

# Racial Equity Assessment and Toolkit for the Built Environment

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Through the stories of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Elijah McClain, and many others, it is abundantly clear that black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are dying and being killed while interacting with the built environment. This report explores how the built environment and related policies, and practices perpetuate racial inequities and offer tools to identify best practices for implementing built environment policies to advance racial equity in Colorado. The core issue being investigated is the perpetuation of racial inequities through the built environment. The process to do this outlined in this report was created for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to share with communities across the state that want to better understand how the built environment perpetuates racial inequities in their communities.

### Background Research

In order to assess racial inequities in the built environment, you need research on racial inequities, racial equity assessments, and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). The research around racial inequities illustrates how structures and systems in our society adversely impact the health and lives of BIPOC. The research around racial equity

assessments outlines ways to identify racial inequities in policies and upcoming projects. The research around CPTED helps to link racial equity assessments and built environments audits, as well as providing a framework to understand the relationship between perceived safety, crime, and racial biases/ inequities. The information in this section will directly inform the tools created within the report.

### Methodology

The methodology can change based on what the focus of the overall process is. If the focus is an entire community, then community members would conduct a number of field assessments that would inform a contextual review. If the goal was to really understand a single site, then a contextual review would guide a few field assessments. The field assessment is an online survey that can be completed on a smartphone on site. The person conducting the assessment will have an assessment guide to clarify the process and a few tricky questions. The Contextual review will be done by city staff, community members, government officials, or whoever. This will look at crime, crash, race, and other types of data to better understand the situation on the site whatever it may be.



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### Findings

Although the findings are limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment process was tested and produced promising results and potential. The assessment and contextual review processes were tested at City Park, Fort Collins in early April. One assessment was conducted during the day, and another at night. It is important to capture different perspectives of the site if multiple assessments are able to be done. Between the two assessments, feelings of isolation changed the most. But there were no blatant racial inequities observed during the assessment. The contextual review revealed that police had been called on a large number of “suspicious individuals” on separate occasions and even a call on a “transient”. This illustrates the importance of doing both the assessment and review because systemic racism is present in so many systems you simply have to assess a lot of systems to get a full understanding. This is an iterative process, and the larger number of diverse assessments conducted will just increase the accuracy of the overall understanding of a site or sites.

### Key Recommendations

Communities across Colorado should work to create revolving on-line racial equity assessment of the built environment. The information collected from this should be analyzed, shared with the public, and worked into an action plan for interventions. Some possible interventions could include removing hostile architecture, increase modal transportation diversity, and do the little things. This process should result in the community feeling heard and understood in ways that they have not in the past. This can only happen if the assessment is widely shared along with the results. Beyond this it is important to remember that the assessment is only step three in the overall ten step process. To really change a community, you must act on the information collected to truly advance racial equity.

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