Equitable Development Frameworks

An introduction & comparison for architects

AIA

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Introduction

AIA Code of Ethics includes a provision on Environmental Equity and Justice, which states,

"Members should promote fairness and safety in providing professional services and make reasonable efforts to advise their clients and employers of their obligations to the environment, including: access to clean air, water, sunlight and energy for all; sustainable production, extraction, transportation and consumption practices; a built environment that equitably supports human health and well-being and is resistant to climate change; and restoring degraded or depleted natural resources."[1]

AIA Code of Ethics also addresses Civic Responsibility:

"Civic Responsibility: Members should be involved in civic activities as citizens and professionals, and should strive to improve public appreciation and understanding of architecture and the functions and responsibilities of architects."[2]

Image credit: Getty Images

Architects and designers are increasingly called upon to address the world's most pressing challenges, from the climate crisis to rising inequity and inequality.[3] This is a daunting task, but it is an opportunity to reimagine the relevance, possibilities, and boundaries of the profession. As outlined in AIA's Framework for Design Excellence, "Every project can be used as a platform for addressing big problems and providing creative solutions."[4]

EXPLORING ARCHITECTURE'S ROLE IN ADVANCING EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

"Now more than ever, the collective voice of architects is essential for designing a better future for our country and planet. Even in times of change, AIA's values remain constant. Today our nation faces unprecedented challenges: the impacts of a changing climate on our communities and critical infrastructure that is deteriorating from neglect."[5] In the midst of a rapidly changing world, AIA is leading with our values. Our series of Where We Stand statements lays out our values on climate action and equity, diversity, and inclusion, among topics such as licensure and infrastructure.

That leadership extends to the AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, which states, "AIA members are dedicated to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and competence. The AIA Code of Ethics guides members' conduct in fulfilling those obligations. The code applies to the professional activities of all AIA members, regardless of their membership category."

The Code designates obligations to the public, including civic responsibility and environmental equity and justice.[6]

AIA is creating and identifying resources that better position the architecture profession to take on complex, interconnected issues like health, equity, sustainability, and resilience. At a global scale, these issues may be seen through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.[7] The AIA Framework for Design Excellence, adopted as part of the institute's plan for urgent and sustained climate action, identifies the Design for Equitable Communities as a key component in working toward a zero-carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment.[8] This report explores valuable resources that architects and designers can use to work toward social equity: a selection of equitable development frameworks.

Five frameworks are compared:

- 21st Century Development framework
- EcoDistricts Protocol
- EPA's Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities
- Gehl Institute's Inclusive Healthy Places Framework
- PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit

This comparison is part of a larger research effort that will inform additional tools and resources for the architecture profession.

Equitable development

Equitable development refers to a range of approaches for creating healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities where people of all identities and backgrounds have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive.[9] Architects can contribute by working to increase affordable housing, connect to public transportation options, create safe and accessible streetscapes, encourage resource regeneration, and institute many other strategies explored in the frameworks.

Equitable development is achieved partly by bolstering the agency and ownership of groups that have been historically marginalized by both public and private development. Architects can contribute to this by advocating for broader inclusion, designing and facilitating participatory engagement, and working to align community and client goals. More equitable outcomes are attainable by embedding community inclusion, values, and guidance into all aspects of a project.

Equitable development frameworks

Equitable development frameworks help architects and designers influence societal equity by addressing interconnected issues and creating projects that respond directly to community needs. Various frameworks have been created by different kinds of organizations to guide practitioners, including architects and designers. The frameworks provide information about foundational concepts, describe and inform equitable engagement processes, and suggest types of equitable outcomes. Some also provide strategies and metrics for evaluation. The frameworks are flexible and applicable in many contexts and scales, from private housing development to public realm design to regional planning.

This comparison report is not exhaustive by any means—rather, it highlights several existing resources for architects and designers looking to incorporate equitable development strategies in their work. The five were chosen because they present a varied, representative cross-section of the types of frameworks available that are most relevant to different types of architectural practice. Criteria is further detailed in the upcoming report section, Equitable Development Framework Comparison.

Most equitable development frameworks are not created specifically for architects but are nevertheless extremely relevant to guide advocacy, influence practice, and improve the built environment. Since the frameworks explored in this report are also used by planners, policy makers, community developers, and many others, their use allows architects and designers to situate their role relative to allied disciplines. Equitable development is inherently collaborative, and architects and designers have a critical leadership role to play.

Besides the five frameworks explored in detail, additional frameworks are listed at the end of this document for reference. Architects and designers are encouraged to seek out other relevant resources for advancing equitable outcomes that are best tailored to their method of practice and the needs of their communities and clients.

GLOSSARY

This report is guided by the following terms:

The purpose of this research is to explore the architect's role in driving equitable communities. Context and language evolve over time—some terms that have been used in the past are no longer in use, and some of the terms will undoubtedly evolve, be replaced, or become obsolete. (See the glossary from our Guides for Equitable Practice for a more complete discussion of language, acronyms, and terminology.)

Agency
Enabling the confidence, rights, and status of individuals or groups to act on behalf of their own interests.

-The Just City Index [10]

Community engagement
"Community" has a broad scope: not only neighborhoods but any group that occupies or experiences a project, from a family to an entire city and beyond. The AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary suggest that architects can engage with communities in three major capacities: as individual citizens, as professionals, and in the type of work their firms choose to do. Whichever the capacity, effective community engagement incorporates diverse voices equitably, respectfully, and authentically in all phases of work, with special attention given to context, including such elements as history, culture, politics, power dynamics, and social fabric.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [11]

Culture
Culture refers to the shared values, rituals, stories, language, and rules of a social group. Some cultural aspects are visible or explicit (e.g., fashion, language, food), while other aspects are unseen or implicit (e.g., attitudes, gender roles, approach to work-life integration).

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [12]

Development
The process of converting land to a new purpose by constructing buildings or making use of its resources.

-Oxford Languages [13]

The design and construction of communities with a mixture of uses—residential, commercial, and cultural—on land that is currently uninhabited. It can also include the re-creation of urban, suburban, and rural communities through renovation and new construction.

-21st Century Development Framework [14]

Diversity
A mix of people with a wide range of visible and invisible personal and group characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and preferences.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [15]

An intentional state of mixed people, institutions, and cultural norms.

-The Just City Index [16]

Dominant culture/identity
Dominant culture consists of the values, beliefs, and practices that are the most common and influential within a society or group. The dominant culture is often [presented] as the norm, the preferred, or the "right" one in a society, organization, or institution. Dominant identities are those that are seen as the norm in a particular cultural situation and generally benefit the most in that culture.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [17]

Empowerment
To give formal authority or power to a person or collective group by promoting action or influence.

-The Just City Index [18]

Equality
Equality is a form of fairness achieved by treating people with dominant and nondominant identities in the same manner, whatever the disparities may be at their starting points. Equal treatment, however well intentioned, may sustain inequities. The term is often used in contrast with equity.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [19]

The provision of equal or equivalent distribution, status, rights, power, and amenity.

-The Just City Index [20]

Equitable development
There is no formal definition or set of principles to describe equitable development, but the term generally refers to a range of approaches for creating healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities where residents of all incomes, races, and ethnicities* have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive. Equitable development strategies help low-income, minority, tribal,** and overburdened communities participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.

It is both place-focused (housing, transportation, infrastructure, pollution) and people-focused (job training and placement, business development,

education, health and wellness, financial management).

-EPA's Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities[21]

**Editorial addition: ages, gender identities and abilities*
***Editorial addition: disabled, elderly*

A positive development strategy that ensures everyone participates in and benefits from the region's economic transformation—especially low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, and others at risk of being left behind.

It requires an intentional focus on eliminating racial inequities and barriers, and making accountable and catalytic investments to assure that lower-wealth residents: live in healthy, safe, opportunity-rich neighborhoods that reflect their culture (and are not displaced from them); connect to economic and ownership opportunities; and have voice and influence in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods.

-PolicyLink[22]

Quality of life outcomes, such as affordable housing, quality education, living wage employment, healthy environments, and transportation are equitably experienced by the people currently living and working in a neighborhood, as well as for new people moving in. Public and private investments, programs, and policies in neighborhoods that meet the needs of residents, including communities of color, and reduce racial disparities, taking into account past history and current conditions.

-Government Alliance on Race and Equity[23]

Equity

Equity is the state in which everyone is treated in a manner that results in equal opportunity and access, according to their individual needs. Equity requires identifying and eliminating barriers that have disadvantaged nondominant identity groups to assure that all individuals receive equitable treatment, opportunity, and advancement regardless of identity; it also means that some individuals will need more support [due to existing structural barriers] than others.

Equity differs from equality or parity. [This report] focuses on equity rather than equality because our society operates on an uneven playing field. Inherent power differentials have resulted in disparate treatment, usually based on identity. Given the profound structural disparities and vastly different starting points, focusing on equality by giving everyone the same support would not accomplish the goal of just outcomes.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary[24]

The distribution of material and non-material goods in a manner that brings the greatest benefit required to any particular community.

-The Just City Index[25]

Inclusion

Inclusion is manifested in an environment in which everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued. Inclusion is distinct from but related to equity and diversity.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary[26]

The acceptance of difference and the intention to involve diverse opinions, attitudes, and behaviors.

-The Just City Index[27]

Participation

The active engagement of individuals and community members in matters, both formal and informal, affecting social and spatial well-being.

-The Just City Index[28]

People/groups/communities that have been historically marginalized

Marginalized populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

-National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health[29]

Note: This term is generally used in this report to describe people, groups, and communities that should be empowered during equitable development processes. The term is intentionally broad in order to be inclusive now and in the future; people, groups, and communities that have been historically marginalized will differ depending on a project's history and context. Design teams need to research and collaborate with community members to determine who might be included in this category.

That being said, it is also important to be specific. Specificity leads to deeper understanding of assets and issues, and to more tailored project goals and outcomes. Specific examples of people and

groups that have been marginalized by development (and actively discriminated against) in the US context include Black people, people of color, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, people who are under-resourced, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, women, and countless other forms of human diversity. These people, groups, and communities bring assets, knowledge, insight, and leadership that are critical for equitable development processes.

Redlining

Redlining is a discriminatory practice of de facto segregation that excludes, most often, Black people from some neighborhoods by denial of mortgages and other services. When the Fair Housing Act passed in 1968, it became possible, in theory, for anyone to buy a home anywhere in the U.S.; however, the history of redlining and neighborhood covenants meant that the homes of many people of color had appreciated in value far more slowly than others, rendering nonredlined homes beyond the reach of those whose financial equity had not increased as much. Redining is considered one of the clearest examples of institutional racism that has disadvantaged Black people and communities.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [30]

Regenerative design

Restores and improves the surrounding natural environment by enhancing the quality of life for biotic and abiotic components of the environment.

-AIA Understanding Resilience [31]

Resilience

The ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions.

-AIA Understanding Resilience [32]

Sustainability

Design that seeks to avoid depletion of energy, water, and raw material resources; prevent environmental degradation caused by facility and infrastructure development over its life cycle; and create environments that are livable, comfortable, and safe and that promote productivity.

-AIA Understanding Resilience [33]

Universal design

Broader than accessibility, universal design calls for environments and products to be usable by anyone, without the need for separation, adaptation, or specialized design. Universal design includes innovations such as curb cuts or doors that open automatically when someone approaches, which allow equal access for people with strollers, wheelchairs users, or delivery people. Cocreating and testing with a variety of people helps target potential innovations and improvements.

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice Glossary [34]

Voice

Allowing the articulation of different points of view and cultural norms to help shape decision-making.

-The Just City Index [35]

Equitable development

On the architecture community's need to address historically inequitable practices:

"Architects and designers are one part of a complex system, and it is essential for practitioners to acknowledge the role the profession has played in perpetuating inequity in the built environment..."

-AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: Engaging Community

WHY EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Equitable development refers to a range of approaches for creating healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities where people of all identities and backgrounds have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive.[36] This is achieved partly by bolstering the agency and ownership of groups that have been historically marginalized by both public and private development.

This type of development provides an opportunity to address historically inequitable practices in architecture, urban planning, and public policy that have affected a host of identity groups and excluded them from decision-making.[37]

Dynamics of traditional development

Traditional development in the United States began with the forced taking of land from Indigenous peoples, setting up a long trajectory of inequitable land practices. Over the past century these practices included, but were not limited to, redlining, housing discrimination, urban renewal programs, environmentally hazardous development, and lack of investment in infrastructure and community amenities generally attributable to discrimination and structural racism.[38] The long history of these practices imports that architects have been involved in projects that had harmful outcomes. Despite this historical reality, there is great potential to exert influence toward a more equitable society.

Though many of these overtly inequitable practices have since been decried, the outcomes have evolved into today's environmental injustices, residential segregation, affordable housing shortages, and disinvestment. With inequity already so deeply ingrained in the built environment, contemporary traditional development tends to reinforce these harmful patterns if equitable strategies are not incorporated.

Part of the problem with traditional private and public development processes has been the lack of inclusive community involvement in decision-making. Private development projects rarely have any community involvement. Public development may require engagement of existing communities, but they rarely focus on increasing the agency of groups that have been historically marginalized. Project outcomes reflect this lack of involvement; in broad strokes, traditional development has focused on creating economic growth for respective owners and cities and focused much less on an equitable distribution of benefits.

Resulting inequities and distrust

Traditional development has resulted in widespread inequity. Environmentally hazardous development has occurred primarily in or adjacent to communities that have been marginalized, exacerbating health issues and risks like flooding, heat islands, and toxic pollution. Wealth and opportunity are concentrated in select areas with limited access, largely to the benefit of dominant identity groups. Racial wealth disparities are exacerbated by barriers to asset ownership of land, businesses, and homes. Even when asset ownership is achievable, these assets are frequently devalued; for example, owner-occupied homes in majority-Black neighborhoods are undervalued by on average $48,000 per home, which limits generational wealth accumulation.[39] Transit and food deserts, residential segregation, displacement, and cultural erasure persist. Historic injustice and inequity scar the built environment with lingering reminders of legally sanctioned segregation, public realms that remain inaccessible to people with disabilities, and spaces that are unwelcoming for certain users.[40]

Inequitable practices in development have fostered understandable distrust from groups that have been historically marginalized. After being excluded from traditional development processes and benefits, people are rightfully wary of investment and development even when it may be needed. Development can imply gentrification pressures associated with very real threats of displacement and cultural erasure.

Equitable development as a clear alternative

Equitable development has emerged as a clear alternative to help architects address these complex problems alongside allied disciplines. Equitable development strategies empower marginalized groups to participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.[41] They are inherently process-based, rooted in the belief that the people who have been marginalized by past development and design processes are best suited to speak on behalf of their communities to determine what new processes and outcomes are inclusive and equitable. They strive for equitable communities that, among other characteristics, provide economic opportunities, affordable living, and cultural expression for all residents.[42] They also make concerted efforts to prevent displacement and cultural erasure.

This builds on a legacy of design activism, from the Civil Rights era to the fight for accessible and universal design to today's Design as Protest movement.[43] Equitable development strategies are not new concepts but require renewed attention in the face of increasing inequality.

ARCHITECTURE & EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Architects and designers can use equitable development strategies to help fulfill their societal obligations, address interconnected issues, and create projects that respond to community needs.

As leaders, architects and designers have a responsibility to understand equitable development strategies, advise clients on their benefits and applicability, and incorporate them into projects. As collaborators, they support other allied professionals. As conveners, they help design and facilitate inclusive participation and engagement, align the needs of the community and client, and negotiate shared solutions that benefit all parties. As advocates, they push for public policies that advance equitable outcomes.

Design for positive societal change

Architects and designers can use equitable development strategies to design for human dignity and the health, safety, and welfare of the public.[44] Architects are in a position to proactively benefit society by considering impacts beyond the client or the end users of the buildings and spaces they design. Strategies like preserving and strengthening existing cultures and histories, increasing access to diverse and affordable housing, providing public transportation options, designing safe and accessible streetscapes, and countless others are directly relevant to architectural practice.

Address interconnected issues

Architects and designers can use equitable development strategies to advance other related goals like sustainability and resilience. All these issues are interconnected; a hurricane or wildfire may decrease the amount of affordable housing available. Everyday flooding may disrupt public transportation that people rely on to get to work. Lack of access to healthy food may have terrible health impacts. Strategies like protecting habitat and wildlife, encouraging resource regeneration, and providing access to healthy food are integral to creating equitable development that is also sustainable and resilient.

Create projects that respond to community needs

Architects and designers can use equitable development strategies to create better, more responsive projects. Inclusive participation and engagement are valuable opportunities to learn from community experts with first-hand experience and knowledge of a project's context. Gaining this deeper understanding early on can sharpen creativity and result in projects that respond directly to community needs. Strategies like holding community planning and visioning workshops, cultivating knowledge of existing conditions, assets, and lived experiences, and supporting inclusion throughout the design process result in better, more responsive projects.

ASPECTS OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Equitable development is an inclusive process

It requires a plan of action designed to achieve equity goals that are created with inclusive community involvement. It is inherently process-based and results in more equitable community outcomes.

This process is rooted in the belief that the people who have been marginalized by past development and design processes are the best people to speak on behalf of their communities to determine what new processes and outcomes are inclusive and equitable.

Equitable development is tied to larger scale regional & global forces

Equitable development ensures participation in and benefits from a region's economic, ecological, cultural, and health and well-being transformation. There are larger-scale regional and global forces at play in every project, which manifest in the physical development of place and space.

Even single buildings are part of this larger context, so it is necessary to incorporate relevant equitable development strategies at the individual building scale to make sure people benefit from these larger forces. Every project can participate in equitable development, regardless of scale, by looking beyond the lot lines.

Equitable development ensures everyone both participates & benefits

The strategy ensures that everyone participates in and benefits from development. Both process and outcome are important, and outcomes are tied directly to collective community input. Equitable development must also be forward-looking enough to benefit future residents. The design team should advocate for the inclusion of people and groups that are not already part of the process.

Equitable development focuses on both place & people

Equitable development requires both place-based and people-focused strategies. Place-based strategies might focus on areas like affordable housing or public transportation, while people-focused strategies might focus on areas like health or business development. Strategies include both design and policy solutions.

Equitable development takes historic, current, & future conditions into account

Equitable development requires a reckoning with past injustices to influence present decisions that improve quality-of-life outcomes for current and future residents. It is critical for architects and designers to be well-versed in the history of the land, people, and surroundings.

Equitable development empowers people who have been historically marginalized & amplifies their voices

"People who have been historically marginalized" depends on context, and identifying them requires research by the project team and consultation with the community.

The determination may be based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, age, and so on. Examples of people and populations that have been marginalized by development in the US context include Black people, people of color, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, people who are under-resourced, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, women, and countless other forms of human diversity.

"Everyone" should participate and benefit, but equitable development intentionally ensures that particular groups participate and benefit because historically they have not. Design teams should leverage their influence to amplify other voices and design inclusively and collaboratively.

Equitable development can advance self-determination & build capacity through participation

Equitable development has potentially excellent outcomes: dignity and resilience that result from self-determination through participating in policies and processes that lead to just workplaces, healthy homes, and a connection to healthy ecosystems and nature. It expands the benefits of development beyond dominant identity groups, builds capacity over time, and, in the process, increases the sense of ownership over the built environment.

To put the **Aspects of Equitable Development** into action, figure 1 outlines some important processes and outcomes for architects and designers to keep in mind.

Processes	Outcomes
Equitable development requires that architects and designers...	If done well, equitable development results in...
• identify and focus on people and communities that have been marginalized, and who historically have not participated in or benefited from development (this depends on context, but may be based on race, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and other forms of human diversity) • recommend processes and inclusion of identified people and communities, empowering them to have voice in and influence on decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions • learn about and understand the historic and contemporary conditions of inequity in a particular context • tailor design strategies depending on that history and context • focus intentionally on eliminating discrimination, bias, barriers, and inequities • incorporate both place-based and people-focused strategies • make efforts to prevent displacement and cultural erasure	• people and communities who have been marginalized helping to make decisions that shape their environment and benefiting from that development • healthy, safe, vibrant, and sustainable communities where all people have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive • place-based improvements, which may fall into larger categories including: transportation, housing, infrastructure, pollution mitigation, resilience to climate change, etc. (specific improvements depend on context) • people-focused improvements, which may fall into larger categories including: job training and placement, business development, wealth building, education, health and well-being, etc. (specific improvements depend on context)

Notably, some of the outcomes are place-based physical improvements, but many are not. An equitable community does not necessarily look a particular way; it is not a design checklist to run through. There are certainly common focus areas, which are highlighted in **Equitable Development Frameworks Comparison** (for example; housing, transportation, health). However, these focus areas are not inherently equitable, the same way that material choices are not inherently sustainable.

Instead, equitable development arises from a locally specific and inclusive process, in which goals are established collectively, and then influence the design and outcome of a project. It benefits everybody, but particularly people and communities that have historically not benefited from development. Equitable development requires a comprehensive understanding of communities, what community members value and need, and the ability to reflect that through the design of the built environment.

FIGURE 1: *Processes and outcomes of equitable development*

ARCHITECT'S AREAS OF AGENCY FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

As described, equitable development approaches, processes, and outcomes are broad and allow for contextual variety and specificity. For that reason, many different types of organizations have created equitable development frameworks as tools to guide practitioners in this work. Organizations include government agencies, research and action institutes, independent nonprofits, and collective design collaborations. Audiences include a wide range of people who influence the built environment: architects and designers, planners, policy makers, community developers, community members, and others.

Since these frameworks have wide audiences, it is not always easy to figure out where architects and designers best plug in. The Areas of Agency (figure 2) identify areas that they have control or influence over where an equitable development framework might impact decision-making. The areas are laid out relative to practice, advocacy, and education.

FIGURE 2: *Architect's areas of agency for equitable development*

Areas where architects and designers can contribute to or influence processes and outcomes

As practitioners...	

...during **project choice & team creation** they can:	• influence the types and locations of projects they work on
	• provide transparency about potential/selected project sites
	• influence the types of clients they work with
	• craft contract terms to include equitable processes
	• communicate the value of equitable development to clients
	• compose working teams that are diverse and trained to advance equitable processes
	• make recommendations to clients about the makeup of the larger project team
	  • *ex. recommend including sociologists, community organizers, translators*
	  • *ex. identify the potential makeup of community team*
	• identify current and potential user groups

...during **predesign & engagement** they can:	• guide research on demographics, context, and historical inequity and injustice • analyze hazard and climate risk and the potential impact of those events on project and community • design and facilitate community engagement and visioning processes • collaborate with the community to create project equity goals that incorporate their insights, priorities, and cultural values • influence client priorities to align better with project equity goals • facilitate commitment to sustained investment and community benefit/ownership

...during **design** they can:	• ensure that community insights, priorities, and cultural values set during engagement are incorporated into the project
	• incorporate predesign research takeaways
	• recommend additional community engagement activities to gather information/preferences that influence design
	  • *ex. surveys, interviews, focus groups, public meetings*
	• design to accommodate certain types of desirable programming
	  • *ex. a retail space may be sized so the rent is at an affordable price point, creating access for people who could not otherwise afford space in a neighborhood*
	• design to be intentionally welcoming and accessible to particular groups
	  • *ex. ensure universally accessible design*
	• design to address risks identified in predesign
	• use interconnected strategies that advance both sustainable and equitable outcomes
	  • *ex. a rain garden may manage stormwater, while also reducing heat island effects*
	• design project aesthetics to be intentionally inclusive and welcoming
	• influence the types and sources of materials used, the impacts of construction phasing, and the hiring and procurement processes
	• specify non-toxic construction processes to protect contractors

...during **construction administration** they can:	• ensure social health and equity goals are met in the procurement process • ensure value alignment with other partners • choose materials that use paid labor practices • choose sustainable materials that consider distance to site • influence the training and hiring of local, minority/women-owned contracting companies • advocate for living wages for project partners • help limit the negative impacts of construction phasing on communities
...during **post-occupancy evaluation** they can:	• create sustainable maintenance plans • collect and incorporate user feedback • make design adjustments that better match collectively set equity goals

On design's spectrum of influence & responsibility:

"We have to actually think about the ways that the power structures go from pedagogy to policy, policy to procedure, procedure to practice, projects and people. As designers we can impact along that entire spectrum. We have to consider the ways in which we are inside that system and outside it, too."

-Bryan C. Lee Jr., Just City Assembly 2019[45]

As advocates they can:

- push for policies that support equitable development
- support additional funding to build affordable housing, public transit, and repair aging infrastructure at all levels of government-local, state, and federal
- volunteer
- seek elected or appointed offices
- serve on boards and/or commissions
- advocate for inclusion and participation of impacted communities not yet 'at the table

As educators they can:

- have a hand in curriculum development
- be involved in educational institutional development
- influence accreditation criteria
- mentor the next generation of the profession
- teach about equitable development in a variety of settings
- give lectures on equitable practices
- take on external leadership positions
- collaborate with other field and industries
- listen and learn from others

Clearly, architects and designers contribute to more than the physical aesthetic of a building or space and have the capacity to influence far more beyond the project boundary.. Their work is tied to zoning regulations, building ordinances, and municipal requirements for neighborhood engagement processes—all of which impact individuals and communities. Their knowledge of materials and manufacturing impacts health, sustainability, and safety. Even the language they use has impact; terms like "blighted" to describe places or "poor" to describe people perpetuate harmful narratives and dehumanization and ignore community assets, knowledge, expertise, leadership, and insights.

These decisions all have intended and unintended consequences; equitable development frameworks help designers intentionally enhance the positive consequences and mitigate the negative. Without this equitable intentionality, they are at best neutral and at worst deeply harmful. As only one of many professions that influence the built environment, they also have the responsibility to bring equitable strategies and values into their collaborations with other disciplines and to advise clients on the benefits and applicability in every project.

Equitable Development Framework comparison

There are many equitable development frameworks created by different kinds of organizations that architects and designers can reference and incorporate into their work. Frameworks vary in the following ways:

- **Intersectionality** Equity intersects with a wide range of other concerns. A framework's intersectionality with other topics tends to be tailored to the interests of the organization that created it. Frameworks may intersect with the design of the public realm, the reduction of segregation and racial disparities, environmental justice and smart growth, sustainability and resilience, health and wellness, etc.
- **Depth** Frameworks range from single-page lists of high-level principles to lengthy, detailed reports.
- **Structure** Frameworks contain different elements within their structure. They may include focus areas, goals, objectives, strategies, and/or tools and metrics.
- **Relevance** Finally, frameworks vary in their relevance to architects and designers since they are created for a broader audience that includes planners, policy makers, community developers, community members, and others who influence the built environment. Relevance is mapped to AIA's Framework for Design Excellence and the UN Sustainable Development goals.

DETAILED FRAMEWORK COMPARISON

The five frameworks explored and compared in this report are:

21st Century Development Framework
A digital matrix that charts a path from standard to regenerative development. Leveraging the seven petals of the International Living Futures Institute's Living Communities Challenge—with augmented benchmarks related to equity and regenerative-level solutions—the 21st Century Development Framework helps stakeholders identify "running room" before significant financial and policy barriers are typically encountered.

EcoDistricts Protocol
A protocol that focuses on the three core imperatives of equity, resilience, and climate protection at the district scale. It embeds a participatory process that allows project teams and communities to tailor six focus areas to local conditions.

EPA's Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities: Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development
A research report that explores common elements that advance smart growth, equitable development, and environmental justice simultaneously. It provides a variety of land use and community design strategies that contribute to revitalization.

Inclusive Healthy Places Framework
A written and graphic guide to advance inclusive and healthy public spaces across scales and project phases using a radiating wheel as an organizational structure. Its four guiding principles correspond directly to project design phases.

PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit
A digital toolkit organized around four focus areas to reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization. Each focus area includes in-depth strategies and policy suggestions, for a total of 27 tools.

These five were selected for this detailed comparison because they cover a diverse range of focuses, provide in-depth guidance, have well-developed framework structures, and influence a range of architectural practice across project scales and Architect's Areas of Agency (figure 2). Other considerations included relevance to the AIA Framework for Design Excellence, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the ongoing movement for racial justice, and COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and recovery.

The five frameworks explored in this report can help address a wide variety of project scales and **Architect's Areas of Agency for Equitable Development**, shown here:

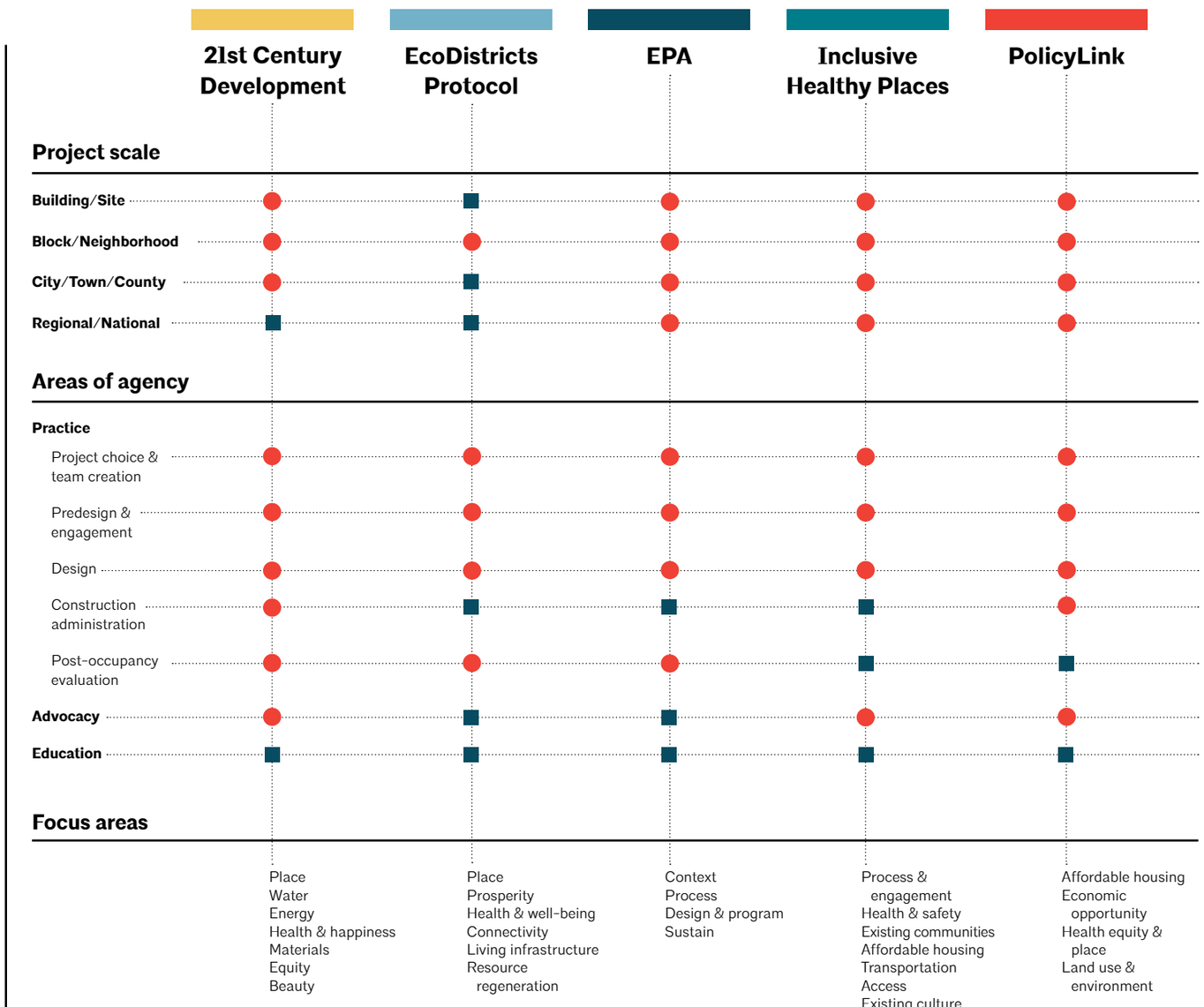


FIGURE 3: Scale and Architect's Areas of Agency addressed by frameworks

Other frameworks that were explored but not included in this comparison are listed in Additional resources. These tend to be less detailed or less relevant to the wide range of architectural areas of agency. They are extremely useful resources and in many instances dive deeply into one or two aspects of equitable development, like community engagement.

A single framework may not be the right fit for all projects, but this comparison provides a sampling and starting point to get acquainted with the types of frameworks available. Architects and designers are encouraged to seek out frameworks that best fit their project types, method of practice, communities, and clients.

Structure and method

The five frameworks are compared by their structures and by a more qualitative, descriptive analysis of their relevance for architects and designers. All five frameworks guide equitable development with some combination of focus areas, goals, objectives, strategies, tools, and metrics. Each framework is diagrammed in a similar manner to allow for cross-comparison.

FRAMEWORK COMPARISON DIAGRAM CATEGORIES

Focus area

Overarching categories that organize the framework

They allow the user to navigate to specific topics they are interested in or that are most relevant to their work, similar to chapter titles in a book.

(ex. affordable housing, health & happiness, materials, etc.)

Goal

Highest-level desired outcomes

They provide an overarching, principled way to achieve an equitable outcome in the focus area. Goals are typically very high level.

(ex. provide housing choices, prevent displacement, etc.)

Objective

More specific desired outcomes

They are specific outcomes that must be met to achieve the larger goal within a focus area. There may be multiple objectives per goal.

(ex. understand the existing housing needs)

Strategy

Actions to take to achieve desired outcomes

They are action-oriented approaches that will lead to the objectives and goals. There may be many options for strategies, which can either be used individually or in combination.

(ex. create new affordable housing, preserve existing affordable housing)

Tool/Metric

Specific policies or practices that fit into strategies, and benchmarks for measuring success

Tools are the most specific actions provided that can be aggregated to achieve the larger objectives and goals. Metrics provide ways to measure the success of an effort, increase accountability, or may suggest types of quantitative/qualitative data that would be useful to influence outcomes.

(ex. tools: cooperative ownership models, rent control metrics: number of additional units after five years)

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Created by AIA Minnesota, Colloqate, Center for Sustainable Building Research, McKnight Foundation

21stcenturydevelopment.org

APPLICABLE PROJECT SCALES
Building/site, block/neighborhood, city/town/county

APPLICABLE PROJECT TYPES
Mixed-use community design (residential, commercial, cultural); urban, suburban, and rural environments; new construction and revitalization

FOCUS AREAS
Place, water, energy, health & happiness, materials, equity, beauty

INTERSECTIONS
Regenerative design, sustainability, health

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE RELEVANCE
Equitable communities, ecosystems, water, energy, well-being, resources, change

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS RELEVANCE
Zero hunger; good health and well-being; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve the goal

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

21st Century Development (21CD) is a framework for the creation of communities that strive to provide a healthy environment for all people and living systems, now and in the future. It is meant to: identify a path to a regenerative future; encourage, assist, and inspire the design community, policy makers, and community development leaders; aid developers and their financial partners; and identify economic and policy barriers.[46]

The 21CD framework leverages the seven petals of the International Living Futures Institute's (ILFI) Living Communities Challenge—Place, Energy, Water, Materials, Health + Happiness, Equity, and Beauty.

The power of 21CD is primarily two-fold. It extends benchmarks and measures beyond the "Living" level to the "Regenerative" level. It also identifies points along the path from "Standard" to "Regenerative" where the most significant financial or policy barriers tend to be encountered.

In applying the 21CD framework, one can identify the "running room" before an identified barrier is likely to slow or stop progress toward the regenerative level. This approach helps fuel agency and advocacy; an architect, designer, client, developer, or community member can say, "I believe we can do better in this area—here's what better looks like, and here's where we're likely to hit a substantial challenge." This can inspire stakeholders to push a project up to and ideally through the identified barriers.

The framework is accessed through a website (21stcenturydevelopment.org) and consists of three types of content.

1. Seven performance areas that mirror the ILFI's seven petals. Each is further divided into sub-focus areas that identify specific development strategies. The "Equity" performance area was extensively augmented beyond IFLI's definition, in collaboration with Colloqate.

2. A matrix that helps project teams aspire to higher levels of performance – progressing from standard practice to regenerative – in a way that makes regenerative-level design less aspirational and more a matter of simply moving along a path, step by step. It is applicable to both goal setting and measuring outcomes for projects, organizations, and communities. Each step up in performance results in quality-of-life improvements.

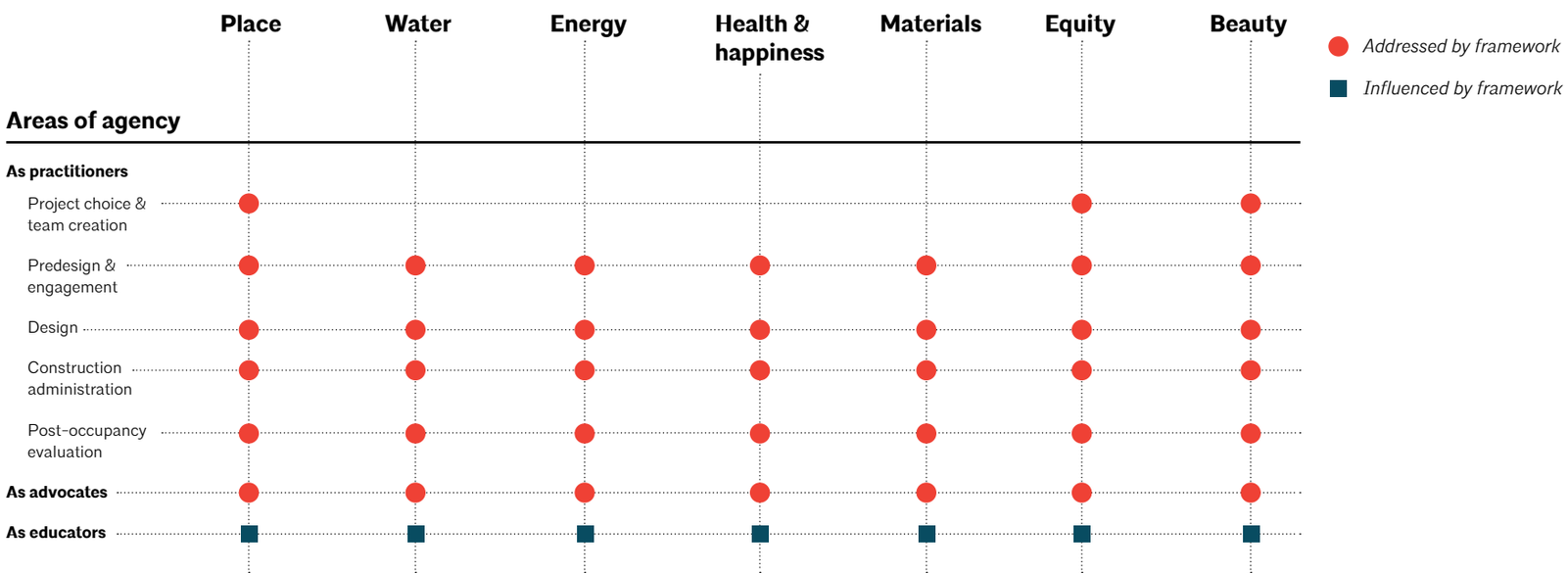
3. Case studies that give examples of projects from around the world that excel in one or more performance areas, each scored by researchers using the 21CD framework (see the scoring of the 11th Street Bridge project in Washington, D.C., Figure 3).[47]

This scoring approach can be used in the early stages of a project or effort to set very specific goals in each performance area. Over the course of a project, using the framework to score the work to date can provide transparency to stakeholders about where and why a project has fallen short of its goals—the barriers that have been encountered along the path. Projects can also be scored after they are completed; doing so as a firm or agency across multiple projects can illuminate the typical outcomes, barriers, and patterns of behavior experienced in development projects, and help in informing advocacy efforts and other next steps to achieve more in future projects.

The 21st Century Development framework was created in collaboration with architects and designers and has clear links between concepts and application in practice. The focus areas apply across project scales and types, from new single-site construction to the revitalization of entire existing communities.

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Framework focus areas



21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Focus areas

	Place	Water	Energy	Health & happiness	Materials	Equity	Beauty
Goals	Realign how people understand and relate to the natural environment that sustains us	Create a future wherein all developments are configured based on the carrying capacity of the site	Inspire a new age of design where the built environment thrives on renewable energy and operates year- round in a safe, pollution-free manner	Envision a nourishing, highly productive, and healthy built environment	Create a future where all materials in the built environment are regenerative and have no negative impact on human ecosystem health	Shift the paradigm from one focused on doing less harm to one that embraces our role as steward and co-creator of a true living future for all	Understand people's objectives and enrich lives with each square meter of construction on each project
Sub-focus/ objectives	**Limits to growth** Understand and embrace the ecological area of the development **Food** Determine ways to integrate food production into developments **Habitat** Protect habitat for wildlife within the development area **Transportation** Aspire to human-powered transportation models and communities designed to support them			**Civilized environment** Promote access to amenities and natural surroundings, including fresh air and daylight, for all people and living entities **Neighborhood design** Improve community connection and flow **Biophilia** Increase connection between humans and nature **Resilient connectivity** Increase resilience of community design and tools put in place to protect the community in the event of emergencies	**Material plan** Better material selection in the development process **Embodied energy & carbon** Improve the energy footprint of the development **Waste** Reduce waste generation	**Neighborhood & access** Create human connection and enhance access for all **Access to nature** Foster equal access to natural resources across the community **Access to community services** Provide equal access to community services **Investment** Move beyond conventional profit structures to bolster community development **Just organizations** Introduce the JUST certification process	**Beauty & spirit** Incorporate design elements for human delight **Inspiration** Incorporate educational tools and community supports that help the community connect with its beauty elements and share its story with others

11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK

21st Century Development Framework case example*

Left: 11th Street Bridge Park Anacostia aerial view
Image credit: OMA and Luxigon

Right: 11th Street Bridge Park shade terrace
Image credit: OMA and Luxigon

***NOTE:** The 21st Century Development framework was not used in guiding the development of this project, but the case was identified by Bryan Lee, Jr. of Colloqate as embodying many of the framework's focus areas and strategies. The project was scored using the 21st Century Development framework by researchers at the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building Research.

bbardc.org/the-park

LOCATION
Washington, DC

SIZE/SCALE
4 acres; site scale

DATES
2016–2023 (anticipated)

TEAM/STAKEHOLDERS
Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR), OMA design team, Douglass Community Land Trust, residents, local and national experts, and community leaders

DESCRIPTION
Elevated public park, infrastructure reuse project

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Provide a new venue for healthy recreation; environmental education and the arts; connect two historically disconnected neighborhoods; economic opportunity; affordable housing stabilization

FRAMEWORK FOCUS AREAS
"Living" and "Regenerative" levels achieved in performance areas of place, health & happiness, equity, and beauty.

ARCHITECT'S ROLE
Practitioner, advocate

11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK

21st Century Development Framework case example*

11th Street Bridge Park stands as an exemplar of equitable development processes for a public park space. As a member of the High Line Network, the 11st Street Bridge Park planners and organizers serves as leaders in the infrastructure reuse sphere and contribute to peer learning across that network. The equitable development plan includes strategies for workforce development, small business enterprises, housing, and arts and culture. The plan was created in collaboration with community members and stakeholders, government officials, business owners, and policy experts, and the project leadership team includes members of the community. The architects are research-driven, and their relationship with the Urban Institute helps them track progress toward their goals.

Project equity goals include:

- serve as an anchor for inclusive economic opportunity
- reconnect neighborhoods on both sides of the river
- improve public health disparities

This is being achieved through an extensive community engagement planning process; community land trusts have been established to maintain affordable housing; preemptive investments are ensuring the supply of affordable housing in anticipation of gentrification.[48, 49] Sustained efforts will be made over time to determine whether these efforts are successful.

11th Street Bridge Park is an example of how equitable development is an ongoing process that empowers people who have been historically marginalized, and how equitable development is both place-based and people-focused.

21CD performance levels achieved:

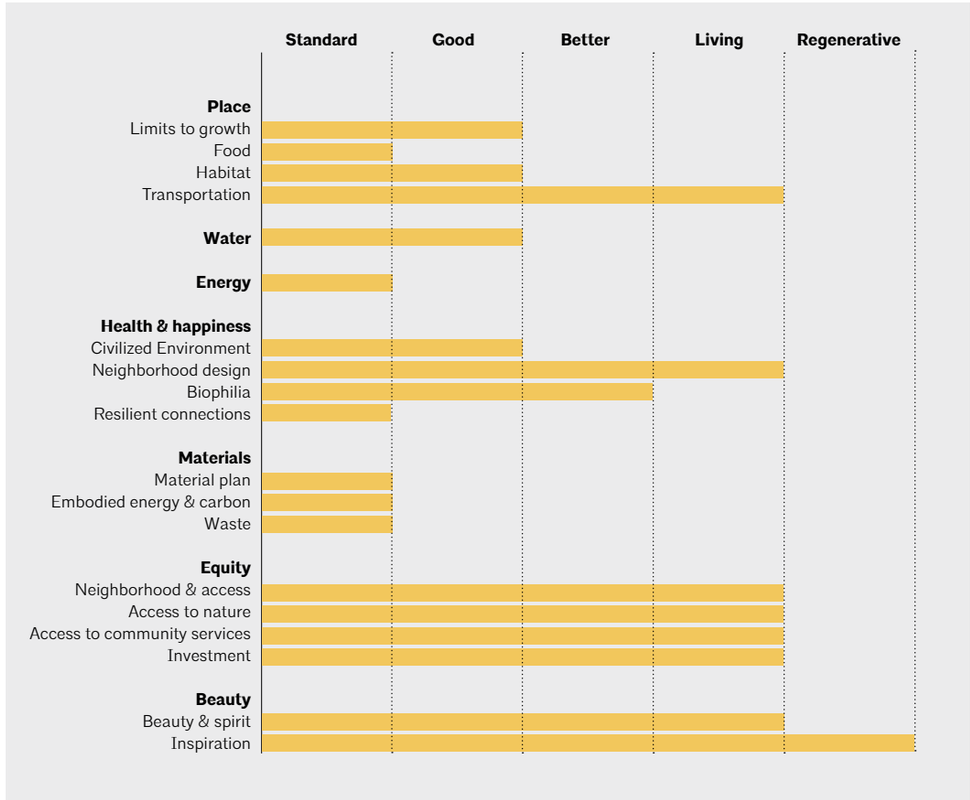
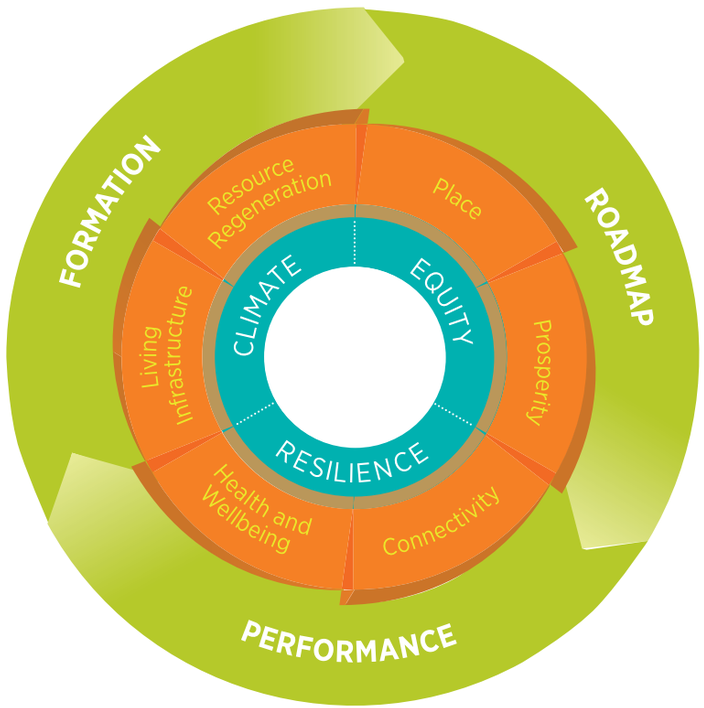


FIGURE 3: *21CD framework scoring*

ECODISTRICTS PROTOCOL

Created by EcoDistricts®

ecodistricts.org/protocol



APPLICABLE PROJECT SCALES
Block/neighborhood

APPLICABLE PROJECT TYPES
Existing neighborhoods, brownfield sites, business districts, institutional campuses, industrial lands, mixed-use districts

FOCUS AREAS
Place, prosperity, health & well-being, connectivity, living infrastructure, resource regeneration

INTERSECTIONS
Equity, resilience, climate protection, participatory design

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE RELEVANCE
Integration, equitable communities, ecosystems, water, economy, energy, well-being, change, discovery

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS RELEVANCE
Good health and well-being; quality education; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life on land; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve the goal

ECODISTRICTS PROTOCOL

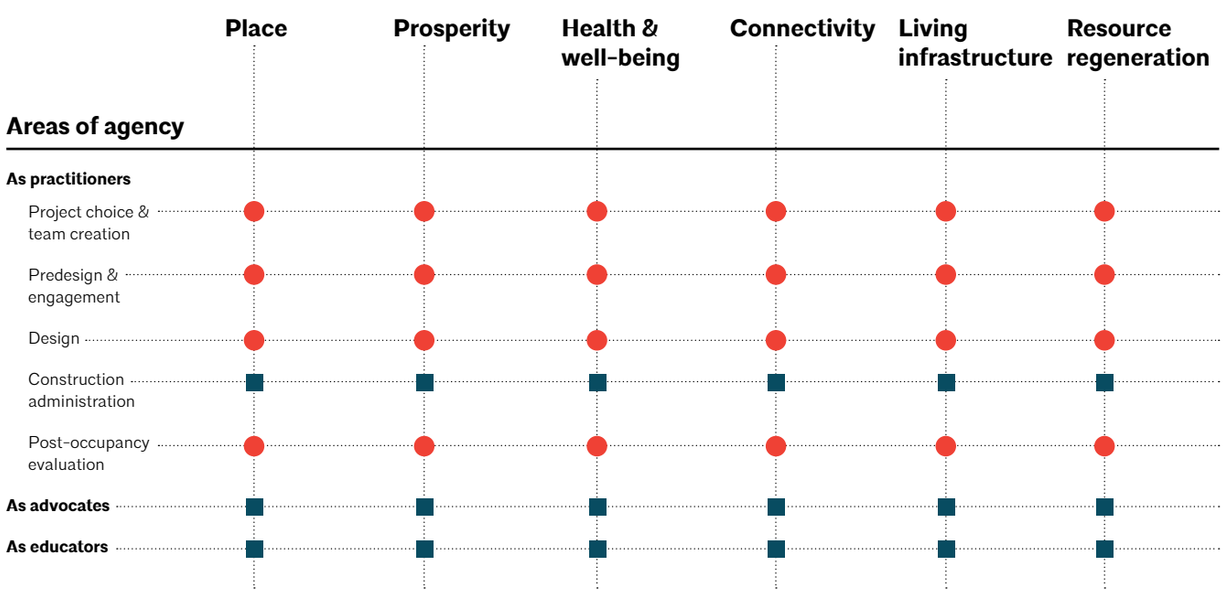
EcoDistricts Protocol advances a new model of urban development to empower just, sustainable, and resilient neighborhoods through community-driven design.[50]

The protocol lays out a process for new or existing communities to become an Ecodistrict. The process is underpinned by an extensive, continuous participatory process during which a community frames its values in terms of measurable, quantifiable goals tied to actionable strategies. This is based in the three imperatives of equity, resilience, and climate protection, and actions are framed around six focus areas (called priorities). The process includes three phases; formation, roadmap, and performance.[51]

It is the only one of the five frameworks compared that works towards a certification goal, so it is easy to identify and learn from other communities that are undergoing a similar process. The embedded participatory process is especially noteworthy and is a useful model for all types of equitable development.

EcoDistricts Protocol was created with input from architects and designers. It guides a process that embeds collective community values and focus area priorities into a project. Design teams then use these values and priorities to create a plan that is carried out through identified partnerships, with regular report-outs to maintain accountability. Architects and designers may work on an EcoDistricts project, become EcoDistricts Accredited Professionals, or simply use the larger concepts to guide their work.

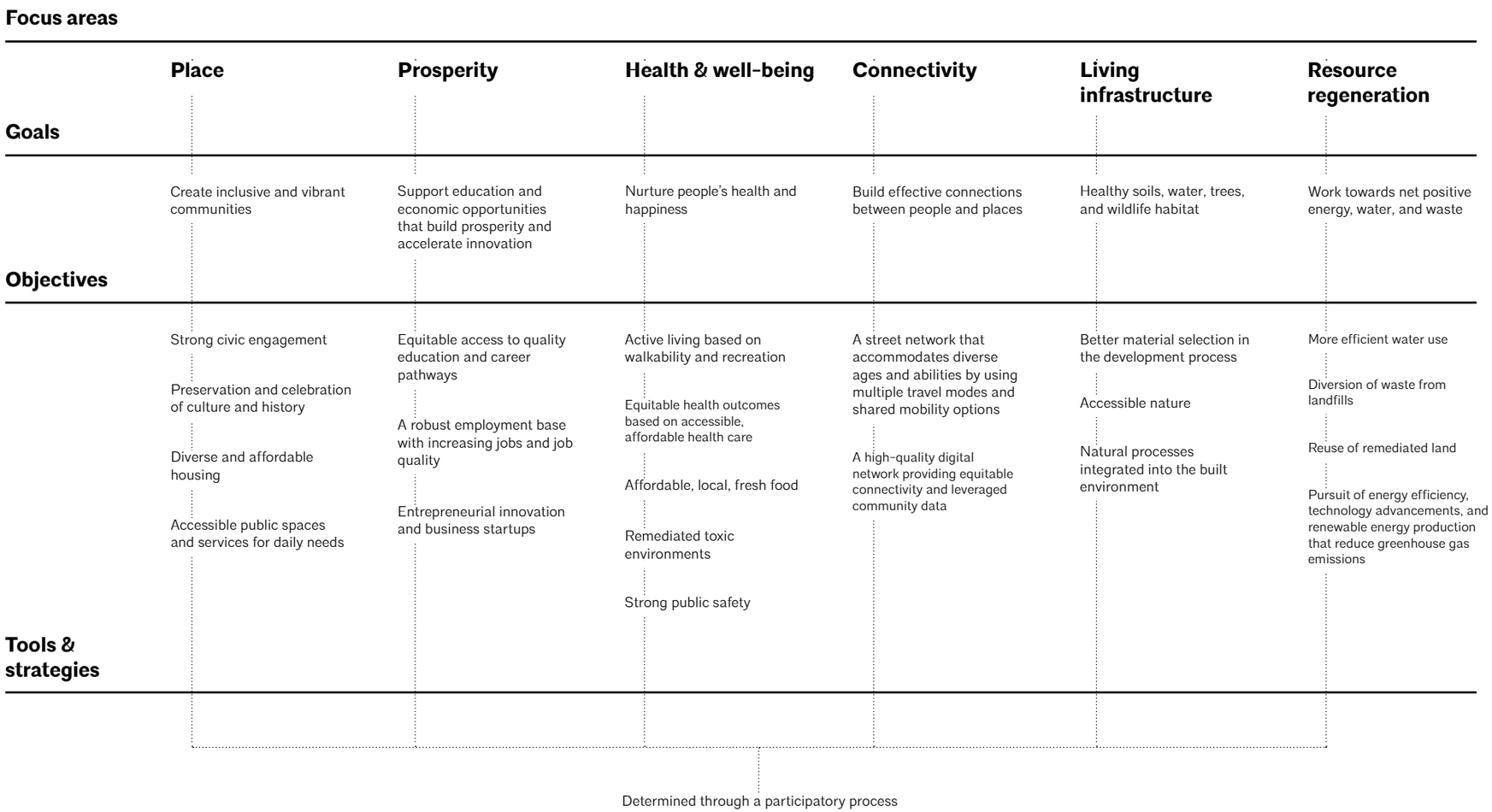
Framework focus areas



Addressed by framework

The framework does not explicitly address this focus area, but the tailored plan created through the participatory process likely would.

ECODISTRICTS PROTOCOL



LITTLE HAITI ECODISTRICT

EcoDistricts Protocol
case example*

Left: Earth-N-Us Permaculture Farm
Image credit: Jill H Gotthelf AIA FAPT RP

Right: Jean Dondy Cidelca Tours
Image credit: Jill H Gotthelf AIA FAPT RP

LOCATION
Miami, FL

SIZE/SCALE
3.5 mi^2; neighborhood scale

DATES
2016–ongoing

TEAM/STAKEHOLDERS
Greater Miami Ecodistrict CEDC, City of Miami Planning Department, State Senator, State Commissioner, Beacon Council, Little Haiti Cultural Center

DESCRIPTION
Neighborhood Ecodistrict

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Bolstering of community identity, affordable housing, economic development, placemaking, resiliency against climate change, transit-oriented development

FRAMEWORK FOCUS AREAS
Place, prosperity, health & well-being

ARCHITECT'S ROLE
Practitioner, advocate

***NOTE:** The Little Haiti EcoDistrict was created with the EcoDistricts Protocol.

LITTLE HAITI ECODISTRICT

EcoDistricts Protocol
case example

The culturally vibrant Little Haiti neighborhood is a reflection Miami's diverse cultural heritage. Little Haiti is home to approximately 30,000 people, the majority of which are of Afro Caribbean and Haitian descent who migrated during the 1970s and early 1980s. Today, the rising cost of real estate in adjacent neighborhoods creates gentrification pressures that threaten the cultural fabric of Little Haiti. Community-wide stakeholders banded together to explore a neighborhood development framework that is more equitable, sustainable, and beneficial to the community. The EcoDistricts Protocol was used to guide the extensive participatory process, and was well-aligned with their planned efforts to create a next generation neighborhood from the inside out.

Equity goals focus on place, prosperity, health and well-being and include:[52]

- preserve culture and identity
- create affordable housing
- increase access to opportunities, economic development, and innovation
- increase active living, health, safety, and food access

Early outcomes include the re-establishment of a community market hub, and local small business development.[53]

Little Haiti Ecodistrict is an example of how equitable development is an ongoing process that empowers people who have been historically marginalized, and that it is tied to larger regional and global forces.

Main Street, Little Haiti
Image credit: Jill H Gotthelf AIA FAPT RP

EPA CREATING EQUITABLE, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development

Created by Environmental Protection Agency

epa.gov/smartgrowth/creating-equitable-healthy- and-sustainable-communities

APPLICABLE PROJECT SCALES
Building/site, block/neighborhood, city/town/county, regional/national

APPLICABLE PROJECT TYPES
Existing community revitalization, planning efforts, affordable housing, transportation design

FOCUS AREAS
Process & engagement, health & safety, existing communities, affordable housing, transportation, access, existing culture

INTERSECTIONS
Smart growth, environmental justice, participatory design

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE RELEVANCE
Equitable communities, ecosystems, energy, well-being, change

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS RELEVANCE
no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; clean water and sanitation; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve the goal

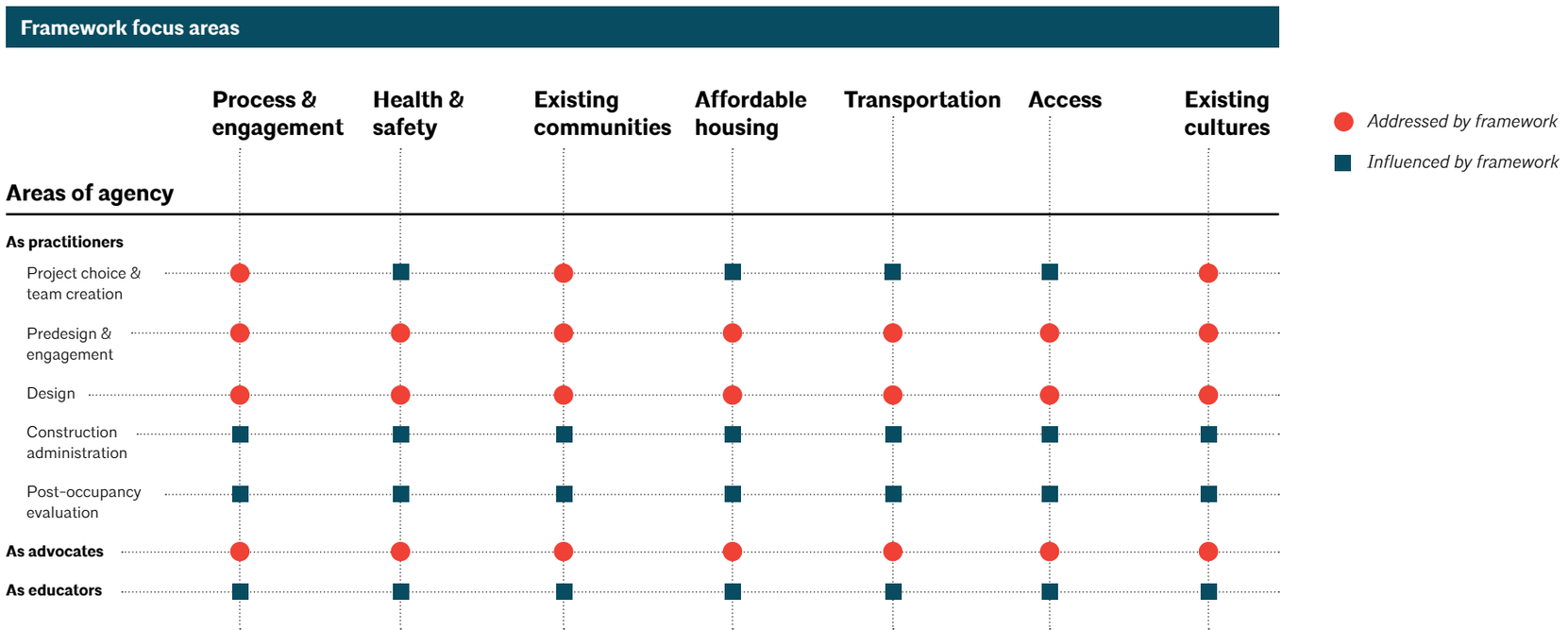
EPA's report encourages a place-based, environmental justice approach to design that improves public involvement, supports collaborative problem solving, and makes a visible difference in communities that are underserved, under-resourced, and overburdened.[54]

This robust 88-page report brings together smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development strategies. It introduces major concepts; outlines the challenges to creating equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities; and then focuses on strategies that fit within seven overarching goals. Strategies tend to relate to land use and community design. There are case studies inserted throughout the report that illustrate specific strategies, like inclusive neighborhood planning or site revitalization.[55]

It is a straight-forward document and provides depth on each of its recommended strategies. This framework is not organized explicitly around focus areas like the other four, but an interpretation is provided for the sake of comparison.

The EPA report excels at explaining larger principles and unpacking how equitable development intersects with other core issues. Some strategies may be more relevant for policy makers and community leaders, but many are directly applicable for architects, especially related to green building, affordable housing, transportation, cultural preservation, and community design processes.

EPA CREATING EQUITABLE, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



EPA CREATING EQUITABLE, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

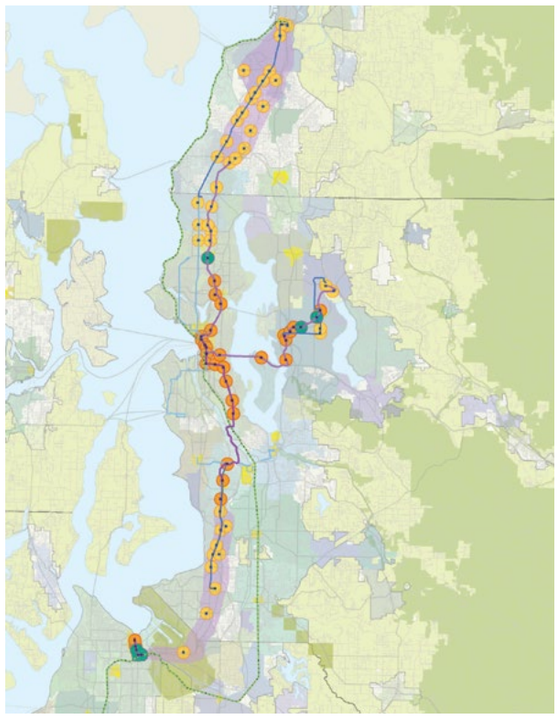
Focus areas*

Focus areas*	Process & engagement	Health & safety	Existing communities	Affordable housing	Transportation	Access	Existing culture
Goals	Facilitate meaningful community engagement in planning and land use	Promote public health and a clean and safe environment	Strengthen existing communities	Provide housing choices	Provide transportation options	Improve access to opportunities and daily necessities	Preserve and build on features that make a community distinctive
Strategies	Conduct multilingual outreach	Reduce exposure to facilities with potential environmental concerns	Fix existing infrastructure first	Preserve affordable housing	Provide access to public transportation	Promote diverse, community-centered schools	Preserve existing cultural features
	Conduct community assessments	Reduce exposure to goods movement activities	Reuse vacant and abandoned properties	Create new affordable housing	Implement equitable transit oriented development	Create safe routes to school	Create new development that strengthens local culture
	Hold community planning and visioning workshops	Clean and reuse contaminated properties	Redevelop commercial corridors		Design safe streets for all users	Provide access to healthy food	
		Promote green building				Provide access to parks and green space	
		Build green streets					

**EPA focus areas are not part of original report; author's interpretation.*

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL VISION 2050

EPA Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities case example*



Left: Growing transit communities, corridors, and station areas
Image credit: Puget Sound Regional Council

Right: Puget Sound community engagement
Image credits: Puget Sound Regional Council

LOCATION
Puget Sound, Washington

SIZE/SCALE
1,020 mi^2; regional scale

DATES
2016–ongoing

TEAM/STAKEHOLDERS
Puget Sound Regional Council, composed of various counties, cities, tribes, statutory and associate members, and transit agencies.

DESCRIPTION
Regional strategy for equitable growth

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Transit growth, economic strategies, affordable housing, minimized displacement, increased access to opportunity

FRAMEWORK FOCUS AREAS
Process & engagement, existing communities, affordable housing, transportation, access

ARCHITECT'S ROLE
Practitioner, advocate

***NOTE:** EPA's Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities was not used in this project, but the case embodies many of the framework's focus areas and strategies.

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL VISION 2050

EPA Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities case example

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) incorporates equity and social justice in its regional growth, transportation, and economic development planning for the Puget Sound region. This region is rich with a diversity of distinct communities, home to over four million people. Its Vision 2050 plan considers how regional planning can result in equitable outcomes. This overarching strategy is meant to provide direction and resources for local governments grappling with similar challenges as they plan for the future of their communities.[56]

Goals include:

- create growth that benefits more of the region's residents
- mitigate displacement
- improve access to opportunity

PSRC develops tools, policies, and long-range plans (like the Regional Transportation Plan) that help guide local governments in achieving these larger goals. It also does comprehensive demographic mapping, opportunity mapping, and displacement risk analysis, so equitable outcomes can be distributed across the region. All of its work is underpinned by participatory processes with community partners, peer networks, and focus groups.[57]

The Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2050 is an example of how equitable development is tied to larger regional and global forces.

INCLUSIVE HEALTHY PLACES FRAMEWORK

Created by Gehl Institute, in collaboration with Gehl and RWJF

APPLICABLE PROJECT SCALES
Building/site, block/neighborhood, city/town/county, regional/national

APPLICABLE PROJECT TYPES
Public spaces (though framework concepts are applicable to other project types, too)

FOCUS AREAS
Context, process, design & program, sustain

INTERSECTIONS
Inclusivity, health & well-being, public space

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE RELEVANCE
Integration, equitable communities, well-being, change, discovery

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS RELEVANCE
Good health and well-being; gender equality; affordable and clean energy; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve the goal

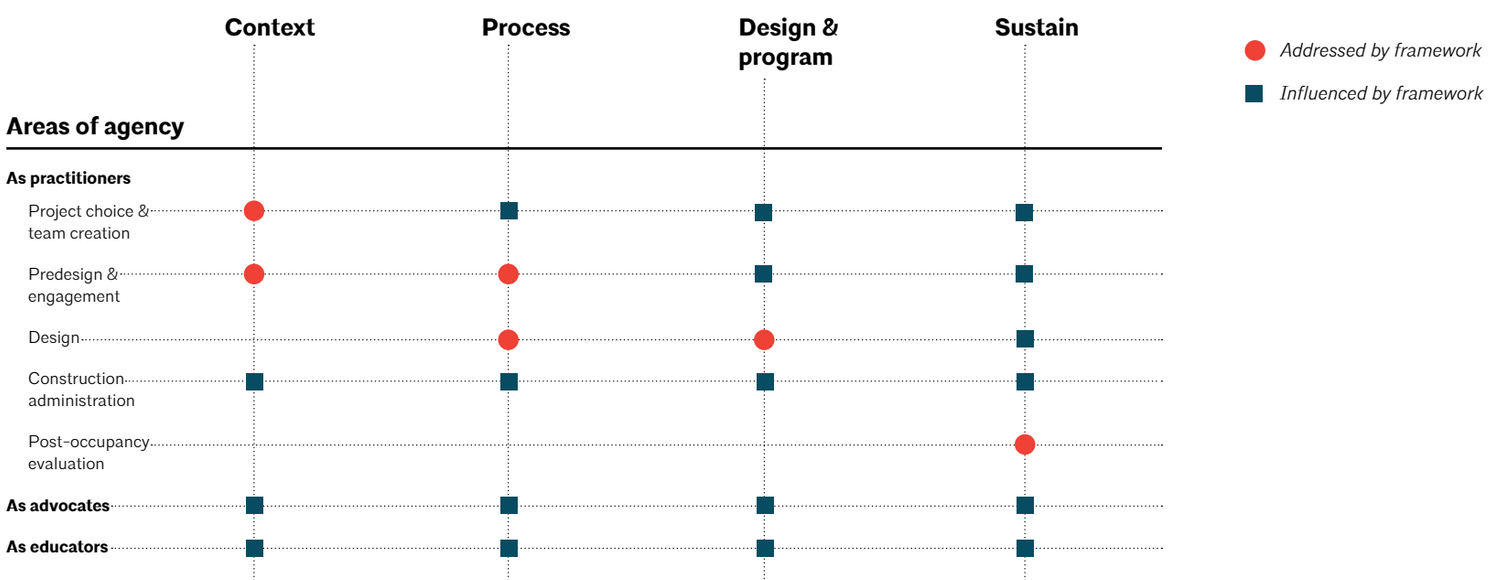
INCLUSIVE HEALTHY PLACES FRAMEWORK

The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework, was created through a collaborative effort by Gehl Institute, Gehl, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a wide range of advisors. It is meant to bridge the fields of public health and community planning and design in order to guide the creation of inclusive, healthy public space.[58]

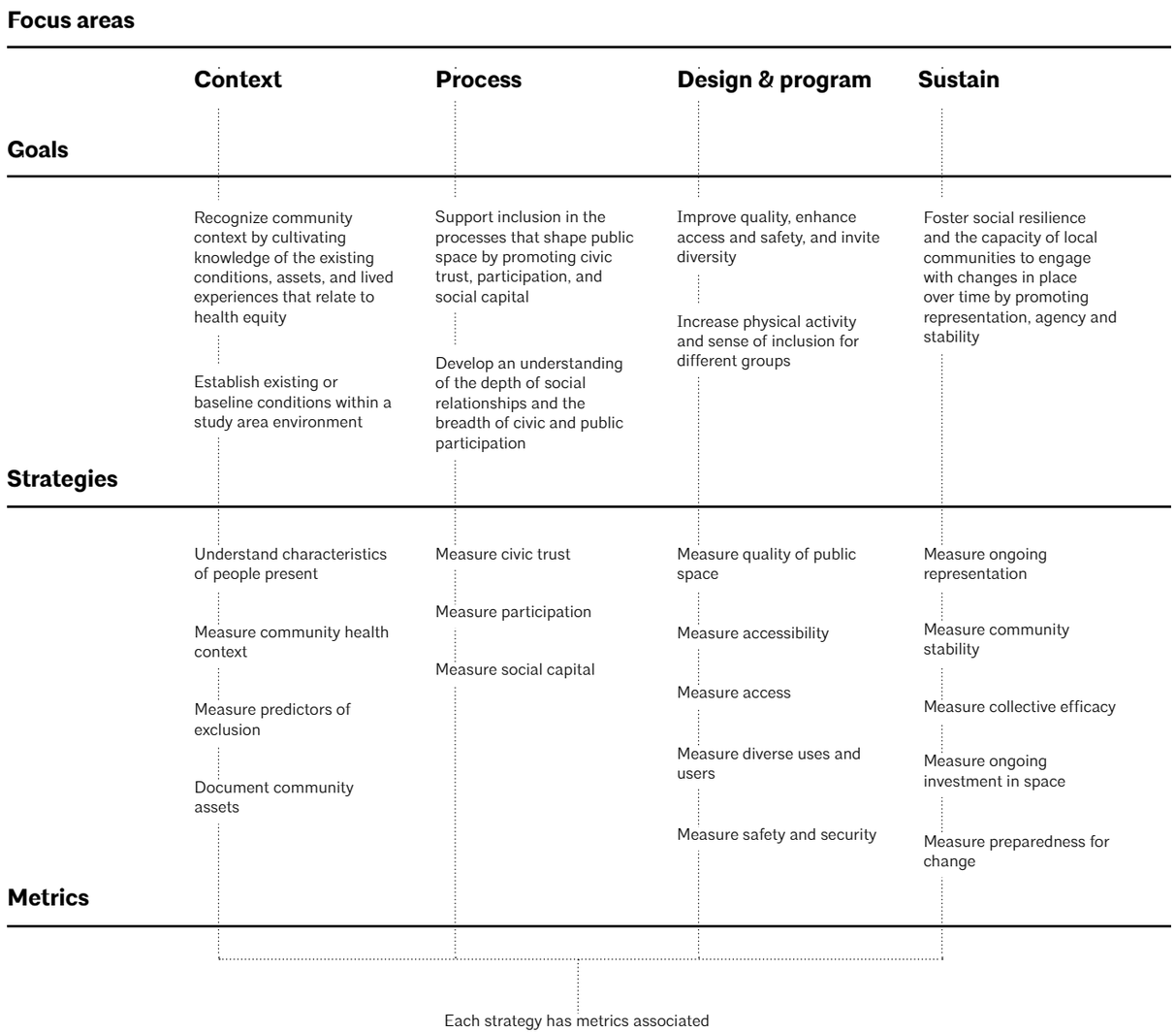
The 75-page report thoroughly introduces the concepts, guiding principles, necessary collaborations, and context and scale of healthy places. It devotes a chapter to the four focus areas of context, process, design & program, and sustain (referred to as principles) before introducing the circular framework. The framework itself is made of drivers (conditions, activities, and/or interventions that create pathways for achieving health equity) and indicators (quantitative or qualitative measures derived from observed facts) that are supported by metrics. The circular framework is supplemented with example metrics that designers might use to guide their research or measure outcome success. The report also illustrates how the framework is applied across scales and phases, from individual impacts at the site scale, to community impacts at the neighborhood scale, to network impacts at the city scale, to population impacts at the regional scale.[59]

The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework is laid out to follow design phases and addresses applications across all different project scales. It helps architects and designers connect equitable concepts directly to practice, guides their demographic and contextual research process, and informs project evaluation methods. It is tailored to public space projects, but the methodology can be applied to all project types.

Framework focus areas



INCLUSIVE HEALTHY PLACES FRAMEWORK



OWE'NEH BUPINGEH REHABILITATION

Inclusive Healthy Places framework case example*

Left: Community mud plastering workshop
Image credit: Tania Hammidi, Photographer, 2012

Right: Completed home
Image credit: Minesh Bacrania Photography for Preservation *magazine*

LOCATION
Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico

SIZE/SCALE
44 traditional family homes; building, block, and neighborhood scale

DATES
2006–2022

TEAM/STAKEHOLDERS
Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority, Atkin Olshin Schade Architects, Avanyu General Contracting Inc., Concept Consulting Group

DESCRIPTION
Rehabilitation of Indigenous housing community

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Tribal preservation, housing rehabilitation, heritage preservation, natural materials, training, community engagement

FRAMEWORK FOCUS AREAS
Context, process, design & program, sustain

ARCHITECT'S ROLE
Practitioner, advocate

***NOTE:** The Inclusive Healthy Places framework was not used in this project, but the case embodies many of the framework's focus areas and strategies.

OWE'NEH BUPINGEH REHABILITATION

Inclusive Healthy Places framework case example*

Owe'neh Bupingeh is the traditional name for Ohkay Owingeh's historic village center. It is believed to have been occupied for at least 700 years and comprises four plazas that were once surrounded by several hundred homes. Today, only 60 of the homes still stand, many of them abandoned. This ongoing, multiphase project seeks to restore the traditional use and character of the historic pueblo core. It balances rehabilitation with ongoing use of the homes, allowing cultural traditions and contemporary life to coexist.[60]

The project involves a community effort to build skills and promote intergenerational exchange. Tribal youth were taught to document and research the existing buildings, and elders described buildings that were no longer there along with stories about how the space was once used. Community meetings were held to get feedback, and the preservation plan was developed with the guidance of the Tribal Council and a Cultural Advisory Team.[61]

Goals included:

- preserve cultural heritage
- engage the community in setting goals and visioning
- provide construction and homeowner training

The project highly valued community participation, and almost half of the construction crew were tribal members. Owe'neh Bupingeh is an example of how equitable development takes historic, current, and future conditions into account and how it can advance self-determination through participation.

Tribal youth playing baseball in the plaza
Image credit: Minesh Bacrania Photography for Preservation *magazine*

POLICYLINK'S EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

Created by PolicyLink

edtk.policylink.org

APPLICABLE PROJECT SCALES
Building/site, block/neighborhood, city/town/county, regional/national

APPLICABLE PROJECT TYPES
Affordable housing, community development, contracting and procurement practices, transit- oriented development, public spaces, brownfield development, commercial projects, urban infill, general policy advocacy

FOCUS AREAS
Affordable housing, economic opportunity, health equity & place, land use & environment

INTERSECTIONS
Policy, racial & economic equity, health

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE RELEVANCE
Integration, equitable communities, well-being, change, discovery

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS RELEVANCE
No poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships to achieve the goal

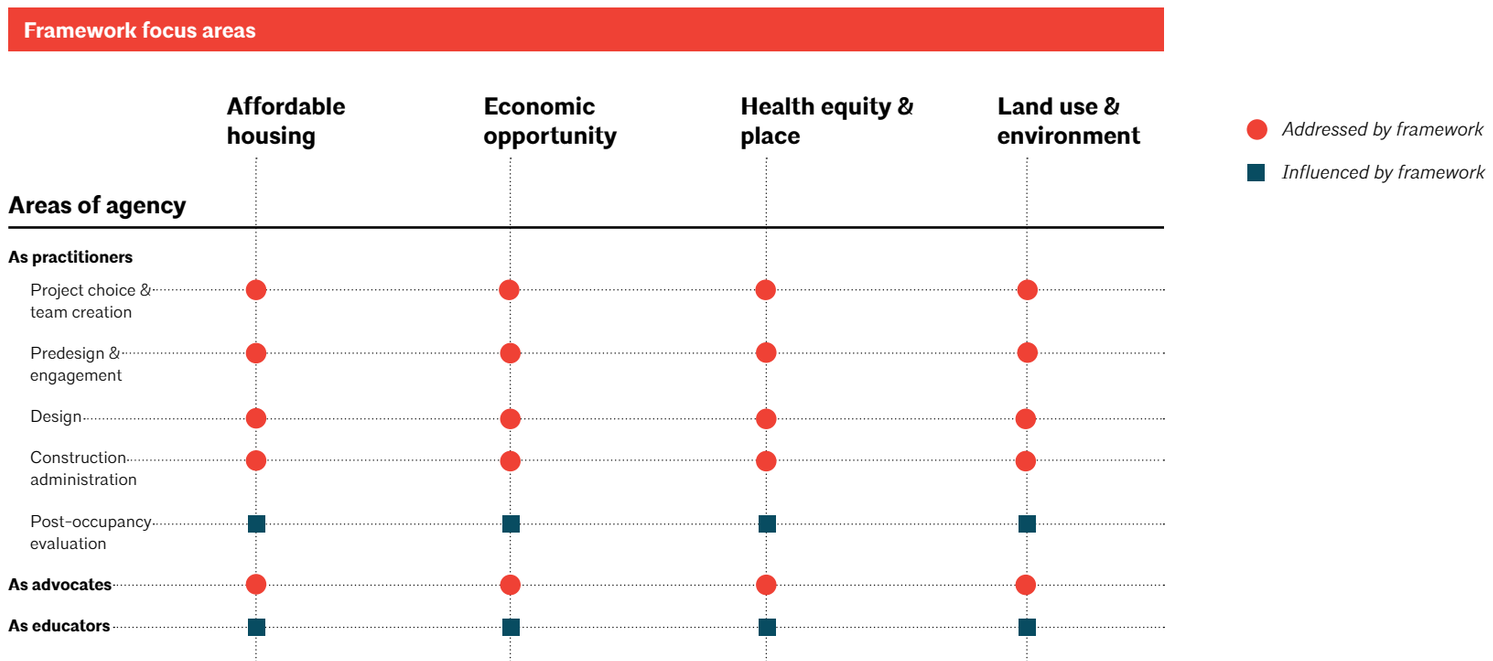
PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit (EDTK) is the first of an array of Equitable Growth initiatives aiming to reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization.[62]

The online toolkit offers 27 tools in total that fall under the four overarching focus areas. The tools range from broad concepts like affordable housing to very specific tools like inclusionary zoning. Each tool links to a multi-page PDF that explains what the tool is, how to use it, key players, challenges, who benefits, success factors, financing, examples in action, and additional resources. Many of the tools strategically utilize participatory processes to advance equitable outcomes.[63]

EDTK is policy-heavy and practice-oriented. It explains the tools within their larger contexts and also goes into great detail about how to use them. For example, architects and designers interested in community mapping will find both detailed instructions and graphic examples to guide them. EDTK is also one of the few frameworks that incorporates information about financing, and it specifically calls out local hiring and minority contracting practices as key parts of equitable development. PolicyLink continues to evolve the EDKT beyond development in the All-In-Cities toolkit, a collection of municipal policies and actionable strategies designed to advance racial equity.

EDTK provides a comprehensive menu of equitable development policies and practices. For architects and designers, it is both a useful primer and a toolkit to use for projects. A lot of the tools focus on policy and will be most relevant in guiding architectural advocacy, but many others are directly applicable to project phases to guide participatory processes, inform design, and influence contracting and hiring.

POLICYLINK'S EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT



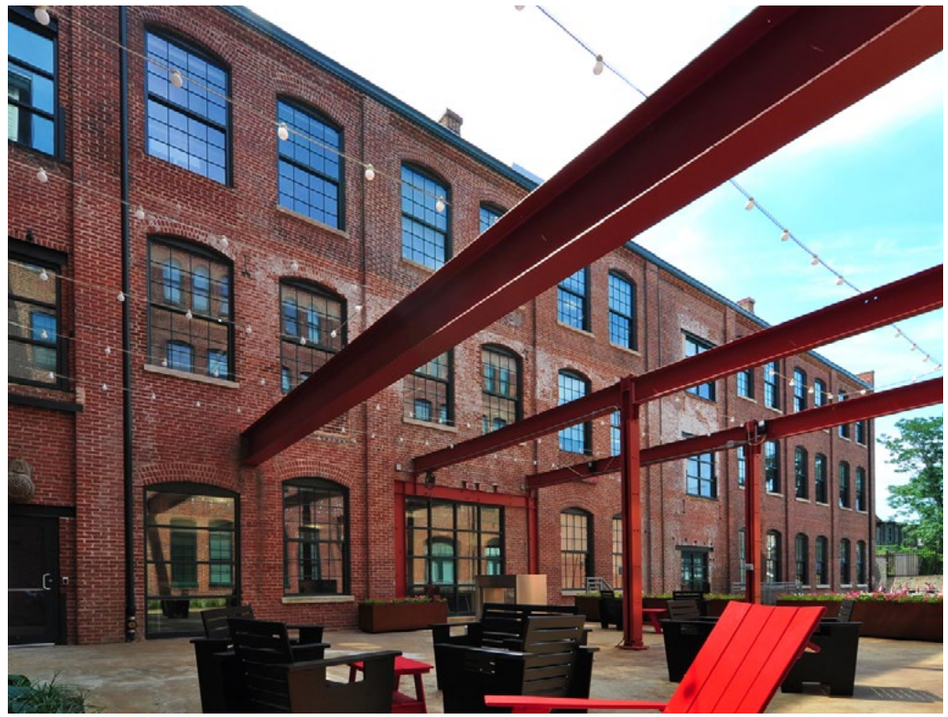
POLICYLINK'S EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

Focus areas

	Affordable housing	Economic opportunity	Health equity & place	Land use & environment
Goals	To ensure existing residents can stay as neighborhood markets revive	Ensure access to good jobs and opportunities to save and build assets to increase community health and stability	Reduce environmental risk and build health-promoting neighborhoods	Ensure new development meets residents' needs and creates healthy community environments
Strategies	Code Enforcement Cooperative Ownership Models Expiring Use: Retention of Subsidized Housing Just Cause Eviction Controls Rent Control	CDCs with Resident Shareholders Community Mapping Employer-Assisted Housing Living Wage Provisions Local Hiring Minority Contracting Resident-Owned CDFIs Transit-Oriented Development	Corner Stores Farmers' Markets Grocery Stores Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens	Brownfield Commercial Linkage Strategies Commercial Stabilization Community Land Trusts Community Mapping Community Reinvestment Act Developer Exactions Foreclosed Properties Housing Trust Funds Inclusionary Zoning Infill Incentives Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives Community Mapping Real Estate Transfer Tax Transit-Oriented Development Community Mapping

MILLER'S COURT

PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit case example*



Left: Resident teachers in their apartment
Image credit: Seawall Development

Right: Exterior lounge area
Image credit: Seawall Development

LOCATION
Baltimore, Maryland

SIZE/SCALE
1.12 acre site, 85,500 sf brick complex; building and site scale

DATES
Completed 2009

TEAM/STAKEHOLDERS
Enterprise Community Investment Inc., Seawall Development Company, Marks Thomas Architects, Teach for America, nonprofits

DESCRIPTION
Renovation of an abandoned, historic manufacturing building into live-work space related to education

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
A supportive living and working environment for school teachers and education-related nonprofits; 40 apartments with discounts for teachers and rent-restricted units for low-wealth households; shared resident amenities; a teacher resource center; a neighborhood cafe

FRAMEWORK FOCUS AREAS
Affordable housing, economic opportunity

ARCHITECT'S ROLE
Practitioner, advocate

***NOTE:** PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit was not used in this project, but the case embodies many of the framework's focus areas and strategies.

MILLER'S COURT

PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit case example

Miller's Court illustrates an innovative development model that addresses the quality of urban public education through the redevelopment of an abandoned building.[64]

The project goals were to:

- create high-quality, affordable housing for teachers in a supportive community environment, improving teacher retention and ultimately benefiting Baltimore's schoolchildren
- create shared nonprofit office space, providing opportunities for growth and collaboration
- spark revitalization in the surrounding Remington neighborhood, which experienced decades of high vacancy and disinvestment
- generate economic activity, increase tax revenues, and create new jobs in an under-resourced community

This was achieved through a thoughtful planning process that activated neighborhood organizations, informed the building's design, and inspired subsequent investment in the neighborhood. The project builds economic value and social capital by connecting teachers and nonprofits, and also improves the surrounding neighborhood. It illustrates the value of collaborative partnerships and of convening focus groups that are targeted to end users to inform design. Rentable spaces (both apartments and offices) vary in size, indicating a mixed price point that can be accessed by a wider range of people.[65]

Miller's Court exemplifies the idea that equitable development is both place-based and people-focused and shows how participatory processes with end users involved early in a project should influence the built form.

Miller's Court exterior
Image credit: Seawall Development

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

Find the framework that fits the project type, method of practice, community, and client.
There is no one-size-fits-all framework, and that's a good thing. Architects and designers work on many types of projects and practice in different ways, so it would be difficult for one equitable development framework to be relevant for everybody and still provide the depth necessary to be useful. Engage clients and communities early and review a number of frameworks together to see which is the best fit for that project. Frameworks can also be taken apart and combined: the participatory process from one may be useful in combination with the focus areas and metrics from another.

Think creatively about equitable development at all scales.
Though it may seem as if equitable development frameworks are more relevant for larger-scale projects, their principles and strategies are relevant at all scales by looking beyond the lot lines. Individual buildings and sites can create many equitable impacts; a restaurant may support a local entrepreneur, create local construction jobs, provide employment opportunities, and help address a food desert. Even single family residential projects for a private client can create equitable impacts if the client incorporates strategies like inclusive contracting and procurement. Be creative and view the potential for equitable development in the broadest sense possible, focusing on surrounding conditions and contexts.

Remember the importance of participatory processes.
All five of the frameworks here underscore the importance of participatory processes. Development is fundamentally not equitable unless it begins with community input; if the community does not have a hand in shaping goals, the project is off to the wrong start. The frameworks detailed here vary in their specificity about the process; seek out additional resources that guide the creation of these critical processes. (See the AIA Equitable Practice Guide for Engaging Community as well as other tools listed in Additional resources.)

Be specific, set outcomes, and measure results.
Both process and outcomes are critical for equitable development. Work with the community and client to be as specific as possible in determining what people and groups need to be empowered to arrive at an equitable process, practice meaningful participation, and arrive at goals collaboratively. Use these goals to set specific and measurable outcomes, and let these guide the design process. Communicate the value of this process to your client, and hold your team accountable by measuring how successfully the project achieved the equity goals.

Look for opportunities to leverage intersectionality.
Equity is intertwined with all other issues impacting society, including a host of other priorities like sustainability and health. The frameworks inherently incorporate intersectionality depending on the interests of the entity that created them, and this is an opportunity to choose a framework that aligns with the intersecting values of the community and the client. A site can manage stormwater with an increased tree canopy (sustainability and resilience outcomes), which also reduces the heat island effect and ambient temperature for those in the area (equitable health outcomes) and also reduces cooling expenses for the building owner (client benefit outcomes). Embrace this kind of intersectionality and use the frameworks to create solutions that work toward equitable outcomes in concert with other beneficial outcomes.

Collaborate across disciplines to increase impact.
The frameworks underscore the collaborative nature of equitable development. Architects and designers are one of many contributors and should partner with other people, disciplines, and sectors to increase impact. If certain framework strategies do not seem directly relevant to architectural practice, that may imply that another type of allied profession (urban planner, government official, developer, etc.) should take the lead. Use these frameworks to identify areas for collaborations across disciplines where appropriate.

Conclusion

On the need for creative thinking:

"It took a great deal of skill and creativity and imagination to build the kind of situation we have, and it is going to take skill and imagination and creativity to change it."

-Whitney M. Young Jr., 1968[67]

As this report describes, designing for equitable development is an important approach for architects and designers looking to advance equitable communities. Equitable development approaches aim to create healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities where people of all identities and backgrounds have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive.[66] These approaches are grounded in inclusive participatory processes that empower people, groups, and communities that have been historically marginalized to influence project equity goals and desired outcomes. They ensure that these people benefit from the decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions and that development creates mutual benefits for the community, the client, and other stakeholders.

These approaches are collected and organized in many different equitable development frameworks that can guide architects and designers. Frameworks provide information about foundational concepts, describe and inform equitable decision-making processes, and suggest types of equitable outcomes. They may differ in intersectionality, depth, structure, and relevance, so it is best to review and use frameworks that are best suited to your project type, method of practice, community, and client. This report serves as an introduction to the concepts that build equitable communities, the frameworks available to develop them, and a point of connection to other resources like the AIA Guides for Equitable Practice. Together, these resources are tools for architects and designers to develop deeper understanding and engagement with the communities they serve, allowing them to collaboratively set goals and establish more equitable communities.

In closing

Architects and designers have a moral and ethical imperative to be leaders and collaborators in equitable development. They contribute to and influence far more than just the aesthetic of the built environment and therefore are responsible for far more. Each project decision has intended and unintended consequences; equitable development frameworks help enhance the positive ones and mitigate the negative. They are important tools to help architects and designers fulfill their influential role in society, address interconnected issues, and create projects that respond to community needs.

Without this equitable intentionality, architects and designers are at best neutral and at worst deeply harmful. They must be creative in incorporating equitable strategies into their work, and they must look for opportunities across project scale and type. They also have the responsibility to bring equitable practice, knowledge, and strategies into collaborations with allied disciplines and to advise clients on the benefits and applicability.

Architecture is a political act, a social art, and a public health discipline. As practitioners, advocates, and educators, architects and designers must understand and acknowledge the role that the profession has played in perpetuating inequity in the built environment and now commit to overcoming that by incorporating equity into practice and design wherever possible.[68]

Additional resources

For other equitable development frameworks and information, see the resources below:

Additional Frameworks & Related Resources

AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

AIA Community by Design's Design Assistance Team Process

AIA Framework for Design Excellence

AIA Guides for Equitable Practice

Anti-Displacement Policy Network

The Alliance: Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard

Anti-Racist Design Justice Index (Design as Protest)

APA's Planning for Equity Policy Guide

Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access, University of Buffalo

Creative Reaction Lab Equity Centered Community Design

Detroit Collaborative Design Center

Dick & Rick: A Visual Primer for Social Impact Design

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

Fitwel Portal

GARE's Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity

The Just City Index

LEED Project Team Checklist for Social Impact

The New Urban Agenda

NIST Community Resilience Resources

PolicyLink's All-In-Cities Toolkit

PolicyLink's Equitable Growth initiatives

Puget Sound Regional Equity Network's Principles of Equitable Development

RELi Rating System

The SEED Network

UN Sustainable Development Goals

Examples of Equitable Development Plans and Initiatives

11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan

Detroit Future City

King County Equitable Development

PolicyLink Equitable Development: The Path to an All-In Pittsburgh

Seattle Equitable Development Implementation Plan

Resource Organizations

Architects / Designers / Planners for Social Responsibility

Association for Community Design

Brookings

Center for American Progress

Design as Protest

Enterprise Community Partners

Just City Lab at Harvard Graduate School of Design

LISC

National Community Reinvestment Coalition

National Urban League

PolicyLink

The Right to the City

Urban Institute

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68. AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: Community Engagement

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