For the RVAgreen 2050 charter, we suggest that the OOS consider including not only the responsibilities of the RT but also how to operationalize those responsibilities in practice, as that seems to be where the gap exists. It seems like Providence ran into a similar challenge with roles, and its community group, the Racial & Environmental Justice Committee (REJC), ended up creating “role descriptions and expectations for themselves and city staff.”<sup>141</sup> With respect to RVAgreen 2050, we suggest the OOS co-create the charter with the RT and facilitators.

Turning from the RT, we also want to highlight the importance of a “whole-government approach” by which silos are broken down among departments, and there is cross-collaboration to address the root of the issues. Such an approach is important because both climate change and structural racism present complex challenges that require multiple stakeholders to be involved in the solutions.<sup>142</sup> Community members from other cities that instituted a similar process to RVAgreen 2050 recognized and voiced the need for this broader approach. One example is from Seattle, Washington, in which feedback was provided that trust had grown between the city officials and community members involved in the specific sustainability planning efforts; however, that growth in trust did not necessarily translate to other government departments, as it was not clear where those departments stood with respect to equity and partnering with the community.<sup>143</sup> Given the importance of this “whole-government approach,” the OOS may want to consider highlighting the number of city departments that are currently involved in the RVAgreen 2050 efforts<sup>144</sup> and outlining the connection that the RVAgreen 2050 process has with Mayor Stoney’s broader equity focus,<sup>145</sup> as well as the Richmond 300 strategic plan. By highlighting these current efforts, it will help bring awareness to the public of what steps the city has already taken.

In addition to publicizing the broader city involvement, the OOS may want to consider assessing the equity knowledge gained through the process via a survey. The survey results from city staff can help serve as a baseline for future surveys to measure the city’s progress. Moreover, to help further support equity efforts, the OOS may want to consider creating a

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<sup>139</sup> USDN, 2017. p. 31. Op. cit.

<sup>140</sup> Washington D.C. (2018). *A guide to community-centered engagement in the District of Columbia: Technical appendix*. <https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/CEG-TechnicalAppendix-10-2018-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>141</sup> USDN, 2019. p. 56. Op. cit.

<sup>142</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>143</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>144</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, March 30). Personal interview.

<sup>145</sup> City of Richmond. (n.d.). *Richmond’s equity agenda | Richmond*. <https://www.rva.gov/rvaequity>



cross-departmental group that would be responsible for continuing the equity efforts going forward.<sup>146</sup> The Government Alliance on Race & Equity has a resource - *Racial Equity Core Teams: The Engines of Institutional Change* - that may be helpful if the OOS decides to implement a cross-departmental equity team. This resource provides guidance on various aspects, such as examples of the types of responsibilities the team could have.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, the OOS may find it helpful to review information related to Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative, which is a “citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government.”<sup>148</sup> The website includes information, such as an organizational chart and the results from the periodic surveys that Seattle has conducted,<sup>149</sup> which may help the OOS gather ideas for Richmond. These additional efforts - surveying city staff and creating a cross-departmental equity group - would further demonstrate the OOS’, as well as the city’s, commitment to equity.

## **Co-develop with Community**

### *COVID-19*

The negative implications of a global pandemic on community engagement do not fall onto the City staff, facilitators, or RT members. COVID-19 has further heightened the issues of accessibility, especially when it comes to online communication and collaboration. When it comes to training the RT members for community engagement and collaboration, it prompts the question -- *Would equitable training be more effective in person?* As the pandemic continues, there is concern about what community members might not be “heard” if they are weary about meeting in-person or in-person events.

### *Community Representation*

One RVAgreen 2050 facilitator pointed out that the Engagement Phase 1 survey results showed that there is still a lot of work to do in order to reach the goal of making sure that the demographics they are reaching are truly representative of the City of Richmond.<sup>150</sup> If there is not a truly representative voice being “heard” -- then there might not be true “collaboration” on this project. The Virginia Community Voice Blueprint found in their experience that community engagement activities that inform, consult, or involve usually fall short of promoting ownership because they do not give community members authority to make meaningful decisions.

## **Prioritize Co-benefits**

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<sup>146</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>147</sup> Government Alliance on Race & Equity. (2018). *Racial equity core teams: The engines of institutional change*.

[https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RaceForward\\_CORETeamsToolkit-10.2018.pdf](https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RaceForward_CORETeamsToolkit-10.2018.pdf)

<sup>148</sup> City of Seattle. (n.d.). *Racial and social justice initiative*. Retrieved April 30, 2021, from <http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/about>

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. <http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/resources>

<sup>150</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal Interview.

### *Ensure frontline communities needs are prioritized*

Outreach is essential to the equity component of RVAgreen 2050, and co-benefits that reflect the existing needs of communities are dependent on comprehensive community engagement. The City should increase its outreach efforts to ensure RT and WG members are able to strategize effectively, by ensuring that all voices are effectively heard. To accomplish this effectively, it is urgent that outreach is expanded to hard-to-reach communities and attempt to increase diversity in the working groups.

### *Quantify co-benefits to maximize impact*

Case studies have shown that quantifying co-benefits are also an effective way to understand which strategies and co-benefits would have the largest impact.<sup>151</sup> If Richmond begins quantifying the co-benefits it would allow for the City to identify which strategies would have the largest impact, and targeting those specific actions. This should be done in conjunction with the established community priorities, ensuring that these priorities are met comprehensively. For example, benefits such as weatherizing homes to reduce utility bills, or various types of green infrastructure could be quantified to provide a cost and benefit comparison. Therefore, the community could identify and understand which benefit would have the highest impact. C40 Cities, a collaboration between 97 cities to tackle climate change, provides numerous case studies for OSS to review and help guide them in quantifying co-benefits.<sup>152</sup>

### *Increase education efforts to ensure everyone understands co-benefits*

While co-benefits are built into RVAgreen 2050, RT and WG members may still have confusion on what their exact roles are which could limit the impact of the strategies that are being developed. Educational efforts should be increased for everyone involved in the RVAgreen 2050 process, to ensure everyone fully understands co-benefits and how they should be prioritized. Benefits can also potentially increase inequities, such as green space resulting in property value increases, so it is important that benefits are planned carefully, and having a stronger co-benefit educational component could help mitigate these risks.<sup>146</sup>

## **Reduction of Disparities**

One way to foster the reduction of disparities through the RVAgreen 2050 process is through education about how and why frontline communities are unevenly impacted by climate change. While the RT is building knowledge in this area, there is room for more education in the WG and in the general public. Providence, Rhode Island has used “anti-oppression training” to empower residents and educate the officials in power.<sup>153</sup> This training acted to increase resident

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<sup>151</sup> The Co-benefits of Climate Action: Accelerating City-level Ambition. (2020). Tyndall Center. <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/73173>

<sup>152</sup> C40 Cities- Benefits Research Programme (2021) <https://www.c40.org/benefits>

<sup>153</sup> USDN, 2019. p. 27. Op. cit.

empowerment in Providence, which was critical to the process. Anti-oppression training approach may be a useful tool to use in Richmond to educate persons who have not historically been oppressed to gain an understanding of impacts and of course ways to not add to these issues.<sup>154</sup>

<i>What opportunities exist for RVAgreen 2050 to better meet its mission?</i>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Equity Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider re-engaging with community-based organizations to ensure frontline communities are reached</li> <li>Consider publicizing the interdepartmental collaboration and connecting it with Mayor Stoney's broader equity focus</li> <li>Consider surveying RVAgreen 2050 participants to gauge equity knowledge</li> <li>Consider creating a cross-departmental equity group</li> <li>Consider creating a RT charter that outlines roles and responsibilities for the remaining phases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure frontline community voices are heard through the community engagement process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Co-develop with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address accessibility concerns, especially when it comes to reaching communities who have experienced online/internet accessibility issues due to COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider creating more opportunities to include background information (or "homework") for the Roundtable members in order to increase how well the engagement is received</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Prioritize co-benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve outreach to include more hard to reach populations, especially in frontline communities, to have a better understanding of what their needs are and what benefits would have the most impact</li> <li>Quantify co-benefits of various mitigation strategies to understand which benefits should be prioritized and would have the largest impact</li> <li>Ensure frontline communities voices are fully heard in order to prioritize co-benefit strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the amount of education regarding the co-benefits that can come with taking climate action for WG and RT members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT and WG should have more education on what their specific roles are and how they can specifically prioritize co-benefits into the proposed goals and strategies</li> <li>RT should bolster outreach to hard to reach populations to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the community priorities</li> </ul>
Reduction of disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide increased trainings for RT members</li> <li>Increased transparencies between the city and the residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower the Roundtable members more when they are in the working groups, it seems like they may feel undervalued.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased training especially anti-oppression training may be helpful</li> </ul>

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.



## D. Equitable Decision-Making

An essential element of equitable, community-driven planning for climate resilience and adaptation, specifically, hinges on the transfer of some or all of the decision-making power from traditional planning experts and municipal leaders to nonexperts in the community. While this is vital for any kind of planning process, it is doubly important in climate action planning as vulnerable communities are more often at the frontline of climate change impacts and tend to suffer the consequences of climate change most acutely.<sup>155</sup> For this reason, this kind of inclusive planning process requires that these frontline communities are participants in the decision-making framework. If done effectively, equitable and inclusive climate action planning fosters long-term engagement and centers city stakeholders, residents, and experts around a shared goal.<sup>156</sup> This transfer of power is what facilitates an equitable decision-making paradigm.

To achieve an equitable decision-making framework, a planning process must foster power sharing, transparency, and accountability. These three elements of equitable decision-making frameworks are critical to a meaningful engagement process. Indeed, equitable community engagement, which ultimately leads to shared decision-making opportunities, relies on the principles of shared leadership and community-driven strategy development. Power sharing, transparency, and accountability measures ensure that municipalities are fulfilling their promises of community inclusion. The USDN also advocates for community engagement along these lines. Optimally, the organization states that it involves two-way channels of communication (i.e., accountability), multiple interactions between residents and city staff (i.e., transparency), and shared decision-making towards the advancement of solutions to complex problems (i.e., power sharing). They claim that a successful community-driven and equitable climate action planning process involves “shared decision-making between local government staff and the community with the aim of co-creating an equitable climate preparedness plan...this approach most aligns with shared leadership and community-driven [engagement], where there is an emphasis on a shared decision-making and co-ownership.”<sup>157</sup>

Assessment Indicator	Definition
<b>Power sharing</b>	Power sharing refers to local governments making a commitment to sharing responsibility for decision-making processes and desired outcomes. It is important to ensure that the stakeholders, private, and public entities are active participants and/or leaders throughout any preparation of programs, plans, or policies that might affect them.

<sup>155</sup> Gough, I. (2011). Climate change, double injustice, and social policy: A case study of the United Kingdom (Occasional Paper No. 1). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

<https://www.unrisd.org/publications/op-gough>

<sup>156</sup> Loh, C.G. & Kim, R. (2020). Are we planning for equity? Equity goals and recommendations from local comprehensive plans. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1-17. DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2020.1829498

<sup>157</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2017). *Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning*. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. p. 25.

<https://www.usdn.org/products-climate.html#GuideClimate>

<b>Transparency</b>	Transparency means that actions or processes are readily observed and understood, and this is a critical part of an equitable decision-making process. When local governments are transparent about how and when decisions are made, community members can meaningfully participate in and influence these decisions.
<b>Accountability</b>	Accountability measures ensure that all stakeholders are adhering to the principles of equitable, community-driven planning. Local governments must be accountable for meaningfully incorporating community voice and input into the final plan to move beyond performative inclusion and reach shared leadership over the plan and its development.

Thus, to evaluate the degree to which the planning for RVAgreen 2050 has aligned its process with these principles to-date, we identify and track three assessment areas critical to the creation of an equitable decision-making framework: (1) power sharing, (2) transparency, and (3) accountability. Ultimately, it is very important in a process that promotes equitable decision-making to identify participation, transparency, and accountability goals and regularly measure progress toward those goals.<sup>158</sup> In this way, equitable climate action planning tracks progress toward two parallel, but interrelated, objectives of *equitable community participation* and *equitable climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions*. Measures that promote equitable decision-making should be incorporated into both streams. Across the process, city staff should be collaborating with community members “to set equity goals and conduct equity impact assessments before finalizing decisions.”<sup>159</sup>

## Building on What’s Working

### Power Sharing

Different approaches to creating planning decisions at a community level are necessary to facilitate equitable outcomes. To ensure an equitable and inclusive planning approach, it requires local governments to share the decision-making process publicly so that all stakeholders understand how and why decisions are made.<sup>160</sup> It is essential to build the capacity of residents to participate in planning efforts to achieve shared power. To do so, residents must be offered the chance to participate in dedicated training to create a shared understanding of the overarching problem, how it affects them, and what participation opportunities are present. City staff must be equally willing to undergo equity training. The City of Richmond Office of Sustainability created the initial pre-planning framework with the help of community partners,<sup>161</sup> showing the initial willingness to collaborate with various stakeholders, and community partners. Richmond staff centered equity as a focal point of the Climate Action Plan with the aid of externally hired consultants to co-create a definition of what equity means to

<sup>158</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, February 22). Personal Interview.



the City of Richmond.<sup>162</sup> Creating a shared definition of equity that is easily understood by stakeholders is a form of power sharing as it builds capacity for stakeholders to actively understand, provide informed feedback, and participate in discussion on policies or plans.<sup>163</sup> To further increase capacity to work on Richmond’s racial equity issues, city staff, Roundtable (RT) members, and technical working group members received equity training.

*“This approach to planning processes has the potential to build community power and leadership by increasing community capacity to engage in plans and policies that will directly impact them.”<sup>164</sup>*

Sharing decision-making power necessitates partnerships and collaboration between community residents, or entrusted neighborhood associations, community based organizations (CBOs), local nonprofits, local businesses, and any other community stakeholders that have a pre-existing relationship with residents. Power sharing between the government agencies responsible for planning decisions and community members bridges the gap between the community and governance.<sup>165</sup> When approaching climate change planning from a community-driven framework, decision-making power must be shared with those who will be most affected. To properly plan for a community, the lived experience of residents and entrusted connections between community organizations are invaluable components to properly identifying an area's needs before subsequently making co-defined solutions to address community priorities and concerns.<sup>166</sup> The Office of Sustainability has made a commitment to uplift marginalized frontline communities; centering the voices of frontline communities in this planning process takes the form of virtual ambassador program and the RT. The Office of Sustainability publicly shares all related and relevant information regarding this plan on their website. This keeps Richmond residents and other stakeholders informed and provides opportunities to get involved in the process.

*“The Office of Sustainability developed the RVA Green 2050 Climate Equity Index to identify the communities in Richmond that are on the frontlines of crises such as climate change and are purposefully reaching out to these communities to engage them in our process.”<sup>167</sup>*

The USDN emphasizes the importance of shared power with government agencies and community members when making equitable decisions, regarding plans or policies that affect community members. The USDN power sharing framework acknowledges that to have inclusive and accessible planning decisions that there must be appropriate racial representation on the core planning team. During an interview, a RT member mentioned how important it was to her

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<sup>162</sup> RVA Green 2050. *Understanding Community Priorities*.

<sup>163</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>164</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> RVA Green 2050. *Engagement and Communication*.



to have the diversity in positions of authority in the planning process and the need for continuous representation throughout Richmonds Climate Action Plan.<sup>168</sup>

## Transparency

Local planning decisions cannot truly be made equitably unless all stakeholders are equipped with the information necessary to make an informed decision, and also understand how and when decisions are made.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, transparency is critical to creating an equitable planning process. In the RVAgreen 2050 planning process, three groups of stakeholders - city staff, consultative facilitators, and the RT - demonstrate a commitment to transparency.

The Office of Sustainability has created and supported transparency in the RVAgreen 2050 process primarily through creating a flexible participatory planning process and engaging in information sharing consistently throughout this process. The office staff indicated that they intentionally created a flexible planning framework that could pivot and change as they received stakeholder input throughout the process.<sup>170</sup> Assessing barriers to equitable decision-making processes and then adjusting a plan accordingly is a critical component of setting the stage for equitable decision making.<sup>171</sup> Using stakeholder feedback to identify barriers to participation and then changing a plan process based on that feedback ensures that more stakeholders can meaningfully participate in the decision making process, and the process is then, overall, more participatory and transparent.

*“The Office of Sustainability is committed to centering racial equity in our work, including the RVAgreen 2050 planning process. We are doing this through intense learning, listening, acknowledging mistakes, and making changes along the way.”<sup>172</sup>*

During their meetings, RT members are constantly engaged in discussion and interact with city staff and facilitators.<sup>173</sup> These meetings provide regular opportunities for sharing feedback from their respective communities - feedback that can then be used to adapt the RVAgreen 2050 process to make it more inclusive, participatory, and transparent. As the plan continues to evolve and progress, the Office of Sustainability staff continue to provide relevant information about the plan to the general public through their opt-in email updates, virtual one-on-one meetings with sustainability staff,<sup>174</sup> the [RVAgreen2050 YouTube channel](#), and their [plan website](#), further supporting transparency in the process.

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<sup>168</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 8). Personal interview.

<sup>169</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit.

<sup>170</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, February 10). Personal interview.

<sup>171</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit., p. 15

<sup>172</sup> RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). *Understanding Community Priorities*. City of Richmond. Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/understanding-community-priorities>

<sup>173</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>174</sup> City of Richmond RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). Get Involved with RVAgreen 2050 webpage. Retrieved April 4, 2021 from: <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/participate>



The consultative facilitators have supported transparency by administering educational training that equipped RT members with the necessary information to communicate about and participate in the decision making process, guided RT members in creating an overarching strategy for the RT to use moving forward in the planning process, and assisted in establishing shared language around equity for the group. One of the best practices identified by the USDN for third party facilitators in the equitable decision making process is that these facilitators should prepare a group such as the RVAgreen 2050 RT to make strategic decisions that are backed by shared principles and practices.<sup>175</sup> The training and shared language guidance that the facilitators provided served as these shared practices and principles, which the RT members could utilize to make fully informed decisions in the RVAgreen 2050 process.

RT members created transparency around their representation of the greater Richmond community by completing initial demographic surveys and sharing the survey results. The survey results clearly demonstrated that the RT and the Working Groups on which RT members serve are not a direct representation of the demographics of Richmond overall.<sup>176</sup> Despite this disconnect, based on our interviews with four current members, RT members seem to be in agreement about their responsibility to the communities of Richmond: listening to community members, giving a voice to and advocating for historically marginalized community members, facilitating community participation in the decision making process, and holding those in positions of leadership accountable. RT members and city staff both openly acknowledge that the demographic makeup of the RT is not a mirror image of Richmond's overall demographics, and this "inexact" representation does not appear to hinder the RT's commitment to transparency and to their overall role in the equitable decision-making process.

### **Accountability**

Accountability measures ensure that all stakeholders are adhering to the principles of equitable, community-driven planning. Local governments must be accountable for meaningfully incorporating community voice and input into the final plan to move beyond performative inclusion to reach a shared leadership over the plan and its development. A core belief of the USDN is that community stakeholders must "be able to trust the planning process to fully participate."<sup>177</sup> In an equitable process, accountability helps to foster this trust by defining clear and consistent expectations from all stakeholders, but particularly from the city, around how to make and implement a shared vision.

Most of the best practices related to accountability in equitable decision-making advocate for the establishment of some version of community advisory committee that is charged with overseeing both the process and the implementation of a community-driven planning process. These community committees are founded on the principle that they will hold the city

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<sup>175</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit., p. 15

<sup>176</sup> Roundtable Discussion Slides 1.5.2021. (2021, January 5). Considerations for Community Engagement Discussion. City of Richmond. Retrieved April 4, 2021, from: <https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/Roundtable%20Discussion%20Slides%201.5.2021.pdf>

<sup>177</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit., p. 24.



accountable for promoting equity equally alongside its climate goals.<sup>178</sup> The Office of Sustainability makes explicit this role by placing the RT at the center of the five working groups and defining its responsibilities as “shaping [the] planning process and content.”<sup>179</sup> Specifically, it holds the RT members responsible for serving “as liaisons to ensure community needs and assets are integrated into the planning process.”<sup>180</sup> Conversations with city staff make clear that the expectation is for the RT to have the “final say” in the plan’s strategies and language.<sup>181</sup> In these ways, the RVAgreen 2050 process has committed to holding itself accountable through a transparent power-sharing relationship with the RT that does not subordinate the RT’s role relative to the city’s.

This practice aligns with the USDN’s recommendations and also reflects how previous equity-centered climate action plans in peer cities were developed. For example, the City of Seattle convened the Green Ribbon Commission (GRC) to sit in between the Technical Advisory Groups (TAG) and the city’s implementation of climate adaptation and resilience strategies. Its 2013 Climate Action Plan, highlighted as exemplary by the USDN, charges the GRC with considering the TAG recommendations and “adding their own ideas and perspective to develop recommendations in the sectors considered by the TAGs.”<sup>182</sup> The RVAgreen 2050 RT serves the same purpose, and the language that the Office of Sustainability uses to describe its role mirrors best practices espoused by the USDN and that is reflected in prior high-quality and equity-driven plans.

The Office of Sustainability has also identified several milestones across its pre-planning and plan development work that seek to keep the city accountable for continuing to incorporate community voice, with the goal of fostering trust in the process. By centering RVAgreen 2050 around the seven community priorities, the staff has made a public commitment to honor these priorities within the plan itself. The website states,

*“We will communicate what we heard and simultaneously make sure RVAgreen 2050 is adequately addressing community priorities.”<sup>183</sup>*

Our evaluation of the process to-date has not identified any evidence to suggest that this commitment is disingenuous. The facilitators charged with leading the RT meetings shared that

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> RVAgreen 2050 Introduction. (2020, October 27). *Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Roundtable: Meeting #1*. City of Richmond. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from: <https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/RVAgreen%202050%20Introduction.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> Roundtable Discussion Slides 1.5.2021. (2021, January 5). *Considerations for Community Engagement Discussion*. City of Richmond. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from: <https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/Roundtable%20Discussion%20Slides%201.5.2021.pdf>

<sup>181</sup> Fisher, B. & Norrell, K. (2021, February 10). Personal interview.

<sup>182</sup> City of Seattle. (2013). *Seattle Climate Action Plan*. Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment. [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Environment/ClimateChange/2013\\_CAP\\_20130612.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Environment/ClimateChange/2013_CAP_20130612.pdf)

<sup>183</sup> RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). *RVAgreen 2050: Understanding Community Priorities*. City of Richmond. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from: <https://www.rvagreengreen2050.com/understanding-community-priorities>



they continually ask members to consider how the content and information shared in the RT discussions relates to them personally and to their communities.<sup>184</sup> This constant (re)alignment and reconciliation of the Office of Sustainability’s climate agenda with the community’s values and lived experiences by way of third-party moderation (via the facilitators) ensures that the office remains accountable to the community. This was a critical shortcoming in Seattle’s plan, for example, where feedback indicated that the city’s ultimate decision-making was not directly accountable to the communities because members of the GRC were handpicked and no third-party stakeholders were involved.<sup>185</sup> Because representatives from the Office of Sustainability join each moderated RT meeting, these discussions reinforce the city’s accountability for achieving progress toward community priorities and remove any possible deniability or ignorance of the community’s feedback. RT meetings thus serve as the nexus for community members, city staff, and outside (i.e., neutral) actors to convene regularly, a critical element of a successful equitable decision-making process.

Finally, the RVAgreen 2050 Equity Tool serves as a tangible framework for holding the Office of Sustainability and the Technical Working Groups accountable for considering the community priorities. This is an essential element of accountability in equitable decision-making espoused by the USDN, which tasks planners to “scan strategies to ensure equity goals are not subordinate to climate goals.”<sup>186</sup> This tool, which asks key questions related to each community priority, was developed by the RT and shared with the Technical Working Groups as they developed draft strategies. In proposing this instrument, the Office of Sustainability prompted the RT by asking:

*“How can we ensure that making decisions related to policy, planning, programming, and budgeting advance racial equity and shared prosperity?”<sup>187</sup>*

Importantly, the Office of Sustainability committed to using the Equity Tool as both a “product and a process.”<sup>188</sup> It was framed by the office as a product to use to “evaluate the extent to which proposed climate action and resilience strategies...prioritize equity as it related to each community priority” and as a process in that it embeds “a practice of equity thinking through creating and using the tool.”<sup>189</sup> Unlike the shortcomings of other climate plans, this Equity Tool helps to ensure that the city and other key policy makers are ultimately accountable to the

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<sup>184</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>185</sup> USDN, 2019. Op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>186</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>187</sup> Roundtable Discussion Slides 11.24.2020. (2020, November 24). *RVAgreen 2050 Vision Statement*. City of Richmond. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from:

[https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/Roundtable%2011.24.2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/Roundtable%2011.24.2020_0.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> RVAgreen 2050 Waste Working Group Meeting Slides 1.7.2021. (2021, January 7). *RVAgreen 2050 Waste Technical Working Group*. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from:

<https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/RVAgreen%202050%20Waste%20Working%20Group%20Equity%20Tool%201.7.2021.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

community. For example, Washington D.C.’s Ward 7 Equity Advisory Group (EAG) provided the city with direct feedback on steps to take to create a more equitable decision-making process, but no accountability mechanisms were established by Washington D.C. to assure EAG members that their priorities would be considered and set up.<sup>190</sup> The USDN cites the D.C. example as a city that has not meaningfully transferred decision-making ownership to communities. By contrast, RVAgreen 2050’s Equity Tool puts explicit mechanisms in place for diffusing the community’s voice into every aspect of the planning process in a formalized manner and provides a tangible document that holds the Office of Sustainability accountable to the community.

<b>What is working well with respect to RVAgreen 2050’s equitable decision-making framework?</b>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Power Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used feedback from community partners to create initial framework for the planning process</li> <li>Hired consultants for equity training to ensure common/understood language</li> <li>Created virtual ambassador program and resident roundtable to center community engagement and input into planning process</li> <li>Invited representatives from other city agencies to be on technical working groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-created the curriculum on meetings with city staff</li> <li>Helped create shared language for equity training purposes</li> <li>Worked with roundtable members to develop community engagement strategies specific for each member’s context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dual participation across roundtable and working groups</li> <li>Presumed to have the “final say” in strategy development</li> <li>Given the responsibility of curating a community-engagement plan for their respective communities</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created a flexible planning process that can change and pivot according to stakeholder feedback</li> <li>Provides detailed and publicly accessible information about the planning process and updates via the RVAgreen 2050 website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered training and provided an overarching strategy for the Roundtable to move forward</li> <li>Created a shared language surrounding the idea of equity to foster transparency in discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed initial demographic surveys to identify ways in which the Roundtable was representative of the broader Richmond community</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started the process by acknowledging the city’s role in perpetuating a history of systemic racism and discrimination</li> <li>Established the Roundtable with the purpose of it serving as an intermediary between</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated regular discussions that prompted Roundtable members to reflect on how new proposals related to them personally and to their communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated as both members of the Roundtable and of a Technical Working Group to ensure that climate and equity goals were considered equally</li> <li>Defined individual strategies that would work well within</li> </ul>

<sup>190</sup> District of Columbia. (2018). *Recommendations from the Equity Advisory Group in Far NE Ward 7*. Georgetown Climate Center and District Department of Energy and Environment. [https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/eag\\_recommendations\\_web\\_8.20.18.pdf](https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/eag_recommendations_web_8.20.18.pdf)



	<p>the community, technical working groups, and local government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly committed to addressing the community priorities in the RVAgreen 2050 plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trained Roundtable members on how to make strategic contributions to the climate plan and taught them the language needed to hold the city and their own communities accountable</li> </ul>	<p>their communities for sharing and gathering feedback on the proposed plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed the RVAgreen 2050 Equity Tool to ensure alignment between community priorities and climate plan</li> </ul>
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Opportunities for Next Steps

**Power Sharing**

Sharing power requires government agencies to actively pursue transparency, accountability, and equitable engagement throughout every phase of the planning process. The Office of Sustainability has made sincere efforts to acknowledge and address previous inequities that have led to current environmental injustices, and to provide inclusive opportunities for involvement in this planning process.

City staff are transparent about the demographics of the roundtable and working group not being entirely representative of Richmonds rich diversity. Third party consultants have identified the need for a reflective RT representation that is inclusive of all of Richmond’s residents, however adding more residents to the RT this late in the process is not a possibility.<sup>191</sup> The working groups are less representative of Richmond than the RT. Some RT members that were interviewed identified a key to making the planning process more equitable is having a more accurate representation in both the working groups and the RT. One RT member even suggested more extensive equity training for those that have not had a lived experience that has been marginalized.<sup>192</sup> All of the RT members that were interviewed expressed gratitude for being a part of the decision making process and to the Office of Sustainability for conducting a planning process that is community driven.

**Transparency**

Creating and maintaining transparency can be challenging. Local government staff, facilitators of the decision-making process, and any participating committees and partner organizations must commit to transparency around information sharing and the nature of the decision-making process itself. The Office of Sustainability staff face a few potential challenges to achieving transparency in their effort to support equitable decisions making, primarily related to expanding community engagement, defining roles for existing stakeholders in the next phase of the plan, and creating a strategy to implement the plan consistently across city departments. There is, according to a RT member, a potential dearth of engagement with two groups of community members: those who do not have access to the internet and those who are not

<sup>191</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.

<sup>192</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview.



already a part of the advocacy community here in Richmond.<sup>193</sup> City staff can work collaboratively with RT members and RVAgreen Ambassadors to identify more inclusive strategies that target these communities. Along these same lines, city staff can leverage the expertise and enthusiasm of the Ambassadors to achieve their engagement goals and increase transparency by engaging with a broader swath of Richmond residents, but should first define or redefine as necessary the role of the Ambassador in the plan development and plan implementation phases. In addition to creating a clear and shared understanding with Ambassadors, city staff should ensure that they have the educational resources needed to create transparent communication channels with these community members. Lastly, this shared understanding of respective roles in the implementation and development phases should extend to city departments who will participate in rolling out the plan in the future. If departments understand their role in moving the plan forward and are supported in doing so, there will be transparency across departments and department staff will be equipped to participate in RVAgreen’s equitable decision making process.

As RVAgreen 2050 shifts from plan development to implementation, the RT will require additional training and support from facilitators. A member of the RT suggested that equipping members and Ambassadors with the data and/or academic information to demonstrate why the needs expressed by the community matter would make the overall RVAgreen 2050 planning process more equitable.<sup>194</sup> The USDN posits that a truly community-driven process requires a transparent two-way channel of communication to support advancing solutions to complex problems.<sup>195</sup> Facilitators should offer their expertise to address any technical knowledge gaps that the RT members identify, so that members feel equipped to effectively discuss complex community needs with working group members and city staff, creating transparency in how information moves from the community to other stakeholders in the equitable decision making process.

RT members are set to embark on a period of community outreach and engagement in 2021 and 2022. Since shared understanding is integral to maintaining transparency, a critical action to ensure that this outreach process is transparent is to identify the purpose, goal(s) and intended outcome(s) for the RT’s outreach efforts. The city staff, facilitators, and RT members should come to a consensus when establishing these and then share them with the community members who are providing feedback. While RT members created their own respective community engagement plans about who specifically they will engage and how,<sup>196</sup> which may differ among members, there is not yet a system in place to track the community feedback collected during this period. Creating a singular system in which feedback is tracked consistently supports transparency because the feedback will be centrally available and accessible. Additionally, feedback will all be logged in the same way, helping to ensure that feedback is

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<sup>193</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 12). Personal interview.

<sup>194</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 8). Personal interview.

<sup>195</sup> USDN, 2017. p. 25.

<sup>196</sup> Walden, E. & Freeman, M. (2021, February 22). Personal interview.



reviewed and considered equitably in the decision making process. City staff are utilizing the Virginia Community Voice Blueprint to guide their RVA Green 2050 engagement efforts.<sup>197</sup> The RT may want to consider this same framework for organizing and cataloging feedback data. The Blueprint framework is meant to support a more inclusive and equitable decision making process.<sup>198</sup> The Blueprint suggests using surveys and interviews to collect three types of information - lived experience, historical context and disaggregated data (i.e. data at the neighborhood level) - and then combine this information to create “data storytelling”.<sup>199</sup> This framework would not only help organize the community feedback collected, but also how to share out the feedback to other stakeholders. This information-sharing across all stakeholder groups is critical to creating transparency in decision making.

### **Accountability**

Having accountability measures in place from the onset provides a level of assurance to the community that city staff are committed to an equitable process and that they have identified tangible metrics to ensure adherence to that framework. In turn, this can foster more trust in the planning process because it provides specific criteria for community members to consult to evaluate the degree to which the city is upholding its promises.<sup>200</sup> Importantly, accountability in equitable decision-making spans the entire planning process from initiation to implementation. Local governments need to be accountable for fully incorporating community voice into the development of a climate action plan, but there also needs to be metrics and protections in place to ensure that the plan is implemented in accordance with equity principles as well.

The RVA Green 2050 process is mapped out to include adoption and implementation of the plan, which suggests that the principles of equity and shared decision-making will translate from the planning stage to the implementation stage. Across 2022, the Office of Sustainability plans to seek community feedback on the final plan, go to the CAO, mayor, and city council for approval, and support the implementation projects in frontline communities.<sup>201</sup> Many of the determinations for the office’s ultimate accountability to the community will occur during these stages of the process. While the Office of Sustainability has been accountable to the RT, and by extension to the broader Richmond community, during the planning process, it remains to be seen if and how they will institute measures to continue to be beholden to the community.

With no plans as-of-yet published on how the office will be accountable to the equity principles of its climate action plan, this is an area that we would recommend further information be

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<sup>197</sup> RVA Green 2050. (n.d.). *Understanding Community Priorities*. City of Richmond. Retrieved April 14, 2021 from: <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/understanding-community-priorities>

<sup>198</sup> Virginia Community Voice. (n.d.). *The Blueprint*. p. 13. Retrieved April 4, 2021, from: <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint>

<sup>199</sup> Virginia Community Voice. (n.d.). *The Blueprint*. p. 6-12. Retrieved April 4, 2021, from: <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint>

<sup>200</sup> USDN, 2017. Op. cit.

<sup>201</sup> RVA Green 2050. (n.d.). *RVA Green 2050: Adopt and Implement*. City of Richmond. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from: <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/adopt-and-implement>

provided. An appropriate model to follow is the Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment’s Environmental Justice Committee (EJC). The EJC was convened in 2017, two years after the adoption of the city’s Climate Action Plan, to ensure continued participation and influence of frontline communities. The EJC developed the office’s Equity and Environment agenda and “centers community ownership in decision-making” as a core mandate.<sup>202</sup> The committee advocates for “strong accountability” that includes “ongoing oversight of government and other entities to address the negative impacts they have experienced.”<sup>203</sup> The EJC continues to hold the City of Seattle accountable for upholding its promise to center community ownership of the decision-making process; for example, in December 2020 it released a report outlining community priorities for equity and environment in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“We believe that affected communities deserve strong, accountable, transparent, accessible, and culturally appropriate solutions that include ongoing oversight of government and other entities to address the negative impacts they have experienced.”*

Despite claims that the RT will have the final say in the plan’s development, no explicit mention of this authority was identified. In fact, in speaking with one member of the RT, they indicated that they “wouldn’t classify” the RT as having the final say, and instead perceived it serving in a more editing and refining capacity.<sup>204</sup> This demonstrates a major gap in the decision-making power of the RT, and the lack of information about its ultimate authority leaves space for the Office of Sustainability to be unaccountable. This ambiguity is further exacerbated by the amorphous nature of the RT’s responsibilities. Numerous RT members expressed confusion over the goals, roles, and duties of the Roundtable, and said that they only became clear after several meetings.<sup>205</sup> Moving forward, we urge the Office of Sustainability to better define and make explicit the roles and responsibilities of the RT as a way to hold themselves publicly accountable for abdicating final authority to the community.

<b>What opportunities exist for RVAgreen 2050 to better foster an equitable decision-making process?</b>			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Power Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore intergovernmental partnerships with other city agencies to help have a more cohesive approach to climate change planning</li> <li>Develop metrics to track progress of roundtable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a more in-depth equity training option for technical working group members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>

<sup>202</sup> Equity and Environment (2020). *Environmental Justice Committee*. City of Seattle. Retrieved April 1, 2021, from: <https://www.seattle.gov/environment/equity-and-environment/environmental-justice-committee>

<sup>203</sup> City of Seattle. (2017). *Equity & Environment Agenda*. Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment. <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OSSE/SeattleEquityAgenda.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>205</sup> [1] Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview. [2] Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 11). Personal interview.



	<p>members community engagement plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With aid from consultants, consider how to make roundtable and working groups more representative of the communities this plan intends to serve</li> </ul>		
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategies to reach out to and share information to those who are not already part of the local advocacy realm, and community members who do not have access to the internet</li> <li>• Identify/clarify the role of Ambassadors in the next phase of the plan</li> <li>• Create a cohesive strategy to implement the plan across city departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based feedback from the RT and city staff, identify additional training opportunities so that RT members have ongoing support</li> <li>• As focus shifts to strategy development and plan implementation, ensure that the language used in communications can be understood by technical experts and community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboratively develop a system for RT members to keep track of feedback from their community outreach</li> <li>• With city staff and facilitators, identify the purpose, goal(s) and intended outcome(s) for the outreach phase</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a standing environmental justice committee to oversee roll-out of the plan and ensure equity continues to be centered</li> <li>• Better define the RT's duties and final authority using language that is clear, accessible, and consistent</li> <li>• Identify any potential institutional or structural barriers that may impede the implementation of equity goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the ongoing community outreach to hold Roundtable members accountable for engaging with their communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

## E. Build Support

By increasing public awareness and support for RVAgreen2050, both the Office of Sustainability and community will benefit from greater understanding and awareness of the goals and expectations of the RVAgreen2050 plan. Doing so will result in more equitable processes and outcomes by ensuring that voices of underserved community members are not only heard but understood and valued in the planning process. Given the long history of racial bias that planning has had, the centering of equity in the process by greater understanding is a crucial step to right the wrongs of the past as well as prevent new hardships related to climate.

### Assessment Indicators

In this section, we focus on six assessment indicators to determine how RVAgreen 2050 is performing with respect to building support for its mission among stakeholders. These assessment indicators are: mutual learning, participants’ needs, realistic timeline, transparency, diversity, and engagement.

Assessment Indicator	Definition
Mutual Learning	Mutual learning allows for ideas to be shared and developed across different groups of people to provide the most benefits possible to all parties. While it can be done in many different ways, mutual learning often happens when community members, facilitators, and city staff meet and discuss ideas, commenting on, critiquing, and commending throughout the process to improve ideas.
Participant’s Needs	Everyone involved in the planning process has different requirements and needs, whether they be services needed in order to participate or planning needs that must be cared for. Understanding and addressing any and all needs of participants is essential to ensure that people can fully participate in the process, unhindered by pressing burdens that would otherwise prevent their inclusion in the process.
Realistic Timeline	Throughout the planning process the amount of time required for a task must be taken into account. The planner and facilitator must ensure an ample amount of time is set aside looking through a practical lense. The established timeline should have a bit of flexibility to accommodate for tasks taking longer than originally planned.
Transparency	Transparency is important to the RVAgreen2050 mission as it seeks to mend the relationships with communities that were marginalized in past plans. Transparency and clarity of purpose helps build support and trust. Here we define transparency to mean the clarity and openness.
Diversity	The RVAgreen team must work to ensure that both the Roundtables and Working Groups include representatives from all groups within the Richmond communities. Diversity is tremendously important to ensure all races and ethnic groups are represented in the process.



Engagement	As RVAgreen2050 moves into the Community Engagement Phase of the project, we examine the plans for future community engagement efforts as well as the engagement that RVAgreen2050 has done with the Roundtable and working group members. Here we will use engagement to mean active participation of stakeholders.
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## Build on What’s Working

### Mutual Learning

RVAgreen 2050 has involved mutual learning across all levels of those involved in the process. The Office of Sustainability chose to center equity in their plan, and therefore began the process with listening to community members to understand what equity looked like for different people. This represents an important step, as many members of the department have advanced degrees, which is not representative of the city as a whole, and therefore are likely to have different priorities than the majority. The facilitators increased the background knowledge of the Roundtable (RT) members in equity, climate change, and city processes, thus building their individual capacities and allowing for greater engagement and participation from all members.

The greatest mutual learning comes from the RT members. Part of their role in the process has been to act as laypeople in their vetting of policies and word choice used, with one RT member saying that they found overly academic terminology and “don’t understand that word. Like [the working group members] are not going to understand that this isn’t translating because they’re not in my shoes. So I can kind of speak up and ask the right questions”.<sup>206</sup> This often occurred as RT members pointed out aspects that have been overlooked by working group members or by vetting whether or not the ideas put forward would translate well to actual community members. In interviews, RT members commented on how this helped them through the process, with one saying “I am learning so much so I want to make that clear as well. I’m not just going in there and shaking my finger and saying you have to do this; you have to do that” indicating that they felt more capable of giving constructive comments.<sup>207</sup> Beyond that, RT members work collaboratively with the other working group members to develop and add to ideas.

### Participants’ Needs

The priorities of RVAgreen 2050 were decided on by listening to what people were most concerned about in their communities, resulting in the seven community priorities for RVAgreen.<sup>208</sup> This demonstrates a clear desire to center the plan on real world community needs, as opposed to esoterically broad concerns like melting ice caps and carbon emissions. The selection of priorities places greater emphasis on the concerns of frontline community

<sup>206</sup> Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview.  
<sup>207</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>208</sup> RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). *RVAgreen 2050: Understanding Community Priorities*. City of Richmond. from: <https://www.rvagreeen2050.com/understanding-community-priorities>



members, rather than more vocal people with expert knowledge who are often disproportionately represented in environmentalism movements.

Working group members have different needs which must be taken care of in order to promote high levels of meaningful participation. RT members in underrepresented communities were given the opportunity to receive grants of up to \$5000 for their work to incentivize participation and help to overcome barriers to participation.<sup>209</sup> This grant money potentially opens the door to participation for people who are unable to justify the time commitment due to some financial burdens. While all members were expected to pay attention and participate at meetings, online meetings provided a unique possibility for members to be at home and tend to things as needed. One RT member mentioned that cooking dinner during a meeting was not at all unusual, even being a relationship building activity as members would casually ask one another what they are cooking.<sup>210</sup> This flexibility permits RT members to care for their kids and multitask if needed, which would not have been possible in a traditional brick and mortar community meeting.

### **Realistic Timeline**

When developing the timeline and schedule for a planning process, planners and facilitators must determine what tasks are needed and carefully calculate the amount of time required to complete each task. The many factors that must be taken into account have to be analyzed to determine just how much of an effect that will have overall. These factors included the number of staff members, the budget allotted for the process, and building some contingency for unforeseeable set back, such as COVID-19.

The RVAgreen 2050 team has been sticking relatively well to the timeline they set in the beginning of the process. The schedule has been very flexible to accommodate for items that may have taken longer than originally scheduled. COVID-19 has placed a strain on the process now that all communication and training for the working group and RT are completely virtual. To accommodate and ensure the schedule is adhered to as best as possible, the RT held a meeting specifically to review previous discussions, looking at the time line to see if the process is on track, comparing and pulling data from other cities, and establishing the methodology that will be used moving forward. The RT meetings are shared via Youtube allowing for members who could not make the meeting update on the latest information and still provide their own feedback.

### **Transparency**

Throughout interviews with RT members, City of Richmond staff, and facilitators, it was clear that stakeholders at these levels were committed to an equity centered process. This commitment to equity was laid out and fully explained at the beginning of the process to ensure

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<sup>209</sup> RVAgreen2050 (2020). *RVAgreen 2050 Roundtable and Working Groups Application*

<sup>210</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.



all members were on the same page. This led to RT members, in particular, feeling empowered to speak out when a statement, process, or suggestion is not considering equity.

Furthermore, with respect to clarity, the City of Richmond staff and facilitator team set a standard early on to cultivate a culture of understanding with respect to language. This included encouraging team members to use accessible and clear language and as a result created an atmosphere in which team members felt empowered to ask for clarification when a term was used that they were not familiar with, or to encourage a language change to ensure the message would be well received and understood by the community. RT members confirmed this in interviews, citing specific examples of asking questions or voicing concern and having their suggestions taken into consideration. For example, one RT member suggested shifting language from “zip codes” to “neighborhoods” when discussing areas of the city to acknowledge the variety of experiences in any given zip code.<sup>211</sup> This point was taken and language in conversations moving forward was adjusted.

If RVAgreen 2050 wants to be transparent to the community stakeholders in this planning process, then as important as the message itself is the ability of that message to be fully understood by community members. We encourage RVAgreen2050 to build on the successes it has accomplished so far and continue to be open and clear that they are centering equity and why as well as continuing to use accessible and clear language so community members can not only understand the message, but feel that the effort to get them involved is genuine.

### **Diversity**

Regardless of how well the process is developed, the importance of diversity within the planning process ensures the unique needs of the community are met. The lack of diversity can severely skew the data collected which can lead to the development of ineffective recommendations at the end of the report. The time and funds utilized for the process are spent on a process that will not be used. This only further delays the ability for mitigation of the issues within the community.

The RVAgreen team provided numerous opportunities for community members to get involved with the process, from email updates and surveys to 30 minute one on one sessions with a member of the RVAgreen team. The “Get Involved” section of the RVAgreen2050 webpage outlines the many ways to get involved.<sup>212</sup> The many available avenues for engagement are offered to ensure all members feel comfortable getting involved and communicating with the RVAgreen team. In this communication, the consistent language is developed to be transparent and inclusive for all to understand. In addition, the members RT were picked to ensure that every ward in the city would have a representative, with the more disadvantaged wards getting extra members as an insurance that every community's voice is heard. The team expressed that

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<sup>211</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>212</sup> City of Richmond RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). Get Involved with RVAgreen 2050 webpage. Retrieved April 10, 2021 from: <https://www.rvagreen2050.com/participate>

their “targeted universal strategy is inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginalized groups but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginalized group.”<sup>213</sup>

### Engagement

Office of Sustainability staff and RT members are very engaged in the planning process. This can be seen through their passion in interviews as well as in the use of resources provided to them. RT members feel that their ideas are being heard and taken seriously, with many members citing in interviews specific examples of their ideas or feedback leading to real time change.<sup>214</sup> This involvement encourages the members to feel engaged, creating more buy in and building support for the planning process overall.

The RVAgreen 2050 team has plans to reach out to the community in many different ways, including social media, emails, and community meetings.<sup>215</sup> One staff member spoke of acknowledging that one size does not fit all with respect to communication, and this is the right attitude to have with respect to outreach.<sup>216</sup> Determining how community members communicate and reaching out to them in ways that are easily accessible will be the key to getting more community involvement.

As RVAgreen 2050 is moving more fully into the Community Engagement Phase, they have also equipped the RT members, who will be the face of the planning campaign, to go out into the community to engage residents. What has been successful to this point, having not yet gathered data on the implementation of community outreach, is that the RT members have received training from facilitators with respect to communication techniques and strategies. RT members have been given the tools to answer the “so what?” and “why should I care?” questions from community members, but it will be important to RVAgreen2050 to adjust their toolkit as the community outreach gets underway and be prepared to pivot if the chosen path isn’t working.

What is working well with respect to RVAgreen 2050’s process of building support?			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Mutual Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening sessions used by RVAgreen 2050 to understand the desires and priorities of frontline organizations, will engage with frontline community members directly in following phases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT members receive training from facilitators to get everyone at a level at which they can contribute to idea development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT members develop ideas collaboratively by adding and contributing to ideas</li> <li>RT members point out blind spots that have not been noticed by the city and advocate for their communities</li> <li>RT vets ideas that the city has come up with to determine</li> </ul>

<sup>213</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, February 17). Personal interview.

<sup>214</sup> Anonymous (P7). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>215</sup> City of Richmond RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). Get Involved with RVAgreen 2050 webpage. Retrieved April 10, 2021 from: <https://www.rvgreen2050.com/participate>

<sup>216</sup> Fisher, B. & Norell, K. (2021, February 15). Personal Interview. [Zoom Call].

			<p>whether they will be effective and well received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT meetings are used to get feedback from members and to do consensus building</li> </ul>
Participant's Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants can be paid up to \$5000 for their work on the RT, less for roles that require less work</li> <li>7 RVAgreen2050 priorities chosen based on what city officials heard from residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone in process is instructed to emphasize the tangible effects of climate change (Urban Heat Island, Flooding, etc.) as opposed to more abstract concepts (Such as carbon emissions)</li> <li>Top criteria for selection on RT are ability to reach hard to reach communities and proven experience doing it</li> <li>RT Member capacity increased by training and homework in the earlier part of process, which they will then use to increase the capacity of their own communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Realistic Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A RT meeting was held to review previous discussions, looking at the time line to see if the process is on track, comparing and pulling data from other cities, and establishing the methodology that will be used moving forward.</li> <li>Kendra expressed the schedule has been very flexible thus far.</li> <li>Sharing the videos via youtube allows for participants who missed the meeting to review and be updated.</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of equity was explained at the outset and it was widely accepted as the priority.</li> <li>Building out consistent language to be inclusive and transparent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trainers worked to get everyone on the same page so there could be effective communication, with respect to common language and consistent messaging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was expressed that having multiple ways the community could communicate, acknowledges that there's not a "one size fits all" solution to communicating with members of the community.</li> <li>The team is working to ensure consistent language to be inclusive and transparent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RT members were educated on how to answer the "so what?" and "how does that impact me?" questions that might arise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The members were picked for the RT to ensure that every city council district would have a representative, with the more disadvantaged wards getting extra members as an insurance in case anyone dropped out.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RVAGreen2050 team has made fair efforts to get a good cross-section of representation from RVA and professionals.</li> </ul>		
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of community communication, including social media, emails, meetings, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitators trained the team on community engagement, what principles to hold themselves to, and how to develop community engagement strategies.</li> <li>Facilitators focused on equipping the RT members with communication tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT members feel that their ideas are heard and taken seriously. Many members have cited specific examples of their suggestions being implemented in future meetings.</li> </ul>

## Opportunities for Next Steps

### Mutual Learning

The mutual learning between working group members and RT members was somewhat disrupted on multiple occasions by a lack of equity training on the part of working group members. While the impromptu equity training provided by RT members when this was brought up was perceived by some to simply be a role of RT members and even an opportunity to educate, the lack of training on the part of expert working group members did put RT members in a potentially uncomfortable situation. In one interview, a RT member stated “it can be really insulting, like the idea of having to teach somebody how to respect you. Like you’re a grown adult, you’re coming to the table behind on this information. It’s your job to catch up.”<sup>217</sup> By providing more equity training resources for all group members, this situation can be avoided while also allowing for higher level and equity focused ideas from all members instead of placing so much of the equity-centering burden onto RT members.

### Participants’ Needs

At this stage in the planning process, there are many opportunities for growth in meeting participants’ needs in future steps. The most pressing concern is that of the digital divide. While this has been mentioned, there is little evidence showing how the process worked to include people without reliable access to the internet. In the times of COVID-19, this divide is admittedly a hurdle to overcome, but given the disparities in who is most affected by the pandemic, it is crucial that these voices in particular be heard. Greater access to the internet has been shown to result in higher rates of public participation and public knowledge, and would therefore amplify these voices.<sup>218</sup> The shortcomings of the digital outreach strategies that the pandemic has demanded, though, surpasses simply having internet access. Many people

<sup>217</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview.

<sup>218</sup> Sylvester, D and McGlynn, A. (2010). *The Digital Divide, Political Participation, and Race*. Social Science Computer Review



are not as comfortable sharing their opinions online as they would be in person, which can slow mutual learning processes as less information is brought up by community members.

As vaccination rates increase and in-person activities can be held safely, the RVAgreen 2050 team will be presented with a host of opportunities in how they wish to take advantage of new capabilities. Beyond including the voices of those without internet access, outreach strategies can be implemented to meet more physical needs of members. This can be as simple as providing food and taking place in ADA-compliant facilities, as was the case in Indianapolis, or more proactive approaches, such as “go to them” activities implemented in Bend, Oregon.<sup>219</sup>

### **Realistic Timeline**

In establishing a realistic timeline, as expressed before, flexibility and contingency should be built into the schedule but dates should still be adhered to as best as possible. Public processes are often confined to tight time and budgeting constraints that necessitate limiting community engagement<sup>220</sup>. With the contingency built in, the potential for missed deadlines are reduced allowing for a smoother process. Expressing dates on the project website will also allow for citizens and other interested parties who can not or choose not to directly be a part of the process the opportunity to follow along with the process more closely.

Providing specific dates can be difficult with regards to schedule changes or tasks taking longer than expected. An alternative to dates is an implementation guide or chart showing the ways in which the items being developed will be implemented. The City of Portland developed an additional Climate Equity Implementation guide that provides a framework for evaluating the actions in relation to the objectives that were developed. A document similar to this or a section within the plan outlining the plans for implementation. This is something to keep in mind heading into the draft strategies section of the process.

### **Transparency**

There are some opportunities for improvement in the RVAgreen 2050 plan with respect to transparency. The role of the Ambassadors is not very clear. While the website has some good tools for Ambassadors, it is not clear what exactly an Ambassador would do.<sup>221</sup> Improvements to the website with respect to Ambassador expectations (i.e. would they be directly contacting community members, are there metrics you expect them to hit, are they required to attend meetings, etc.), may help get more community members involved as Ambassadors and improve transparency with respect to that program. Providence’s Race and Environmental Justice Committee faced a similar problem with respect to expectations of different roles and

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<sup>219</sup> Fisher, B. (2021). Centering Equity in CAP - Best Practices and Examples. RVAgreen2050.

<sup>220</sup> Yien, T., Yurkovich, E., Grabowski, L., & Altshuler, B. (2017). USDN Guide to Equitable Community Driven Climate Preparedness. *Urban Sustainability Directors Network Innovation Fund*, 1–68.

<sup>221</sup> Virtual ambassador program. (n.d.). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.rvagreeen2050.com/ambassador-program>



communicating those expectations. They responded by developing and publishing role descriptions and expectations of all stakeholders.<sup>222</sup>

Another opportunity for improvement is with respect to social media outlets and RVAgreen 2050. These outlets are opportunities for RVAgreen 2050 to reach community members that might not otherwise visit the website, or entice people to visit the website to dive deeper into the information available. Both the Facebook and Instagram accounts are largely limited to calls for input and invitations to events, but lack the transparency with respect to why community members should buy-in to this effort. What makes this round of planning different from past efforts? How is equity being centered? Why should community members get involved? Why do you need them to be involved? All of these questions pose an opportunity for you all to be transparent about your intentions. In particular, RVAgreen 2050 has been transparent on the website about the shortcomings of planning in the past with respect to inclusion of disenfranchised communities, but that conversation is largely absent from social media. RVAgreen2050 can look to Baltimore for examples of successful use of social media to drive home the equity message in a sustainability plan. Not only does Baltimore use social media to convey information to community members, but they also use it to encourage community members to communicate with the City, by using the #EveryStoryCounts, community members share what they're doing to "make Baltimore a stronger, more sustainable city."<sup>223</sup>

Finally, there is some confusion among RT members about various aspects of the RVAgreen 2050 process. For example, none of the RT members who also serve on Working Groups know how many people are on the Working Group.<sup>224</sup> Many were unsure how they ended up on the Working Group they were on.<sup>225</sup> One RT member also voiced confusion about the role of the RT moving forward once the community engagement begins and the foundation of the RVAgreen2050 process is set.<sup>226</sup> All of these issues can be easily cleared up with an information session. It's suggested that the Office of Sustainability staff periodically host meetings (or portions of meetings) with RT members specifically designated to answering outstanding questions.

## Diversity

The importance of diverse input through the planning process cannot be stressed enough. Establishing the engagement of all community members making sure all are represented and

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<sup>222</sup> Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (2019). From community engagement to ownership: Tools for the field with case studies of four municipal community-driven environmental and racial equity committees. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf)

<sup>223</sup> *Every story counts*. (n.d.). Baltimore Office of Sustainability. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from <https://www.baltimoresustainability.org/every-story-counts/>

<sup>224</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview. Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview. Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview. Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>225</sup> Anonymous (P1). (2021, March 8). Personal interview. Anonymous (P2). (2021, March 10). Personal interview. Anonymous (P3). (2021, March 15). Personal interview. Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.

<sup>226</sup> Anonymous (P4). (2021, March 22). Personal interview.



included in the process ensures the recommendations and strategies will be effective and provides changes that benefit everyone. Though due diligence was done to ensure all members of the community were represented, comments were made expressing that most of the respondents are white, middle-upper class, and 35-55 years old. We must ensure the group assembled at the planning table is as diverse as the communities it aims to reimagine and rebuild <sup>227</sup>.

Due COVID-19, certain provisions are not applicable to the process which makes public involvement more difficult. In the review of the process thus far, suggestions and comments have been shared from individuals involved in the planning process that additional efforts to ensure diversity should have been taken. The digital interaction allows for contactless responses via the email and social media but it deprives the opportunity for individuals who lack access to the internet to be involved. This makes said community members inherently less powerful in the planning process during social distancing. This may be the cause of the lack of diversity from the comments received. Though it can become a financial burden, physical copies of the survey and other notification avenues should be provided to community members to overcome the barrier of lacking internet access. The community representatives should be responsible for notifying citizens of locations where the physical copies of this information can be obtained, or even distribute them to the community members directly.

### **Engagement**

Echoing the same sentiment from the Transparency section, improved social media use would also positively impact RVAgreen 2050's engagement efforts with respect to building support. The RVAgreen 2050 Facebook page is largely limited to calls for input and invitations to events.<sup>228</sup> While this is important information to get to the community, reintroducing the RVAgreen 2050 concept periodically will help engage new community members. Try sharing this information via short videos from Office of Sustainability employees or RT members. Putting a face and voice to the effort will help community members feel more connected.

To this point in the process, many of the RVAgreen 2050 survey respondents have not been representative of the target communities the team is trying to reach.<sup>229</sup> To improve the survey respondent demographics, some RT members have suggested diversifying outreach and engagement techniques and we support this suggestion. A RT member proposed reaching out to community members that are already trusted in the community (i.e. churches, civic organizations, religious groups, local shop owners) and creating buy-in with those community representatives. Trust between the RVAgreen 2050 team and the community can be built

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<sup>227</sup> Moore, D. (2015). The Just City Essays: Urban Spaces and the Mattering of Black Lives. *He J. Max Bond Center on Design*, 1, 18–20.

<sup>228</sup> RVAgreen 2050. (n.d.). Timeline [Facebook page]. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.facebook.com/rvagreen2050/>

<sup>229</sup> Anonymous (P2). (2021, February 15). Personal interview.

quickly on a firm foundation if RVAgreen 2050 can solicit support from these strong community pillars.

What opportunities exist for RVAgreen 2050's to better achieve building support?			
	Office of Sustainability	Consultative Facilitators	Roundtable Members
Mutual Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better training of working group members so that RT members do not need to explain relatively basic equity concepts to them</li> <li>Further explain importance of community engagement and equity training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Participant's Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The digital divide is recognized which makes it harder to reach non-connected people, but it is unclear what is being done to overcome this</li> <li>Good outreach should emphasize meeting community members in their own neighborhoods and in places where they are comfortable. Zoom meetings hosted by the city are inherently not in a comfortable, familiar location, potentially making people less likely to share and participate</li> <li>Post-covid, meetings should include things like free food and flexible times, days, and locations for meetings to encourage participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better training at the beginning of the process and extra resources for those who are new to equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
Realistic Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RVAgreen2050 website should share specific dates as to when tasks will be taking place.</li> </ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's not clear exactly what the Ambassadors do.</li> <li>Social media isn't very active with respect to original content (mainly sharing other accounts' information, blog isn't active).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None of the members seem to know why they were placed on the working groups they're in or how many people are on their working group.</li> <li>The role of the RT moving forward isn't clear to some of the members.</li> </ul>
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People without reliable internet access inherently have less power in the planning process during social distancing</li> <li>Was expressed that there is a lot that could be done to make it more equity and community centered. The survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The working groups did not feel as representative as they should. They lack the diversity that should be included.</li> </ul>



	<p>respondents were mostly white, middle-upper class, and 35-55 years old.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If financially feasible, consider hiring specialists from other cities to express their opinions of different matters and allow RT and the working groups to have the final decision.</li></ul>		
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current survey respondents are not representative of Richmond, let alone the target demographics RVAgreen2050 would like to capture.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's possible to have RT meetings both closed and open to the public.</li></ul>

## Appendix A. Priority Recommendations Timeline

RVAgreen2050 Opportunities for Next Steps				
Focus Area	Immediately	Within 6 months	Within 1 year	
Top Priorities	These steps can be taken immediately to improve efforts.	These efforts will take more time to develop.	These efforts develop over time and require more work to achieve.	
Opportunities for Next Steps	New Documentation	<p><b>What:</b> Create a checklist for equity self-evaluation (p. 17-18)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Promotes openness and reinforces commitment to centering equity</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Define and publish equity-related indicators (p. 49)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Adds clarity to the progress related to centering equity</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Create a RVAgreen 2050 Guide including training strategies, how to support RT members during engagement phase, and how to catalog and communicate community feedback (p. 48)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Focuses strategies and priorities and lays framework for future decision making</p>
		<p><b>What:</b> Survey current RVAgreen2050 participants to gauge equity knowledge gained (p. 4; p. 35-36)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Highlights knowledge gaps of current team</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Quantify co-benefits (p. 4; p. 37)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Will show which strategies will have the greatest impact</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Create a Climate Equity Implementation Guide (p.59)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Provides a framework for evaluating actions and accountability</p>
		<p><b>What:</b> Develop a charter defining roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (p. 4; p. 35; p. 59)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Adds transparency with respect to expectations of each role</p>		
		<p><b>What:</b> Attend existing community meetings</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The team will become more familiar with community members where they are</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Start building strong relationships with community leaders already in place (i.e. religious organizations, civic groups, local shop owners) (p. 62)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Effort will gain credibility within disenfranchised communities</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Diversify working groups</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Gives more diverse voice to Working Groups</p>
Community Engagement	<p><b>What:</b> Re-engage existing community relationships (p. 4; p. 34)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Maintain existing support and potentially supplement RT outreach</p>		<p><b>What:</b> Incorporate more youth engagement (p. 16-17)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Encourages involvement of next generation</p>	
			<p><b>What:</b> Engage new citizen-participants (p. 47; p. 61)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Increase in survey response and community participation</p>	
Finances	<p><b>What:</b> Plan to expand compensation of facilitators, Round Table members (pgs 27-28)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The team will need to examine budget implications</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Develop procedure for participatory budgeting (p. 19-20)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Allows for more involvement of community members and indicates commitment to community driven approach</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Seek outside funding sources (i.e. grants and philanthropic partnerships) (pgs 27-28)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Bolsters overall budget to allow for more focus on training and compensating community members for their expertise</p>	
Training	<p><b>What:</b> Determine if contracts of current trainers and facilitators can be extended (p. 25)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Maintains training foundation and accessibility of facilitators</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Provide equity training for Working Group members (p. 7; 58)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Prevents ideas incongruent with the concept of centering equity</p>	<p><b>What:</b> Develop community training focused on equity and sustainability</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Cultivates widespread community understanding of the importance of sustainability issues and centering equity</p>	
	<p><b>What:</b> Determine if facilitators can be assigned to Working Groups (p. 28)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Encourage co-learning, education on co-benefits</p>		<p><b>What:</b> Consider creating a cross-departmental equity group (p. 4; p. 35-36)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Will allow for further capacity building within the government and will further demonstrate the government's commitment to equity</p>	