

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

RESOLUTION NO. 2018-108

Affirming Support for Environmental Justice and Encouraging the Adoption of an Environmental Justice Policy and Prepare an Environmental Justice Snapshot.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

1. Multnomah County serves a unique role as the guardian of our communities' public health, protecting the health of the environment for all communities is key to this role.
2. It is important to recognize the history of the land on which the County resides in order to understand the present-day impacts of our environment on our communities.
3. Our entire County rests on the homelands, villages, and ceded territory of the Indigenous Tribal Nations of this region; we acknowledge the loss of life when European explorers came to this country.
4. Numerous local laws, ordinances, and practices were codified between the 1850s and 1950s that limited the ability of people of color to live, work, learn, practice spirituality, or play, resulting in exposure to disproportionate environmental and health impacts. These practices included local exclusion laws which limited people of color from renting or owning homes and/or land wholly and later outside specific geographies.
5. Due to exclusionary housing practices in the County through the majority of the 20th century, the African American communities settled near industrial areas in NE Portland and in a lowland area adjacent to the Columbia River called Vanport. The former exposed generations of community members to substandard air quality and other pollutants. The latter resulted in the displacement of roughly 17,500 residents and 15 deaths during the 1948 Vanport Floods.
6. There are numerous additional examples of race-based exclusionary practices that resulted in the geographic concentration of people of color in areas exposed to disproportionate environmental and health impacts, including the brutal internment of Japanese Americans during WWII.
7. Race-based exclusionary policies extended to employment opportunities where jobs in the private sector for African Americans, notably, were limited to service personnel in hotels, restaurants, and office buildings as janitors, doormen, porters, bellhops, waiters and cooks.
8. People of color have been further impacted and continue to be impacted by environmental racism resulting in forced displacement. Notable examples include the siting of public infrastructure projects like Interstate 5, the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Legacy Emanuel Hospital or the Interstate Urban Renewal Area.
9. Today, areas of the County with higher proportions of low-income and people of color have fewer sidewalks, greenspace, transit service, and other environmental amenities.

10. The County's efforts to address environmental injustices builds upon a legacy of tremendous efforts led by people of color in advancing environmental justice. The County recognizes and

acknowledges the contributions by countless advocates that have led to the development of the historic 1994 Federal Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice, the 1996 Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, and numerous others over the last three decades that have advanced environmental justice.

11. The County's efforts to address environmental injustice builds on the County's prior and ongoing efforts to address institutional and structural inequities of people of color and other historically and currently underrepresented groups representative of the County's population. These efforts include, but are not limited to the County's 2008 Health Equity Initiative, 2008 Equity and Empowerment Lens, 2012 Equity and Empowerment Lens, 2018 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, and 2018 Community Health Improvement Plan.

12. Multnomah County defines the principles of environmental justice as:

- a. "Environmental Justice" is the equal protection from and equitable distribution of environmental and health hazards, burdens, and benefits.
 - i. "Environmental Justice" is intrinsically reliant on meaningful public participation in decisions that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn, practice spirituality, and play.
 - ii. "Environmental Justice" necessitates that environmental justice communities receive additional consideration in environmental decision-making due to historical exclusions that have resulted in disparate negative impacts, including but not limited to decreased air quality, access to green space, access to transit, and access to the renewable energy economy.
- b. "Environmental Justice" is rooted in response to a history of environmental racism whereby racial minority communities have been subjected to disproportionate pollution and other conditions and exposures associated with increased environmental risks.
- c. "Environmental Justice communities" are defined as: minority communities; low-income communities; tribal communities; and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes. Underrepresented communities may include those communities with significant populations of youth, the elderly, those with physical or mental disabilities, or those who identify as LGBTQ or gender non-conforming.
- d. "Meaningful public participation" requires sincere and well-planned attempts to create and maintain a space where community members are empowered to provide input, ask questions, and raise concerns regarding policies that will affect their environment. Well-executed "meaningful public participation" will result in a more comprehensive analysis of potential environmental impacts and is more likely to result in an equitable distribution of benefits and burdens of environmental actions. Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those most impacted by:
 1. Ensuring information is easily understood by those most impacted;
 2. Removing barriers to participation and taking measures to recognize that those most affected by the County's decisions are experts in their lived experience and provide insight that brings benefit to our entire community; and

3. Ensuring meeting times and locations are accessible with logistical supports in place for those most impacted.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Resolves:

1. To affirm the Board's support for the principles of Environmental Justice and desire to ensure that those principles are enacted in the work done by our organization.
2. To encourage the Chair to direct the Office of Sustainability and the Environmental Health Services Program of the Health Department to:
 - a. Develop and produce an environmental justice snapshot within 18 to 24 months of the adoption of this Resolution that highlights relevant indicators, current practices, and opportunities relevant to environmental justice within the County's work and areas of influence; and
 - b. Apply a lens of environmental justice in all relevant areas of its work, and continually search for opportunities to improve County practice to better align with the principles of environmental justice; and
 - c. Assure that relevant community partners have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the snapshot.

ADOPTED this 8th day of November, 2018



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Deborah Kafoury

Deborah Kafoury, Chair

REVIEWED:

JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By *Katherine Thomas*
Katherine Thomas, Assistant County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY: Hayden Miller, Constituent Relations & Policy Liaison, District 3