Environmental Justice Planning Meeting

January 20, 2021

3-4pm

Attendees: Warren Lavey, Kara Durek, Jason Webb, Savannah Donavan, Margarita Teran, Kaamilyah Abudullah-Span, Kimmy Chuang, Scott Tess, Morgan White, Meredith Moore

- Environmental vulnerability assessment
    a. Jason Webb is an undergraduate student in Geography/GIS who joined the meeting. He is interested in helping conduct an environmental vulnerability assessment for this effort.
    b. Potential layers: tree canopy cover, water/soil quality, sidewalk/bike/road cover
    c. Focus will be on urbanized areas of campus, Champaign, Urbana, Savoy
        i. If we start small, we can eventually expand
    d. *Margarita* – Health Equity Report card could be a useful tool to see what is in the area where we are in
    e. *Warren* – What is the scope of this work, is it on environmental justice (exposure to toxic chemicals, air pollutants; climate justice – how to handle heat waves, flooding, etc.)
    f. *Kara* – Need measurable data, we may need to focus our scope on what data we have access to
    g. *Scott* – We should look at defining what we are addressing (e.g., housing)
    h. *Jason* – We want to be careful about having too many variables to keep the project from getting overwhelming. It might be helpful to focus on a few key areas.
    i. *Morgan* – We could define a larger list and then focus on a few subsets to further investigate
    j. *Kimmy* – UC Berkley – calculate environmental impact, combine socioeconomic impact (% of ethnicity, unemployment) and pollution burden; what socioeconomic data do we have and then how can we use the formula to weigh the factors
    k. *Kaamilyah* – is there a definition for vulnerability? What does it mean? What factors contribute to making a community vulnerable?
        i. *Warren* – There is not necessarily a definition for environmental justice. Kimmy pointed out EJ screen which is used in California and other states, like Illinois. Heather Knightfall identifies two standards of environmental justice used in our state – future energy jobs act $30 million / year solar program targeting environmental justice communities and this has one definition, earlier act created an environmental justice commission that operates under a different definition.
        ii. Would be worth looking at both of these standards. Also Center for Disease Control and Prevention funded work in Illinois (Department of Public Health) conducted at UIC did county by county analysis that combines many of these factors. Let's find out what they have. It's an ongoing group.

      iii. *Scott* –Future Energy Jobs Act – communities can self-designate
- Key principles of other EJ plans and tree canopy analysis in Urbana – Scott
    a. Intersection of equity and environment; Urbana and Sustainability Advisory Commission reviewed these to evaluate different principles
    b. Diversity in job postings and documents and recruitment
    c. Good words to include are "institutionalize" and "advancing"
    d. Promoting DEIJ in the workplace, addressing unconscious bias
    e. Added paragraph of "commitment statements" without promising specific outcomes, but rather committing to the values, goal list to convert to actions
    f. Urbana is currently working on tree canopy analysis, studying race and income and the correlation with tree vacancies
        i. Overlay these variables on a map with basic statistical analysis and heat map to address equity issues
        ii. Similarly, we could do follow this methodology and expand variables, e.g, sidewalks and walkability
- What indices do Champaign, Urbana, Savoy, and University have strong control over? What influence do we have?
    a. **Next step:** list data/indices in spreadsheet that we have access to and can control
    b. Should try to apply existing indices and existing methodologies so as not to reinvent the wheel
- Carle has committed $2 million / year for 10 years for Healthy Beginnings Program
    a. Mobile medical van that goes into communities that have high infant mortality or early childhood health problems – neighborhoods they target have been built on various indicators beyond health and income
- Champaign County Stormwater Partnership MS4
    a. Management of our rainwater
    b. Addressing rainwater equality, cleaner water, and flood control
- Can Champaign and Savoy also conduct similar analyses like Urbana is with trees?
- Next steps?
    a. Interviews? Further research?
- Our plan does not have to be complicated; we could list 5 pillars, for example, and outline next steps with the intention that the plan will be revised and improved
- Reminder that we identified high indicators of resilience, could be helpful in identifying priorities
    a. Could start with what data is available for each of these items
- Job training opportunities and resources
- NAACP has modules of how to build an Environmental Justice Plan (which we are already doing for the most part)
- UC Berkley hosts discussions and workshops on climate anxieties
- University of Oregon received $4.5 million grant to start EJ Institute