**Project Update**

Title: EJ Plan Summer 2021 Summary

Throughout the summer of 2021, I (Kimmy Chuang, iSEE intern, supervised by Meredith Moore) accomplished the following tasks to further the Environmental Justice Plan. Titles contain hyperlinks to files on Box.

1. **Compile** [**contact information**](https://uofi.box.com/s/wz8w9nta1q73k6t5b6o4k6pes93peeqf) **for focus groups**

Number and type of contacts were organized into the following:

* 1. Champaign Neighborhood Associations (16)
  2. Urbana Neighborhood Associations (8)
  3. Community Groups (10)
  4. Government Organizations (13)
  5. Social Justice Groups (8)
  6. Relevant UIUC Advisory Groups/Personnel (12)

Contacts were primarily found through Internet searches. Many of the groups were identified as relevant during Environmental Justice Committee meetings. Where possible or necessary, I’ve included notes and additional links.

1. **Research other EJ plans to draft** [**focus group questions**](https://uofi.box.com/s/pi1mrglejgx28zhi7sy6zcvmxzr4g7tt)

I drafted possible questions for focus group interviews through what I learned from the following EJ or similar Climate Justice Plans:

[City of Providence’s Climate Justice Plan](https://uofi.box.com/s/elavay4cu75r2alj44buwj7kthpnn0c4)

* First, trained frontline community members in energy democracy through workshops by working with One Square World (equity and sustainability process consultancy). Then, conducted interviews of frontline community members along with citywide survey (survey results [here](https://uofi.box.com/s/c2kzbv5m3oo4kby8ufcneajn48by0l9j))
* Favorite takeaway: Must fundamentally change the way policies are created and prioritize historically excluded communities. “Zip codes shouldn’t determine your health or economic outcomes.”

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO)

* Also hired consultant to conduct interviews and outreach
* One of their goals was “Base Building” where they have a local base of families, school/community/youth/labor/business leaders as well as strengthening coalitions with other EJ groups in the region
* Warren Lavey has worked with Kimberly Wasserman (LVEJO Director of Organizing)

National City Health and Environmental Justice Element (San Diego County, CA)

* First jurisdiction in California to adopt an EJ element and nationally recognized
* Contains useful definitions of “healthy food supply” and “universal design”
* Similar format to iCAP, ends every objective with “why is this important”
* San Diego county is currently conducting outreach for their county-wide EJ plan with an online survey that can be found [here](https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/environmental-justice-survey)

1. **Compile** [**contact information**](https://uofi.box.com/s/165mmj8hstu2dzt80qnltvpyh15huwp1) **of other municipalities with EJ plans**

For the plans I reviewed above, I collected contact information for each municipality into a spreadsheet. The EJ Committee suggested that we reach out to other municipalities that had successfully written EJ plans to inform our process.

1. **Review local engagement efforts to identify salient local environmental issues**

Meredith and I’s original goal for the focus groups was to identify 4-5 of the most salient environmental issues in our community that our plan should address.These are issues that have been identified multiple times during EJ Committee discussions or through my research:

1. Flooding (especially in the Garden Hills neighborhood)
2. Toxic waste clean-up (mainly in the 5th and Hill neighborhood)
3. Mahomet Aquifer contamination from Clinton landfill (allowing PCBs/toxic waste disposal)
4. Heating/cooling centers (climate change preparedness)

Through my research, I identified four local public engagement efforts that could be relevant for our EJ plan:

[Champaign County Community Health Plan 2021-2023](https://uofi.box.com/s/31cc0rawdjz8mi88zg8h7o4cbme7gthb)

* Champaign Public Health Department conducted 4 assessments, 2 of the following contained engagement with residents
  + Survey 634 community residents about strengths and weaknesses of the community – identified mental health, child abuse, gun violence, and infectious disease as top health concerns
  + 25 community leaders from different agencies brainstormed about major threats/opportunities that they perceived with various issues and filled out a survey. Some issues include climate change, Mahomet Aquifer threatened by Clinton landfill, toxic waste disposal, drought
* Appendix includes all surveys used
* Useful maps showcasing racial diversity and other important demographics

Storm Water Management Plan

* Identified their own EJ areas
* Contains survey about storm-water specific issues

Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District

* Currently soliciting feedback through customer survey [here](https://forms.gle/DbWCixHFHJjkfg4g7)
* May be useful for phrasing questions about environmental services

Urbana Comprehensive Plan

* Ongoing engagement [survey](https://imagineurbana.com/initial-survey/survey_tools/launch-survey) for Urbana’s new Comprehensive Plan, suggested for EJ by Scott Tess

Here are ideas from the iCAP as it was listed in the Appendix “Acknowledgements for future considerations” that may be relevant for EJ:

* 1. Reduce pollution in Boneyard Creek
  2. Identify places of heavy erosion, such as channel buffers and farms
  3. Implement curbside food and lawn waste pickup program for UC community to decrease per-household garbage volume
  4. Reduce mowing by 10% by 2022 to increase natural areas

1. **Start conversations with other community members about EJ**

Other than the Resilience iCAP Team and the EJ Committee, Meredith and I met with the following community members about EJ:

Gabe Lewis (Planner at CCRPC)

* Reached out through email and made him aware of EJ Plan efforts

Jessica Lehmkuhl, James Corbin II (Sustainability Advisory Commission)

* Met over Zoom, SAC is open to collaboration and want to be a part of our plan

Cassie Carroll

Met over Zoom about Cassie’s expertise in interviews/focus groups. The following are notes from our discussion:

* Suggested for us to reach out to Dr. Robin Jarrett ([rjarrett@illinois.edu](mailto:rjarrett@illinois.edu)) at UIC who has experience in Human Dimensions to develop training for interviewer and more
* Told us that charettes (multi-day interviews/workshops) had been conducted in Washington Street Basin (possible follow-up item for us)
* Start with organizations we’re friendly with who have a broach reach and start base building
* Need to clarify how we will follow up with people after interviews and how much they want to be involved
* We should get buy-in from groups so they can actively participate in what we’re working on
* Possibly incentivize focus group participation through offering lunch etc.
* Recommended having person from community to lead focus groups, but they will need training
* They had 7 people actively working at her job where they worked with Ameren to understand how people could be more connected to energy-efficiency jobs

**Moving Forward…**

In this section, I will summarize what I had hoped to accomplish this summer, why we weren’t able to do so, and questions to consider as the EJ Plan moves forward.

Initially, I had planned to conduct focus groups this summer and analyze the results. However, after discussions with Meredith and the EJ Committee, we decided to delay the focus groups until we had more thorough knowledge about the best way to conduct them. The following are questions we have in mind, but aren’t sure how to proceed:

1. Scope of the EJ Plan
   1. What is the geographic range of the EJ plan?
   2. The iCAP cites the urbanized areas of Champaign, Urbana, and Savoy. But since EJ goals may be different from the iCAP goals, how do we define which areas will be included/excluded in the EJ Plan?
2. Vulnerability Assessments
   1. The geography students working for Meredith in Spring 2021 submitted a report that used available data but did not identify specific EJ areas.
   2. EJSCREEN, Solar for All, the previous Storm Water EJ Areas, and the Champaign GIS consortium can all be used. EJSCREEN may be sufficient for identifying vulnerable communities. All data and maps gathered can be found [here](https://uofi.box.com/s/6jbuxutvee0lq11dertqjpqhjuhvhvxm).
3. Possible funding
   1. I researched groups in Illinois that have received Environmental Justice Grants from the EPA. There weren’t very many, but it may be helpful to reach out in the future
      1. Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO) “Chicago Healthy Homes Inspection Collaborative” (2016)
      2. Legal Council for Health Justice “Building Community Capacity to Address Lead Poisoning: Creating a Blueprint for “kNOw LEAD” App Development” (2019)
      3. Center for Neighborhood Technology “Helping the Chatham Neighborhood of Chicago Become Rain Ready” (2015)
4. Ownership of the EJ Committee
   1. Everybody on the committee is very passionate, but since they are all volunteering their time and have other commitments, it is sometimes difficult for anybody to take ownership on initiatives.

**Appendix**

Here are all the documents that were referred to in the report with hyperlinks and titled as they appear on Box:

* [“Summer Focus Group Interview Contact List”](https://uofi.box.com/s/wz8w9nta1q73k6t5b6o4k6pes93peeqf)
* [“EJ Draft Focus Group Questions”](https://uofi.box.com/s/pi1mrglejgx28zhi7sy6zcvmxzr4g7tt)
* [“City of Providence’s Climate Justice Plan”](https://uofi.box.com/s/elavay4cu75r2alj44buwj7kthpnn0c4)
* [“Providence EJ Survey Results”](https://uofi.box.com/s/c2kzbv5m3oo4kby8ufcneajn48by0l9j)
* [“Little Village EJ Plan”](https://uofi.box.com/s/j4z98voj5kb1d114w20cq93htsfplo0b)
* [“National City HEJ Element”](https://uofi.box.com/s/3pj442jjknkt42m8sp8our5dw69nfauh)
* [“Contact for Other Cities with EJ Projects”](https://uofi.box.com/s/165mmj8hstu2dzt80qnltvpyh15huwp1)
* [“Champaign County Community Health Plan 2021-2023”](https://uofi.box.com/s/f6vn45tntylrwk9pjspb7lxuze2ze83j)
* [“Storm Water Management – EJ Areas + Survey”](https://uofi.box.com/s/7nqtbfwbf7e93iktvfismsf6e95qc37a)