Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector Initiative
NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice (ECJ) Program
Virginia Beach, VA
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Launching in August 2018, the Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector (CESBS) Initiative seeks to universalize access to safe, affordable, healthy, and energy efficient buildings. Communities of color and low-income communities bear the brunt of the impacts of unsustainable buildings where they live, work, play, shop, and go to school, among other activities. These impacts include such things as: poor mental and physical health, lack of access to public transportation and other public amenities, and detrimental financial impacts because of high energy bills, poor construction, and environmental health threats. In addition, these communities disproportionately experience the negative effects of climate change, to which unsustainable buildings contribute as major consumers of fossil fuel-based energy and become a hazard without proper cooling in times of extreme heat or adequate disaster resilience in times of extreme storms.

Building upon the August 2018 Launch Summit that convened people and organizations across multiple sectors, our aim is to build a bigger, broader tent for the sustainable building movement. The CESBS Working Retreat in October 2019 (and a subsequent mini, virtual retreat) continued the conversation to adopt a collective, grassroots action agenda and policy platform that will provide a vision and personal action commitments for an equity-based sustainable building sector.

**Objectives of the Retreat:**

*Drive action planning* from multi-sector stakeholders to center equity in sustainable building for their respective organizations/projects/partnerships and the CESBS Working Groups.

*Facilitate knowledge-sharing* from leading organizations and model projects to spread a vision and commitment for equity in the sector.

*Ground participants in examples of exemplary, grassroots projects.*

*Build relationships* among program participants to bolster work in the coming year.

*Celebrate and thank* participants for their contributions.
Action Agenda

As a collective, as organizations, as communities, and as individuals, we identify the following priority action areas to center equity in the sustainable building sector:

Collectively, we aspire to shift policies and practices around sustainable building to advance universal access. We envision a future in which our buildings sustain the human right to live in a safe and healthy environment for all current and future generations and create inclusive livelihood opportunities for African Americans and other people of color.

Guiding Statements:

- We work with a focus on the most impacted and disinvested communities, emphasizing existing residential housing (including affordable and rental), K-12 public schools, HBCUs, small businesses, faith institutions, and other community facilities that are created by and for frontline communities.
- We emphasize the role of women of color, youth, and seniors in bringing about this transformation.
- We redefine the focus of development to shift from property to human development.
- We seek to redesign the systems of our society to eliminate their structural racism and evolve them to be structurally inclusive.

Actions:

Implement policy to make sustainable, equitable, affordable, and resilient buildings the norm for all communities.

- Advocate for improved federal, state, local, and utility policies and implementation through NAACP membership and a broad coalition of partners.
  - Local ordinances and zoning policies
  - Better building codes
  - Measurement of green jobs in the sector
  - Prioritization of resources for the most impacted communities and transparency of funding outcomes
- Advocate for removing policies that reinforce inequitable outcomes, from difficulty in achieving capital, to the location of less desirable infrastructure, to unbalanced zoning that encourages only market-rate housing.
- Develop and promote organizing and advocacy tools, case studies, and trainings for members to take action locally.
- Build capacity and secure representation of people of color in decision-making bodies.
- Advocate for more inclusive engagement and policymaking processes.

Integrate equity strategies into building standards and industry practices.

- Identify and promote an expanded definition, essential guidelines, and strong metrics for equity in sustainable buildings, pointing to examples of leadership to help share and link existing efforts.
- Advocate for more and stronger equity-based requirements in voluntary/model sustainable building standards.
Identify avenues and representatives to engage in standards development to ensure equity issues are identified and addressed.

Partner on the development and promotion of equity rating tools for development.

- Empower sustainability, building, affordable housing, and policy professionals to adopt best practices for equity through training, closer collaboration, and recognition.
  - Develop and promote guidelines for equitable community engagement and building operations.
  - Build capacity among small developers, affordable housing managers/developers, and small landlords/building owners.
- Organize and promote support services to help projects navigate through complicated processes.

Deepen justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in sustainable building education and professions.

- Initiate awareness and expand the pipeline for sustainable building professions through inclusive introductory education programs, including informal, project-based, place-based, and school-based learning opportunities.
  - Connect existing programs/employers to frontline communities not yet reached.
  - Pilot workforce development in local sustainable building projects in NAACP members’ communities.
  - Partner with community colleges and HBCUs to bring sustainable building tracks and workshops to their schools.
  - Establish and promote mentoring groups and fellowships for underrepresented students and professionals, with a focus on partnering with established and specialized professionals of color.
- Increase access to higher education, specialized training, and credentialing programs for underrepresented students and professionals.
- Engage early and often in workforce policy discussions and debates at all levels (national, state, and local) to address discrimination, access, equity, and expected results.
  - Hold major stakeholders such as utilities, solar and wind providers, and legislators accountable for workforce metrics and results.
- Advocate for and support JEDI training and internal policies within organizations across sustainable building professions.
  - Launch a campaign to reinvest savings from energy efficiency into internal JEDI efforts.
  - Pilot a program to pair professionals who are underrepresented in the sector with firms that have a stated commitment to JEDI.
  - Initiate a campaign and scorecard for public reporting of JEDI metrics by leading sustainable building organizations.

Mobilize financial resources for communities with the least access to sustainable buildings.

- Promote a framework for equity-based funding opportunities that addresses whole systems, prevents displacement, and upholds community ownership and wealth.
- Identify and share existing financial resources and, where possible, establish new funding opportunities.
  - Resource demonstration projects in the communities of NAACP members.
Partner on a reparations campaign for universities with ties to slavery to fund sustainable building projects at HBCUs.

**Uplift a new narrative that centers equity and amplifies the stories of frontline communities.**

- Establish shared, inclusive messaging and definitions that are created by the most impacted communities, promote relatable projects, and speak to communities’ values and experiences.
  - Infuse existing industry and NAACP platforms with the CESBS narrative, and enumerate equity connections with existing industry priorities around health, resilience, energy, etc.
  - Distribute a quarterly newsletter or blog with community-based highlights.
  - Identify and feature the great work of people of color in the building space from an equity/sustainability lens.
- Gather the data about intersections of environment, pollution, and health for those most impacted (low-income and people of color, elderly, children, differently-abled, etc.).
  - Create a database of needs and concerns and a system to report housing injustices.
- Develop resources, such as toolkits and directories, for residents to take advantage of existing resources and take action for sustainability and health practices and policies in their communities.
  - Empower NAACP members to be information “captains” for their communities.
- Develop community support and learning circles so people can offer one another support and information at a local level live and in real time.

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Do you see yourself or your organization in any of these action items?

The NAACP ECJ Program was created to provide resources and support community leadership in addressing these human and civil rights issues. We need your support to put these ideas into action. Help take the lead and/or advise our work by contacting slee@naacpnet.org.

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The NAACP will strive to:

- Write a sequel to the Lights Out in the Cold report, exploring the next step in NAACP’s policy platform on utility energy affordability, with a focus on the role energy efficiency can play.
- Articulate the rights that renters, low-income households, people of color, and African American households have (and should have), such as the right to energy, clean energy, affordability, safety, comfort, healthy homes, and equitable access to energy efficient investments.
- Create a policy guide for centering equity in workforce solutions for the sustainable building sector.
- Facilitate a Memorandum of Understanding among CESBS Initiative partners to establish a job training and entrepreneurship partnership with HBCUs, the Divine Nine, and NID Housing.
• Develop standards for community engagement, which national partner organizations should adopt and further.
• Develop community-based checklists among NAACP units for Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector to evaluate various criteria, such as local government funding for community engagement, transparency for involvement, hiring and workforce development, business training for minority enterprises, etc.
• Address the low representation of people of color in sustainable building professions by reaching out and engaging with their organizations, such as the National Organization of Minority Architects, National Society of Black Engineers, American Indian Science and Engineering Society, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and connecting with the American Institute of Architects and the U.S. Green Building Council.
• Partner with ACEEE to survey programs serving low-income customers at the federal, state, local, and utility scale for best practices; create a model for holding programs accountable through standards (80% reach to these communities, for example); and create a follow-up method to ensure delivery.

Individually, participants pledged to:

...work with officials to develop an equitable and transparent program that supports marginalized communities, property owners, and residents to be aware of, educated about, and have access to funding efforts that support energy efficiency, weatherization, and flood-proofing their homes.

...advance policies/programs to build capacity in housing justice teams to mitigate gentrification.
...make equity & community priorities a part of every conversation I have with cities developing policies & programs.

...effective organizing amongst communities, workers, and institutions.

...tell my story and be the voice to the voiceless until justice prevails for the environment and the people in it, even if I have to take off my earrings.

...raise the profile of equity and its value internally and with stakeholders.

...design and implement holistic clean energy workforce development programs for environmental justice communities.

...require that “marginalized” voices are always included and at the forefront!

...write the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on the Climate Crisis proposals for environmental justice policies.

...organize our NAACP branches in my area to hold joint town hall meetings to educate the community about the urgency of sustainability in our area!

...see that my region’s Disaster Plan solidly in place by next hurricane season.

...create a working group to ensure that “green” materials are healthy materials that do not pollute EJ fenceline communities.

...listen, generate conversation, and lead action towards justice and access in the areas of clean water, clean air, and education. We need to act NOW!

...continue to push conversation & thinking about the intersection of structural racism & energy systems so we can better advance energy justice, equity, democracy.

...foresee, help and promote a more accessible city for individuals with different physical and cognitive restrictions.

...advocate for an equitable carbon-free future by advocating for Black and Brown lives & using my professional expertise.

...set up a local workshop to get information out about a program that removes the credit score barrier for those that want to purchase a home.

...financing for HBCU retrofits with investment from institutions making reparations for slavery.

...execute an action plan to engage with organizations to present their plan to address climate change, renewable energy, equity, community engagement, and workforce opportunities, and support initiatives & legislation that positively impact our communities, “communities of concern,” for environmental, economic & social justice.

...better embed racial equity into our research strategies and process.
...change the attitude in my community about climate justice and its effect on the local economy.

...assist in the development of financing programs for clean energy and electrification upgrades.

...be a resource for communities and community organizers. I also commit to be intentional about my efforts to amplify the voices of community organizers and grassroots organizations within my own organization.

...partner with NAACP to identify “1 thing” our organizations can do in 10 Southern communities to advance capacity towards greener buildings and communities in the next year.

...create employment opportunities for African American residents with my seat at various community & political tables in the areas of sustainable climate justice & the building sector.

...build strong relationships with tenant, EJ, and racial equity groups in impacted communities.

...advocate for additional training/pipeline opportunities within my organizations.

...rent/provide 10 or more temporary/R.V. housing units that are moved to Burning Man for 10 days and used 50 weeks a year for people experiencing homelessness.
...work to center the needs, concerns and knowledge of the homeless community in developing sustainable housing solutions.

...document & pass on all that I learn & do for Environmental & Climate Justice action.

...ensure that my local NAACP branch leads in the county’s Climate Action Plan.

...develop an environmental justice speakers group & write an environmental play for the African American community.

...initiate and support community driven climate adaptation planning across the urban communities in the Northeast!

...learn all I can about climate, environment, energy, and how it impacts marginalized communities. Make change happen!

...advocate for public policy to facilitate a new NAACP Social Hub at our branch property.

...promote workforce diversity standards for new affordable housing construction.

...establish an alternative transportation coalition to serve the needs of residents who cannot rely on personal cars for travel and advocate for changes to meet those needs.

...establish a different way to commute around my county and specifically to my local community college.

...identify avenues for community leadership in state and local climate and energy planning and policy.

...create a vision for resident services that centers racial equity and healing.

...establish working ECJ committee for my NAACP Branch and raising hell.

...continue to advance high road economies that are sustainable, economically just, inclusive, and democratic.

...follow up with participants to ensure that the ideas, synergies, voices, enthusiasm and inspiration are incorporated and uplifted in our national NAACP ECJ advocacy and policies. Your dedication and insight have been extremely helpful and will guide me in this crucial area. Thank you.
Policy Platform
Emerging from our conversations from convenings and working groups, we have begun to identify the foundation of a policy platform to center equity in the sustainable building sector:

- **Homelessness:**
  - All policies and programs must uphold a holistic approach for looking at the entire individual, not just shelter. This includes expanding funding and resources for mental health, drug rehabilitation, etc.
  - Those who are directly impacted, especially youth experiencing homelessness, must be represented by and lead decision-making groups, such as Homelessness Councils.

- **Housing & Economic Development:**
  - Projects to upgrade affordable housing must ensure the right to return and other protections for tenants.
  - The federal government must increase the availability of resilient and sustainable affordable housing through federal funding.

- **Transportation:**
  - All policies and programs advocating for Complete Streets and Vision Zero must center equity by focusing on the needs of low-income communities, people of color, wheelchair users, youth who bike, bike-based entrepreneurship, etc.

- **Energy Affordability:**
  - The federal government must increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), especially as current funding levels do not meet the high need, especially in Southern states. WAP dollars must include money for multifamily implementation support across states to ensure that this funding can be used for multifamily housing.
  - Governments must dedicate funding for those who don’t qualify for energy burden assistance programs.
  - Low-income households should receive energy efficiency ratepayer dollars at least equivalent to the dollars they put into their state/utility energy efficiency portfolio. Low-income customers often pay more in ratepayer dollars than they get back through programs designed to reach them.

- **Workforce Solutions:**
  - School renovation contracts must increase the participation and give priority to minority, women and disadvantaged business enterprises (MWDBE) in contracts and tie projects to workforce development/training opportunities in construction as well as higher-paid jobs such as architecture.
  - We reject a one-size-fits-all approach to programs and policy for workforce development. Program design and policies need to address barriers and provide support for participants through measures like coaching, transportation, childcare assistance, alignment of training with jobs and opportunities, early engagement with employers, retention services, fair chance hiring, and eliminating drug testing policies.
  - Workforce development begins with education and outreach, including youth education for Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) and education of the community about sustainable development.
**Environmental Justice**
- NAACP units and partners will mobilize around federal legislation to uphold environmental justice, such as the Environmental Justice Act of 2019 and other policies that protect lower-income communities against siting of harmful facilities, for example.
- Higher education degrees, professional credentials and certificates, and examination and licenses in relevant fields such as architecture, public policy, and law should require an understanding of environmental justice.
- Standards for sustainable materials and products must be defined as healthy for the environmental justice/fenceline and worker communities from which they originate.
- There must be sustainability and justice in re-homing programs for people after flooding disasters.
- Governments and other funders must prioritize school infrastructure funding for communities with dilapidated school facilities.

**Health**
- Incorporating health and health equity considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas.
Root Causes, Definitions, and Levers of Change

Evolution of the Sustainable Building Movement

Where did this movement come from?

Though humans have a long history of sustainable building practices – using local and renewable materials, adapting to the climate, building small, and capturing passive heat from the sun, for example – we remain reliant on many of the newer, unsustainable practices sparked by the industrial revolution – heavy consumption of fossil fuels, cheap manufactured goods shipped long distances, and abundant chemicals, for example.\(^1\)

While energy efficiency, solar power, and alternative housing approaches grew in response to the 1974 energy crisis, the size of the home continues to go up (i.e. McMansions). By the 1980s, the field of building science emerged to address significant health problems in buildings, such as mold and what is called “sick building syndrome.” United Nations reports in the early 1980s provided the first definition of the term “sustainable development.” In the early 1990s, warnings by scientists about global warming received overwhelming attention by the public.

There is no defining moment for the beginning of the “green building” movement, but generally the industry was launched by a small group of building professionals (primarily White American men of means) starting formally in the 1990s.

You may hear many different terms for sustainable buildings, such as “green,” “healthy,” “regenerative,” “high-performance,” and “living” buildings. While they represent different visions for buildings, these terms are often used interchangeably.

What does the sector look like now?

There are green building programs, green rating systems and certifications, and government mandates or incentives in many areas now, but in spite of that, conventional building is still much more common. A few hundred thousand certifications have been awarded among the more than 123 million buildings and residences in the country. Nonetheless, with more than $70 billion in revenue from green building projects in 2018, the sector continues to grow and have a significant economic impact.\(^2\)

Many states incentivize green building practices in affordable housing, but green buildings are still largely promoted in the context of luxury markets, serving more affluent, environmentally-minded builders, property owners, and tenants. Most sustainable buildings are commercial and new construction projects, leaving behind the vast majority of U.S. residents whose daily experiences are defined by residential buildings and older, existing buildings.
“We cannot neglect that we are in an affordable housing crisis in this country.”

The U.S. has only 35 affordable units for every 100 low-income people, and one in four African American households experience severe housing cost burden (spending more than half of one’s income on housing). Most low-income people live in affordable rental and multifamily housing. Today, there is not a single state, metropolitan area, or county in which a minimum wage worker who works 40 hours a week who can afford a two-bedroom apartment.iii

A wide range of more fragmented programs for renewable energy, energy efficiency, weatherization, and health interventions in buildings seek to tackle some of these challenges in low-income communities and communities of color.

Just as the environmental movement as a whole has fallen short on promises to diversify, so too has the sustainable building sector. As an example, we know that less than 2% of registered architects are African Americans, and less than 0.4% are African American women. These trends apply across the professions of engineering, construction management, planning, consulting, and more. There are significant barriers throughout the career ladder for underrepresented professionals.

**How is sustainability currently being defined by the mainstream?**

“The sustainable building sector has drifted away from the definition of sustainability that places equal weight on the environment, economy, and equity. Instead, green buildings are defined almost entirely by environmental impacts, with some mention of health impacts.”

It is common to hear the terms “social equity,” “quality of life,” and “green building for all” in the sustainable building sector. However, it is clear that there are some huge equity gaps in the actual requirements and norms of the sector. Universal design, affordability and access, social and economic inclusion, health equity for the groups at greatest risk, emergency management and resilience to climate change for those most impacted, fair treatment of workers, and cultural resonance are just a few other categories we would consider fundamental to sustainable buildings and development.

We should be asking ourselves what we want our buildings and infrastructure to sustain. At our 2018 Launch Summit for
the CESBS Initiative, one of our opening speakers spoke a very powerful truth:

“Sustainability without equity is sustaining inequities.”

Do we want to sustain wealth inequality, de-facto segregation, gentrification and displacement, health disparities, modern slavery, homelessness, land theft, structural racism, and an economic model of exploitation and endless growth?

We need to reimagine the possibilities for our buildings, transportation networks, food systems, and energy sources to transform our communities into hubs of justice, democracy, cultural vibrancy, and community well-being.

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Root Causes of Inequities in the Sector

Based on ongoing conversations of the CESBS Working Groups and the insights of participants at the Working Retreat, we put forward a synthesis of some of the many ways that inequities have been created and maintained in the sustainable building sector.

Inequity is not an accident; it is the result of systems that are designed for exclusion. At the very root, the United States built its wealth on the displacement of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of African Americans. Communities of color have been excluded from all types of decision-making and wealth-building over the generations, and nearly all institutions have yet to truly reckon with structural racism and reparations.

Segregation, redlining, single-family zoning, over-industrialization, and disinvestment in communities of color have exacerbated inequalities when it comes to housing and development. Lower rates of homeownership, income inequality, mass incarceration, and other factors maintain an enormous wealth and opportunity gap. Systemic racism is a legacy that persists and is very much alive today.

Climate change and disproportionate environmental burdens are a threat multiplier for communities of color and other groups who are and will continue to live on the front lines. Yet, historically, the environmental movement (and the sustainable building movement within it) has been dominated by a white, male, and elitist viewpoint. In recent decades, a choice was made to take a pro-business, market-based approach to sustainability, particularly in the building industry, which has limited the benefits of this movement to a limited few.

Without a broad diversity of people taking leadership and creating the rules, programs, and policies, the sustainable building sector will continue to uphold systems of exclusion and oppression. Even when invited to the table, members of frontline communities may be prevented from participating due to unsupportive engagement approaches and a history of trauma. Richer neighborhoods take advantage of environmental programs, while lower-income and renter households often cannot overcome barriers such as access to information, up-front costs, and complicated processes.

Simultaneously, the real estate market is driven by profit and expediency, rather than human need and dignity. Sustainable buildings are primarily new commercial and high-end residential
properties, which are marketed to increase rent and leasing costs. On the part of tenants and smaller, mission-driven landlords and developers, there is typically less bandwidth, expertise, and access to capital to prioritize sustainability. Local, state, and federal governments are not held accountable for their lack of investment, support, and safeguarding of the most marginalized communities. When investments and sustainability upgrades do reach communities of color, these communities often confront a very real threat of gentrification and displacement.

The notion of sustainability in buildings has narrowed to mean environmental sustainability. Within this, a focus on technical, quantifiable outcomes overshadows more nuanced health and social justice strategies. General awareness and education pathways into the sustainable building sector are more limited for communities of color. In turn, professional opportunities in the sector are passed along through existing networks and within unwelcoming organizational cultures influenced by implicit bias.

Finally, perceptions and narratives about sustainable building have kept communities of color from seeing themselves as part of this movement. Often, sustainability appears to be more expensive and/or require people to give things up.

What are the outcomes we see today?

Communities of color and low-income communities bear the brunt of the impacts of unhealthy, energy inefficient, and disaster-vulnerable buildings. Yet, these populations who are most impacted have the least access to decision-making, economic opportunities, and the buildings themselves within the sustainable building sector.

“We are dealing with legacy issues. They have impacted us for 400 years. We know the problems. It is time for solutions. African Americans owned 18 million acres in 1910; today, we own 1.8. We have to ask: How did people coming out of slavery own 18 million acre? Now, with a middle class, how do we not own that land?

We are now at a pivot point. Climate change has us at a point where we have to rethink everything. Our relationship to capital, the environment, land, to each other. We need to go from an extractive economy to reimagine and rebuild America with equity at the center. We need collective economics.”

Denise Fairchild
Levers of Change

Returning to Tradition

Many of the insights and practices that center equity and sustainability in buildings and development have existed within the African American community for generations. Community land trusts, for example, grew out of the struggle for civil rights and economic opportunity for African American families in the Deep South. Similarly, multigenerational living supports African Americans to claim and sustain family property, as well as increase social, economic, and environmental sustainability. These ideas, and others, are rooted in African American history.

Healing Spaces

Beyond financial support programs, there is a deep need for healing in low-income communities. While many people in affordable rental and multifamily housing love their communities, many also experience trauma of living in their communities. Healing might take the form of great design,
community involvement and ownership, thoughtful resident services, and recognizing that one size does not fit all.

**Reparations through Investment**

2019 marks 400 years since the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to the United States, specifically at Point Comfort and Fort Monroe near Hampton, VA, just a few miles up the coast from the location of our Working Retreat. The NAACP reaffirms and stands in favor of financial reparations to African Americans and those of African Descent in the United States that are descendants of the slavery and the Jim Crow Era. With reparations as the first step in repairing the devastation inflicted upon African Americans, we call upon institutions that benefitted from slavery to **invest in African American institutions and communities**. For example, universities with endowments in the tens of billions could invest just one percent in their sister HBCU institutions to green their buildings and nurture the next generation of African American professionals in the sustainable building sector. At a smaller scale, we have to think about the products and labor that make a building sustainable and invest our dollars into the small but emerging group of minority- and women-owned businesses.

“After 20 years working on climate, I am getting tired advocating for things where (even if we get them) we aren’t the investors.

*I promise we will outperform average. We have always been above-average people.*

*Where are we in the deal? I’d like to be the dealer.*”

*Felicia Davis*

**Health and Equity in All Policies**

In addition to combatting direct health hazards from certain types of furniture, carpets, cleaning solutions, and other materials, health must be addressed comprehensively when we think about buildings and development. “**Health in All Policies**” is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. This includes during the development, implementation, and evaluation of all policies and services. As health is influenced by one’s social, physical, and economic environments, our policies must address these “social determinants of health” that are the key drivers of health outcomes and health inequities. It will take collaboration between public health and equity experts with nontraditional partners who have influence over the social determinants of health.

At this moment, it is particularly relevant to track how the Green New Deal is being considered at the federal, state, and local levels. Social justice and health equity must be woven into the core of any legislation. We need to evaluate environmental and economic policies by how well they address people on the margins.

**Representation and Accountability at All Levels**

When we think about representation, we tend to concentrate our efforts around voting on Election Day. However, the political process is a **year-round process**. Beyond getting people into office, we must visit them during session, keep them aware when they are off-track, and engage in primaries when voters have more than once choice and can ask questions. Scorecards for CESBS could let policymakers know their constituents are paying attention.
“Why can’t the next HUD cabinet member be someone in this room?”

While it is critical to push for change at the federal level, change can trickle down and trickle up. Opportunity Zones in depressed neighborhoods, for example, are unlikely to be an opportunity for anybody without financial equity. We can both advocate to improve this federal program and seek to increase the leverage of people by increasing ownership. When it comes to homeownership, you have to be deeply involved in local politics and putting in place local programs for new homeowners.

Finally, we must bring equity into the conversation in all sustainable development circles. Even those organizations that consider themselves to be very inclusive can exhibit phenomenal exclusion.

“We have to be aware. Who knows who decides? And who decides who knows? Who decides who decides?”

President Lonnie Feemster

Local Organizing and Partnership

There is a major source of power beyond money and political office: people. The NAACP grassroots and our partners have power within local units, college campuses, faith institutions, and beyond. At the Working Retreat, we heard two inspiring examples. In San Angelo, Texas, the NAACP presented a first-time homeowner workshop in a local church with a funding partner and creative engagement approaches, including a play. Two people are now going through the process of buying a home. In Los Angeles, the local U.S. Green Building Council legacy project reinvests in communities with grants and professional support to allow residents to realize their own goals.

Intersectionality

Last, but absolutely not least, we remember Audre Lorde’s teachings:

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

We must be intersectional in our advocacy. For example, we must remember that there are different levels of privilege and access within communities of color. While some African American households have reached homeownership, trans men and women are not likely to be in that group. Our consideration of the sustainable building sector must extend to the workers and fenceline communities affected by the production of building materials, furniture, and other products, many of which are contain chemical hazards. As declared by our Working Retreat Mistress of Ceremonies, Denise Fairchild, intersectionality “is the new normal.”
Case Studies of Success Shared by Participants

The Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative (JPNSI) is a Community Land Trust (CLT) and housing rights organization committed to creating sustainable, democratic, and economically just neighborhoods and communities in New Orleans.

“What we call a home, other people call real estate.”

Khalil Shahyd

JPNSI was created as an alternative to the model of city development based on the priorities of white residents, increasing property and land value, gentrification, and displacement in a never-ending cycle of growth. However, property owned by African American communities has less value on the real estate market due to the legacy of racism and redlining. In addition, JPNSI was created in response to Hurricane Katrina, the most devastating climate event to hit the city almost 15 years ago. More than 100,000 New Orleans residents are still displaced, primarily due to housing and related policies.
“There is a penalty we pay for being the majority in our own neighborhoods, for reproducing our identity in our own neighborhoods.”

A group of friends got together with a small piece of property donated by one of the group to form the first CLT in the city. It originally consisted of eight apartments, but is growing with 20 more underway. Land trusts take properties off the market. JPNSI is located in the neighborhood of Mid-City, on the edge of a planned medical corridor that displaced an entire neighborhood and includes the abandoned, historic Charity Hospital that had been the only place in the state of Louisiana to serve pregnant African American mothers.

While it might seem counterintuitive to suggest that we shouldn’t allow our land to appreciate, CLTs automatically and permanently reduce the cost of housing. People can buy or rent the units at JPNSI. Land trusts are also a lower-cost way to help people who own their homes, but can’t pay the full cost of recovery from disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

Moreover, the CLT uplifts the practice of democratic governance. There is a community advisory board that requires at least half of its members to be renters from the CLT and the surrounding community, as well as more than half women.

New Orleans is a majority-Black and renter community, in which more than 68 percent of residents spend more than half of their income on rent. However, the JPNSI members noticed that most affordable housing organizations and advocates were white and did not come from their communities. JPNSI amplifies its efforts through renter advocacy across the city in order to update rental laws that have not changed since the 1820s during the time of slavery.

“One of the most unfortunate events during Recovery Master Planning process, we saw mixed-income multifamily housing was coded in brown on the map.”
The **Portland Clean Energy and Community Benefits Fund** (PCEF) is a grant program created by a local ballot measure that taxes one percent of the revenue of large corporations in order to raise $54-100 million each year for green jobs and healthy homes for all Portlanders. The initiative ensures that the city’s climate action plan is implemented in a way that benefits reach all Portlanders. As the first initiative in the country led by communities of color, the PCEF lifts up the voice of climate injustice in the African American community in Portland, which is only about one percent of constituents.

“When you start from the bottom, everybody rises. The African American community is the last informed and the first affected.”

*Reverend E.D. Mondainé*

Similarly to JPNSI, the PCEF initiative also prioritizes democratic governance. There is a 10-person committee to oversee the fund to ensure that the program upholds its racial equity framework. The implementation of the PCEF starting in 2020 is where the outcomes will be fully measured. However, the coalition behind the PCEF campaign has already begun lobbying against counter-initiatives and working with technical training programs to ensure there are wraparound services for participants to succeed. They call themselves “redline erasers.”

“The real magic is the power of the people. We the people are the people, the only people that can do it. You can never stomp out the power that people have.”

The Georgia Institute of Technology built one of the most environmentally advanced education and research buildings ever constructed in the Southeast – **The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design**. The Kendeda Building goes beyond sustainability to be a regenerative building that gives back more than it takes from the environment. As it works to achieve Living Building Challenge certification, the project must meet certain Equity Imperatives.
These include: reducing surface parking and large signage; increasing the number of windows and spaces dedicated to gathering, community, and beauty; adhering to accessibility standards; creating public areas; not blocking anyone’s access to fresh air, water, or sunlight; creating gender-inclusive restrooms; and working with socially-responsible companies.

While many of the practices in the certification focus on building design, Georgia Tech will extend equitable practices into operation by taking specific steps to create a welcoming environment, inviting others to use the space to advance discussions about diversity and inclusion, incorporate equity into the curriculum, and track equity through metrics.

In addition, Georgia Tech has many plans to give back to the community through programming and partnerships. An example is the partnership that the construction management firm Skanska forged with Georgia Works!, a local organization that trains formerly homeless individuals in construction trades and helps place them at job sites. Six Georgia Works! graduates helped build The Kendeda Building gaining skills that they applied in subsequent projects. For example, Skanska hired one of the individuals to work on a subsequent project.

Lastly, the project funded a faculty-student pilot project called the Living Building Equity Champions, which complements the work of Georgia Tech’s Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion. The 11 students who were selected as Equity Champions are serving as a cadre to push forward on the Kendeda Building’s ambitious equity goals, such as balancing campus security with inclusion, building relationships between students and workers, and more. The Kendeda Building involves both underrepresented campus groups, as well as off-campus community members in the building’s design, operations and programs.
The Barack Obama Green Charter High School in Plainfield, NJ, was established to prepare students to become resilient, productive and independent critical thinkers with a focus on sustainable development and leadership. In particular, the founder observed a need to welcome people of color and young people into the low-carbon green economy to work on key issues like conservation, food and water security, and climate change. At its launch in 2009, the school included 240 students in grades 9-12.

Within the surrounding community, 80 percent of residents in the school district experience poverty, the majority of residents are African American, and there is a large presence of recent immigrants particularly from the Caribbean-born. The charter school itself is nearly 100 percent minority students, primarily coming from failing schools and often two to four grade levels behind. Meanwhile, a large, white middle-class community tended to send their children to schools outside of Plainfield.

The charter school initially partnered with the Nature Conservancy and Duke Farms to offer environmental education and paid internships to its students, but realized that these programs did not connect deeply to social justice and speak to the students’ immediate needs. Therefore, school leadership sought to update the curriculum and move beyond student engagement to empowerment. Through student involvement in town halls about environmental and social justice, the school has rooted sustainability education in the firsthand experience of its own
community. Students raised issues that had not yet been addressed in the classroom, such as sex trafficking, educational and funding disparities in Plainfield, police brutality, and food justice. For example, students participated in a mapping exercise of their neighborhoods to identify assets and needs, noting the balance of fast food chains, churches, liquor stores, etc. In addition, students opened up conversation about gentrification and acknowledgment of Indigenous land rights when working on reforestation.

From there, students created a design and model in partnership with local architects to renovate their school to embody sustainability, eventually presenting their vision at a regional conference for school designers. Students met with City Hall officials and the new municipal Green Team to imagine how they could reimagine Plainfield once resources became available. Finally, the school engaged in an international STEM exchange program with Chinese students to collaborate in redesigning their school to be a green school.
The furthest east one can travel in the United States, Virginia Beach is a region of 1.8 million people and 385,000 square miles. About 18 percent of the population is African American, and their history goes back to the very beginning of slavery in 1619. Because of where Virginia Beach was located, it would have been a place where Africans resisted the institution of slavery by running away as maroons and hiding in isolated pockets. These communities eventually became African American neighborhoods.

The legacy of slavery and structural racism is seen in the way neighborhoods were formed and have been maintained. In every urban area like Virginia Beach, legal restrictions on movement and migration, such as redlining and restrictive covenants, stabilized African American communities. In addition, de-facto segregation by custom and tradition meant that people became accustomed to living in separate areas. Virginia Beach has 12 historically Black neighborhoods, including Atlantic Park, Burton Station, Mill Dam, Doyletown, Lake Smith, Newlight, Newsome Farm, Gracetown, Beechwood, Queen City, Reedtown, and Seatack. Seatack is the oldest ongoing Black community in the nation and operated independently through its own (and the first) life-saving operation prior to the U.S. Coast Guard and fire-fighting force, which benefitted Black and white communities. Many of these neighborhoods host Homecomings to bring people back.

There are many assets and examples of resilience within these communities. In particular, Black churches have sustained the traditions of their communities over the generations. These include capturing oral history and “Watch Night” services every New Year’s Eve (or Freedom’s Eve) to commemorate the enactment of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. The historic churches of Virginia Beach are some of the oldest in the country. Another key institution is The New Journal, the oldest Black newspaper founded in 1900. Lastly, Virginia Beach is very unique about housing. Rather than building housing projects, the city places low-income residents in housing stock across the city that is indistinguishable from their neighbors.

It is also important to remember the historical and ongoing oppression and struggle within the African American community in Virginia Beach. A visceral example was segregation of the
beachfront in Ocean View. African Americans were restricted to a colored-only beach, where there were numbers placed out into the water to indicate that they could not swim across the line to the white-only side of the ocean. More recently, veteran members of the Virginia Beach NAACP recount the dissolution of the Black community. With integration, builders and developers began changing the edges of Black communities until few are left. Ironically, professional Black architects and developers created two planned communities in Virginia Beach, but they were not Black communities. Moreover, residents recall that education at the Union Kempsville High School was higher quality before the City took over and disparities emerged.

At the 1989 Greek Fest, about 100,000 college students arrived at Virginia Beach for spring break, encountered unrest, and had their civil rights infringed. Until 2018, it has been a challenge for young college students to feel as if they are welcomed by the City, as hotels raised prices and even blocked students.

Finally, elders note that generations of African Americans working for the city government are apprehensive about speaking out about disparities. Outside of voting, they turn to organizations like the NAACP, the Hampton Roads Black Conference, the Human Rights Commission for the city, and the Virginia Beach International Ministers Conference to be the voices of city workers.

Local African American leaders seek to build a platform for environmental and climate justice by addressing health in affordable housing; reducing energy burdens; establishing incentives for developers and schools for green building; holding landlords and slumlords accountable; prioritizing small and minority-owned businesses in larger development contracts; and increasing education about flooding, weatherization, chemicals, and more.

“Environmental work feels like catching up. But we are catching up.”

Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond

Of course, prior to the settlement of European colonizers, Virginia Beach has a long ancestral history among Indigenous peoples. Among those who survived and remained active in the region to this day, the Nansemond are the indigenous people of the Nansemond River, a 20-mile long tributary of the James River in Virginia. The tribe was part of the Tsenacomoco (or Powhatan paramount chiefdom) which was a coalition of approximately 30 Algonquian Indian tribes distributed throughout the northern, southern, and western lands surrounding the
Chesapeake Bay. Living in settlements on both sides of the Nansemond River, the Nansemond (meaning “fishing point”) harvested oysters, hunted, and farmed in fertile soil.

When the English arrived in Powhatan territory in the early 1600s, several decades of violent conflict ensued with the Anglo-Powhatan Wars lasting from 1610 to 1646. In this period of time the English displaced the Nansemond from their ancestral land into surrounding areas. Members of the Nansemond tribal community reacted differently to the upheaval which caused a schism in the tribe. Some families assimilated to an English lifestyle while others adhered to a traditional lifestyle.

As political pressure increased in the lead up to the Civil War, a number of oppressive laws against people of African ancestry also affected people of Indian ancestry. Some protection was provided to the Nansemond still residing in the area through certificates for “people of mixed blood, who are not negroes or mulattoes.” By 1901, a Smithsonian anthropologist completed a tribal census that counted 61 households in Norfolk County. The Nansemond Indian Nation, recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the federal government in 1985 and 2018, respectively, serves cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

Today, the Nansemond continue to uphold and teach a belief that humans are just one part of the natural world, all of which contains a divine spirit that is to be respected. They managed the land to produce for all living creatures, integrating with the landscape rather than changing it to their advantage. They take only what is needed, giving thanks and respect to trees and animals that provide wood for homes and fire, flesh for food, and skin for clothes.

“We are the land ... that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life the Earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth. The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs ... It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is our self ...”
By acknowledging Indigenous people and their territory, we play a small part in disrupting and dismantling colonial structures. We must keep Indigenous people in the forefront of our plans, as they are rarely represented at the table of such forums. As recommended by our opening speaker, John Silver of the Nansemond Indian Nation:

*If I could leave you with anything to remember, when you travel back to your respective homes, consider familiarizing yourselves with your local indigenous history. Make connections and form partnerships with Native communities. We have come a long way, but, unfortunately, the first Americans are being left out.*

**Our Venue, the Brock Environmental Center**

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation built the Brock Environmental Center to engage, inform, and inspire generations about the environment and how we can all help Save the Bay. The Center, located at Pleasure House Point in Virginia Beach, Virginia, is among the first buildings in the nation to embrace energy and water independence. The Brock Environmental Center is designed to meet the strictest environmental standards in accordance with the Living Building Challenge.

Completed in late 2014, the Center produces 83 percent more energy than it uses through on-site solar panel and wind turbines. Therefore, it pays the minimum fee to tie into the grid each month. It is the first commercial building in the continental U.S. permitted to capture and treat rainfall for use as drinking water. The building also uses 90 percent less water and 80 percent less energy than a typical building that size. The Center features geothermal wells, waterless
composting toilets, and natural landscaping. Elevated 14 feet above sea level, it is also a prototype for coping with climate change in a region increasingly prone to flooding.

In the realm of equity, the Center was designed to be fully accessible to the public for recreation and education, with prominent outdoor gathering spaces, trails, office space for local environmental groups, and a multi-purpose room available to anyone. The CBF also partnered with the City of Virginia Beach and the Trust for Public Land to preserve 110 acres of once-private land and protect it from over-development as a city park. There are no gates that separate the existing trails on site from the Brock property.

Moreover, the building was designed to meet the latest federal regulations for accessibility and ensure that neighbors’ views would not be compromised. The project designer broke his leg in a bicycling accident 3 months before the Center’s construction was completed, and was bound to a wheelchair during the final construction and the building dedication. He completed the building punchlist, inspecting all portions of the building while in a wheelchair, and learned (the hard way) the importance of universal accessibility.

At the Center and as an organization, the CBF seeks to deepen its practices and policies for diversity, equity, and inclusion through a litigation program for social justice, educational programs, increased representation within the organization and its members, better outreach to minority populations, partnerships with HBCUs and faith institutions, and community grant
funding. Through the Working Retreat, the NAACP successfully advocated for the inclusion of Black-owned businesses for the Center’s approved caterers list.

*The lightbulb moment for me was to see all the different materials that go into this building. Components that are recycled, refurbished, reused. These are things that I want to do in Fort Wayne.*

*President Sheila Curry-Campbell*

### Knowledge Shares

Working Retreat attendees engaged in peer learning through mini workshops in which they taught knowledge and skills from their own experiences and work. A summary of various Knowledge Shares is below:

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<tr>
<th>Organizing on a Dime</th>
<th>Political Advocacy</th>
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<td><strong>By the Numbers</strong></td>
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| - Let’s talk about keeping some working capital in your project treasury. It takes 100 paid memberships of $30 each to make a NAACP branch. If you are brazen, you can petition the branch for .90 which would give your committee about $90 a year for the important work you do. If you wanted to send a mailer with a petition, alert or declaration to just 100 people it would cost you about $50 not even counting copies and envelopes which would leave you with $40 to do everything else for the rest of the year.  
- You don’t want to get your every cent from grants either. You want to set your own agenda and timeline, no strings attached. I won’t spend any time telling you how to chase grant money. | - Civic Engagement work in the NAACP is usually thought of as voter registration, getting out the vote, and voter education. The first two are necessary for effective political advocacy, but not sufficient for truly effective work. All too often Voter Education is thought of only as candidate forums or similar narrowly focused ballot issues. |
| **Learn to Earn**      |                    |
| - Have a product      | - Effective advocacy is a continuous activity and involves not only elected officials, but appointed and career persons as well. |
| - Always do an “ask”  | - Contact must be maintained not just with Black officials but others as well, including those who usually oppose NAACP positions. The latter may be key to certain issues and cannot be written off. |
| **Make a big splash with a small amount of cash** | - Remember “no permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests.” |
| - Glean in the fields | - You cannot rely on only the small cadre of Branch leadership, but must educate broader numbers about being involved on a regular basis. |
| - Be creative         | - Try to find some commonality and build on it. Sometimes some officials may support a NAACP position for a completely different reason than the NAACP. |
| **Whether near or far…earn some money where you are** |                     |
| - Make it a habit     |                   |
| - Don’t be obnoxious  |                   |
| **Have an annual fundraising event** |                |
| - A tea               |                   |
• Coffee
• Luncheon
• Dinner
• Bar-B-Q
• ...Whatever

Make sure to have presentations for your workers and key volunteers. Educate your guests and potential new members. Start your event with the history, and things your project has done. Don’t be shy. Point out unsung heroes. Include some music and entertainment. I like to use talent from area elementary and middle schools. Make sure you let them know in advance that you expect them to stay for the whole event and how you would like to have them dressed. Give time for awards/recognition. Seek donations (in-kind) from local businesses.

Don’t let other folks convince you to spend more than you have or will earn.

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Workforce Solutions

• It’s important that workforce programs balance their focus between careers and jobs. Both are important, have specific requirements, and have trainees that are pursuing opportunities.
• Workforce programs should be comprehensive and include the following components:
  o Community-based recruiting and outreach
  o Employer Engagement
  o Case Mgmt or trainee support
  o Transportation/Childcare/clothing and other needed allowances
  o Career Counseling and Placement Support
  o Retention Support
• Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) and Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) with workforce development requirements are important to include

Community Benefits Agreements

• Many struggle with the concept of Community Revitalization—transforming communities from Striving to Thriving.
• Successful methods of community engagement continue to be an area of challenge. They include one-on-one interaction, hosting multiple local forums, extensive social media, surveys, assessments, and photographic and video-based campaigns.
• Implementation of ECO Districts based on Equity, Resilience, and Climate Action is a promising success path, but requires dedicated resources.
• The Hampton Roads ECO District Project has engaged more than 120 individuals, 35 projects, and more than $1 million in direct economic contribution to the community to date.
• The Project is working to execute a Community Benefits Agreement with a
when approving projects, especially in communities of color.

- Develop and improve relationships with unions and other organizations that support apprenticeship programs.
- Hold those that run apprenticeship programs accountable to being inclusive with a specific focus on their ability to train, place, and retain job trainees.
- Assess and leverage workforce development participants for creativity and business competencies to ensure they are placed in the appropriate training programs.
- Ensure there are workforce development programs focused on developing diverse contractors.
- Other important areas of emphasis for workforce development:
  - youth engagement
  - create and train worker co-ops
  - engage early in new tech and innovation

- Steps to a successful agreement:
  1. Phase 1 Walking Audit and Company Identification
  2. Action Plan and Strategy
  3. Community Benefits Agreements using benchmark and best practices
  4. Formulate Pilot Initiative with five companies
  5. Action Plan for Full Scale Implementation Based on Pilot Results

Climate Action Planning in Communities

Issues/Challenges:

- Need a dual focus on climate mitigation and adaptation
- Need to bring in community from the start to ensure communities are becoming more resilient as a whole
- Make sure plans address other important community priorities (e.g., embodied greenhouse gas emissions in consumption, housing, health, adaption, etc.)
- Eugene, OR, considering climate impact fee—a progressive tax based on models of household consumption.

Solutions:

- Tax consumption based on consumption estimates and use funds to support the just transition (low-income energy efficiency and

Community Organizing & Outreach

- Know your personal limits and your partner organization’s capacity.
- Know your knowledge base, what you bring, and what others bring. Let knowledge guide the conversation.
- Commit and follow through.
- Within an organization, understand how internal culture affects the way you view a community and your work. For some, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (JEDI) is new. Use toolkits to engage internally and externally.
- Make equity more than just a buzzword
- You have to have one-on-one conversations to determine if an organization is good for your community, or if it has a savior complex that does not align.
- There is no wrong way to find frontline communities to engage with, but the best way is to initiate the
other efforts targeting a vulnerable populations)

- Call to action for NAACP leaders. Develop a toolkit to empower community engagement from the start.
- Local government should fund community engagement
- In addition to climate planning, we need local hiring requirements with a focus on minority-owned firms

Engaging with State Energy Offices and Utilities:

- Unfortunate but important to investigate your State Energy Office and utility to understand the specific offerings and opportunities in your area.
- Look at renewable energy portfolio standards in your state, or drive them forward if they don’t exist.

Racial Justice Frames & Transparency within Organizations

- Last year, the Energy Efficiency for All program for multifamily housing started a racial equity group.
- Two Brown Girls Consulting Cooperative helps organizations transform their impact and relationship to impacted communities.
- Firm 2 Brown Girls. Evaluation and Assessment
- Look at policies, goals and metrics that fit your work, and funding organizations’ capacity to participate.
- The JUST program is a voluntary disclosure tool for organizations from the International Living Future Institute. It assesses Diversity & Inclusion, Equity, Employee Health, Benefits, Stewardship, and Purchasing & Supply Chain.

conversation, let people feel their story, introduce yourself to someone else’s space, and acknowledge the history of African American communities.

*With, not for, communities.*
Focused Lens: Building Electrification & Equity

Following the CESBS Working Retreat, various participants participated in a post-Retreat workshop from Emerald Cities Collaborative to learn about and provide feedback on centering equity in the building electrification movement.

The momentum to usher in a new era of cleaner, healthier, all-electric new homes and buildings has gained steam in California in particular, with more than 50 cities either considering or having passed measures to accelerate all-electric buildings:

*Building electrification is gaining traction as California’s most affordable and effective tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from homes and buildings—responsible for roughly a quarter of the state’s emissions. Electrification can provide environmental and social justice communities access to the major benefits such as cleaner air, healthier homes, good jobs and empowered workers, and greater access to affordable clean energy and energy efficiency to reduce monthly energy bills, while helping the state meet its climate goals, including a net-zero carbon economy and 100 percent clean electricity by 2045.*

*Meanwhile, the cost of safely maintaining California’s gas system is set to escalate dramatically in coming years as increasing infrastructure costs and safety upgrades combine with a decline in demand as the state transitions away from fossil fuels to hit its climate targets.*

*The result will be higher costs spread around fewer customers - leading to significantly higher gas bills and prompting those with the means to do so to move off the system for financial, health, and environmental reasons. As this trend continues, gas customers who face barriers to electrification will need assistance to move to cleaner electric appliances to help shield them from the rising cost of gas.*

*While electrification has promising benefits for residents and for the state, the rollout of policies at both the local and state level must be undertaken equitably. Decisionmakers must ensure that environmental and social justice communities are supported to transition to all-electric homes and are given opportunities to weigh in on when and how this transition happens, rather than being left with polluting and increasingly expensive gas appliances.*

*A Public Utility Commission pilot program currently underway in the San Joaquin Valley illustrates what successful community-driven electrification decision-making can look like in practice.*
To learn more, explore the recent research and report from The Greenlining Institute and Energy Efficiency for All and follow Emerald Cities Collaborative.

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Thanks so much for the opportunity to participate in this energizing and inspiring event! I look forward to continuing to advance the partnerships and ideas that came out of these discussions!

*People before product (and profit)*

The NAACP is to be commended for this effort to get in front of the curve on energy footprint and insisting on equity being an integral and driving component of moving forward.

*NAACP has an important leadership role to play in advancing equity in the building sector, and they have now launched a powerful collective committed to long-term impact at the community level.*

I am thankful I had the opportunity to take part in this work. The deep dive into the existing issues of inequity that blight the built environment and environmental sustainability practices was necessary to design and develop solutions that could help right the course. The quantitative and qualitative data shared can help raise the collective consciousness of the industry and society at large. I now feel fully empowered to move forward with individual and collective actions to ensure communities of color are more than an afterthought.

Thank you to all Working Retreat attendees and CESBS Initiative participants your presence, enthusiasm, insight, and commitment to carrying this work forward in your communities and organizations.

To dive into videos of panels and speakers from the Retreat, visit our ECJP Twitter page.

To sign up to be a part of the CESBS Initiative for our mailing list or working groups, please complete our form here. Keep updated at our Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector webpage.

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