

OCCUPANCY

Measuring equity: Evaluating project outcomes

Community goals can be used to assess how well a project achieved its goal. It's important, when establishing goals, to discuss how to measure success. Community members should be part of establishing those measures and the timelines associated with them. Is the goal to build community wealth by creating retail spaces for Black- and brown-owned small businesses? Check in on the success of businesses for several years to understand how well the strategy performed.

Investing time, whether as part of contracted services or as a firm investment in future work, to understand what strategies were tried in a project, what they set out to achieve, and the reality of the achievement allows a firm to build a base of knowledge to effectively work toward more equitable communities. Consider if partnerships with universities or local nonprofit organizations are possible to both find grant funding to cover this phase of work and to engage with local residents and students to complete evaluations.

Stories are powerful ways to communicate impact. Previous projects' successes and impacts can be used to educate clients about the benefits of community participation. The [AIA Film Challenge](#) offers some compelling examples, often highlighting community benefits.

Consider:

Frameworks for measuring project health and impact exist. Enterprise Community Partners' 2020 Green Communities Criteria⁶⁸ distills into a checklist the items required for an affordable housing project to be resilient, place-based, rooted in community, and contributing to positive health outcomes. Pursuing Green Communities

"I think our profession often privileges the technical and aesthetic aspects of architecture in part because they are easier to measure and are more exciting to put in magazines or online sites like Instagram. Equitable communities work is so layered and complex that it's harder to measure, harder to tell the story of in terms of how a singular project on a single site moves the needle toward equity. And it's process heavy, which makes it harder to teach and harder to put in print."

— Emilie Taylor Welty

Certification builds a body of knowledge for sharing best practices and successful innovation.

Much work can be done within project scopes to mitigate systemic inequities in the built environment. Material selection, community involvement and participation, building partnerships and teams all have impacts on the type and quality of projects architects design and implement. It's also critical to understand the impacts that projects have within the communities.

i LEARN MORE:

- » [AIA Film Challenge](#)
- » [Equitable Development Frameworks, AIA](#)



King Open/Cambridge Street Upper Schools & Community Complex. Credit: Anthony Crisafu