



## Environmental Justice Analysis + Executive Summary

### 1. Overview | Town of Truckee Environmental Justice Analysis

Included in the Scope of Work for the Equity and Wellness Institute (EqWI) was to develop an Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, and Accessible (IDEA) Action Plan for the Town of Truckee, and as a complement to that plan, an Environmental Justice (EJ) analysis and Executive Summary. This EJ Analysis + Executive Summary includes: 1) a definition of “environmental justice” and historical aspects; 2) data collection methodology; and 3) findings from the data collected, noting areas where the Town has made improvements and could potentially make more.

EqWI’s contract with the Town of Truckee and the associated Statement of Work specifically states: “The Staff included an EJ analysis into this project per Town Council direction given to staff during the adoption of the *Truckee 2040 General Plan*. The EJ analysis will be performed qualitatively and quantitatively, looking at the traditional data sources, while additionally interviewing community members and stakeholders to help identify the vulnerable communities in Truckee. While the CalEnviroScreen tool does not identify Truckee as a disadvantaged community, we understand that there are many underserved communities in Truckee. The EJ analysis will help inform the policies to be developed in Task 3, the IDEA Action Plan.”

The Town of Truckee identified communities facing the greatest inequities as: youth; non-English speaking; Latino/a/x (EqWI’s terminology: persons identifying as from Latin American or Caribbean descent); LGBTQ+; Indigenous peoples; senior citizens; people who are facing financial insecurity; people with disabilities and ambulatory challenges; persons experiencing homelessness; and veterans (veterans were added later in the process).

#### *What is Environmental Justice (EJ)?*

According to the [Ecological Society of America](#) (ESA), “Environmental Justice is understood in many different ways, but all definitions affirm the importance of equitable access to a clean and healthy environment for all people, as well as opportunities for meaningful participation in shaping healthy communities.”

[The National Resource Defense Council](#) specifically lays out the historical roots of environmental injustice, including impacts on communities of color and those facing financial insecurity:



*“Environmental justice essentially means that everyone—regardless of race, color, national origin, or income—has the right to the same environmental protections and benefits, as well as meaningful involvement in the policies that shape their communities. But rarely has this been the reality for people of color and those with low incomes. That’s because virtually all environmental injustice is shaped by the same patterns of racism and inequality that have existed in the United States since its founding and continue to influence every facet of our society, from education to housing to health care.”*

Climate justice is also part of this scenario. People who face the same vulnerabilities above also experience greater climate change impacts than do others with more resources and/or power. Rural areas like Truckee are especially vulnerable to rapidly changing and sometimes extreme weather conditions - as well as ongoing impacts of climate change.

## **2. Methodology**

For the overall information-gathering effort of the IDEA Action Plan and in alignment with the Statement of Work, EqWI reviewed Town documents and incorporated EJ-related questions into the staff survey as well as community and staff interviews. Since EJ issues are intersectional (i.e., they can cross economic, social, health, and environmental factors), EqWI also consulted with the Town’s GIS mapping analyst and mapping technician (see below) to develop an IDEA Action Plan Map (see below).

EqWI analyzed EJ data as it was being collected (from November 2023-February 2024), through an internal document review as well as various outreach efforts. The process included identifying key themes, findings, recommendations, and data sources, which resulted in the EJ Analysis. Research included the following components noted below.

### ***Internal Document Review***

Various internal documents for this EJ Report were reviewed – including the Town’s General Plan and the Climate Action Plan – to provide a framework for what is currently in place and/or intended for the future.

### ***GIS Mapping Project***

EqWI’s collaboration with the Town’s GIS Analyst and GIS Technician resulted in the [IDEA Action Plan Maps](#), which helped to provide data to inform the findings listed below. Specific maps include:

- Population density; medical facilities; grocery stores; transit stops; trails, parks, and



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open space; railroad and road noise extents; fire maps; fire hazard safety zones; flood zones; airport land use compatibility; and affordable housing -- with overlays of Census data for persons identifying as Latin American or Caribbean descent as well as proximity to the aforementioned amenities and hazards.

The mapping data can help the Town determine trends that will require continued attention. For instance, whether people who live in affordable housing and/or those identifying as Latin American or Caribbean descent have physical proximity to basic services, free transit, sidewalks (walkability), trails, recreation, grocery stores, and health care, or are near environmentally vulnerable areas (i.e., flood and fire zones).

### ***Survey Data***

As part of the data collection process, EqWI conducted a staff survey that included the following questions about environmental justice:

- *How do you see environmental issues (e.g., climate change impacts, historical and ongoing pollution, environmental hazards) impacting communities facing the greatest inequities in Truckee?*
- Out of the 84 people who participated in the staff survey, 38 responded to this question.

### ***Community Interviews (9 interviews, plus informal input from Promotoras/es)\****

\*Promotoras/es are community outreach workers serving people of Latin American and Caribbean descent

EqWI conducted over 20 confidential individual community and staff interviews, which included several questions about environmental justice and disaster preparedness, such as:

- *Are you or the population you serve familiar with the term “environmental justice”? (If so, provide a brief definition.)*
- *Does the population you serve have the resources they need to be outdoors (e.g., skiing, bikes, activities that require equipment)? If not, how could the Town help?*
- *Are you or the population you serve aware that the Town has a Climate Action Plan? Have you seen it and did you find the information accessible?*
  - *Do you understand or want to know more about how climate change impacts your area?*
- *Has the population you serve received instructions for emergency response plans from the Town?*

### ***Staff Interviews (12 interviews)***

- *Are you familiar with the term “environmental justice”? If so, how would you define it?*



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- *How equipped do you think the staff is to address equity issues and environmental justice challenges that the Town might face internally?*
  - *How equipped do you think the staff is to address equity issues and environmental justice challenges that the Town might face externally with the community?*

### ***Analysis of Findings***

EqWI conducts its data analysis through an IDEA lens that includes: qualitative and quantitative data based on the information gleaned above, combined with years of experience developing racial equity action plans (REAPs). The proprietary process includes the following:

- A thorough review of materials, interviews, surveys, and document findings, quotes, and emerging themes.
- Code data (that was repeated multiple times and in different forms) and integrated into EqWI's data analysis tracker by major findings.
- Recognize and identify universal concepts (identifying patterns while utilizing an equity lens) into overarching themes and findings.
- Develop the Environmental Justice analysis and IDEA Action Plan, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, IDEA Analyst, Assistant to the Town Manager, as well as the Department Heads.

### **3. Environmental Justice Findings**

The Town of Truckee has and continues to address environmental justice issues in current activities and future planning. People who face the greatest inequities will continue to require equitable access – whether it be financial or physical – to Town services. They will also require access to information about climate action plans, emergency response services, and low-cost or free and accessible services.

The Town has prioritized expansion of services and infrastructure to reduce the need for single occupancy vehicles, including offering fare-free fixed-route TART bus service, fare-free on-demand TART Connect microtransit service, a bike share programs, and expansion of bike lanes, multi-use trails, and sidewalks.

Survey respondents and interviewees mentioned some areas of concern regarding communities with the least financial resources would be most greatly impacted by climate change/weather events. Others noted that regulations placed on people in regards to electric car requirements,



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smog regulations, and the emergency response realm could be a barrier. People with limited financial resources may also not have access to the same recreational activities as do others.

Concern was additionally noted about how to communicate emergency response information, as the Town must take into account language barriers and the various communication devices and platforms that different groups utilize or have access to.

The findings listed below reflect areas that require further attention by the Town.

**Finding #1:** The term “environmental justice” is generally unknown or misunderstood by Town staff and the community.

**Finding #2:** Although the Town does not seem to be experiencing significant issues related to environmental justice, some improvements could be made to reduce physical and economic barriers for people who face inequities.

**Finding #3:** Town staff and the community do not have a full understanding of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and/or the Emergency Response System.

During the particularly harsh winter of 2022-23, recognizing that older units in the Town’s Mobile Home Parks were particularly vulnerable for structural failure due to snow load, the Town quickly took action to hire contractors to provide emergency rooftop snow removal for several mobile homes whose owners were not able to do so themselves. This is an example of a response that would have been difficult or infeasible to coordinate if not for the Town’s expanded capacity and focus on equitably serving the most vulnerable community members.

Since 2023, the has worked closely with the Tahoe-Truckee Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) coordinator to support the Access and Functional Needs Outreach Program. This provides targeted outreach and disaster planning for populations who have a disability or limited mobility, speak a language other than English, are under-resourced, and/or have other access and functional needs.