



CITY OF ITHACA

108 East Green Street, Ithaca, New York 14850-6590

Shaniqua Lewis,

MEMORANDUM

TO: Common Council
FROM: Rebecca Evans, Director of Sustainability
DATE: April 17, 2024
RE: Justice50
CP#: N/A

Review of Justice50 framework and resolution



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 10, 2024
To: Common Council
From: Rebecca Evans, Director of Sustainability
RE: Resolution to Adopt Justice50 Framework

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional information on the resolution to adopt the Justice50 framework. Adoption of the Justice50 goals will support the City of Ithaca's commitment to ensuring the benefits of the Ithaca Green New Deal are shared among all local communities to reduce historical social and economic inequities, as described in the Ithaca Green New Deal (IGND) resolution adopted in June 2019. More information on the process and proposal can be found in the recording of the [September 2023 meeting](#) of the Sustainability & Climate Justice Commission.

PROJECT HISTORY, BACKGROUND, & ANALYSIS

The Common Council adopted a resolution accepting a local [definition of climate justice communities](#) in May 2022 (pg. 12). This definition supplements the NYS and federal definitions of "Disadvantaged Communities". The criteria used to inform this definition were then used to map climate justice communities by census tract and neighborhood. We expect to bring a plan to collect additional local data for Council's consideration in the coming months.

The background work to inform the Justice50 framework began in 2019, shortly after the adoption of the IGND. Under the leadership of Building Bridges and the Dorothy Cotton Institute, project partners collected and analyzed information about the community's hopes and expectations of the IGND and how its "justice-related" work could impact their lives. Additionally, for a year beginning in 2022, staff researched best practices and met with industry experts, including the U.S. Dept. of Energy, UCLA, the U.S. Digital Services Justice40 working group, the USGBC, and local activists, education, and non-profit leaders. These conversations with local and national experts informed the development of the proposed Justice50 framework.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- A need for increased democratic engagement across all local communities
- A need for balance in the City's investment in local communities
- An ongoing need for transparency, accountability, and participation in government processes by the public

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS & FUNDING

The Justice50 framework will require a percentage allocation of the City’s budget to ensure equity in its financial investment in infrastructure and programming. Additionally, it proposes an additional 10% allocation of the City’s capital project budget for participatory budgeting, which is subject to a public voting process. The total dollar amounts earmarked for fulfilling Justice50 goals will vary depending on the budget year.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Near unanimous feedback on how to structure the Justice50 framework was to prioritize direct financial investment in priority or disadvantaged communities. This is considered the leading practice in achieving community equity.

NEXT STEPS

If Council chooses to adopt the Justice50 framework as written, the next steps for staff are to:

- 1. Create a “rubric” to determine if proposed capital projects serve climate justice communities, ensuring that 50% of total funds are directed to those communities. This will be implemented as part of the FY 2025 budget process.
- 2. Organize and implement a community-wide survey to collect additional climate justice community determination data in fall 2024.
- 3. Identify and periodically track themes and investments in capital project budgeting for City Manager review.
- 4. Create a working group of community members and local leaders tasked with proposing a structure and implementation plan for participatory budgeting.
- 5. Present the draft participatory budgeting proposal to Common Council no later than May 2025.

STRATEGIC THEME

Justice50

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

- Establish a minimum investment floor of 50% of total IGND program funding to be allocated to serving Climate Justice Communities (CJC), as defined by the City of Ithaca.
- Establish a goal of 40% of participants in green jobs workforce training and development to identify as climate justice individuals, including populations that do not meet the CJC criteria but still experience substantial economic burden, such as individuals who were formerly incarcerated, those without reliable internet access, and underemployed single parents.
- Establish a minimum investment floor of 50% of the City’s total capital project budget to service Climate Justice Communities.
- Allocate 10% of the City’s capital project budget to participatory budgeting, which will be designed in collaboration with community members.

FRAMEWORK’S PROPOSED PRIORITIZATION RUBRIC CRITERIA

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Health & Safety	Project reduces or eliminates health hazards like traffic/vehicle accidents, hazard exposure, or illness

Neighborhood Benefits	Project positively affects quality of life for the neighborhood (e.g. improves visual appearance, reduces noise, reduces air or water pollution, improves recreation, eases commute, etc.)
Distributional Effects	Estimated groups impacted, duration of impact, and any “downstream” impacts.
Public Perception of Need	Projected or realized public support or advocacy group interest in the project.
Alignment with Council Priorities	Project is aligned with Council’s stated legislative priorities for the given year.
Leveraging Partnerships	Project proposal leverages partnerships with outside agencies/organizations that increase funding or project capacity.
Essential Services	Project provides, repairs, or enhances access to services essential maintaining public health, proper nutrition, adequate medical services, or reliable energy.

RESOLUTION to Adopt the Justice50 Framework and to Operationalize Climate Justice in the Ithaca Green New Deal

Whereas, the City of Ithaca has demonstrated its desire and commitment to be a leader in sustainability and social equity, as exemplified by the adoption of the Ithaca Green New Deal; and

Whereas, the City of Ithaca has further demonstrated its commitment to social and racial equity and sustainability, as exemplified in the Comprehensive Plan, Plan Ithaca, and the City's 2017 Assessments of Fair Housing; and

Whereas, to fulfill the social equity ambitions of the IGND, a transformative effort must be made to prioritize populations that have been historically marginalized; and

Whereas, current and historic marginalization can manifest in ways that are not well-represented solely by income and therefore the City accepted a local definition of Climate Justice Communities in May 2022; and

Whereas, the effects of climate change may combine with other current and historic social and economic stressors, becoming a threat multiplier and disproportionately impact vulnerable population groups; and

Whereas, prioritizing Climate Justice Communities for municipal investment may result in a more equitable distribution of the economic, social, and environmental benefits of the IGND among all residents; and

Whereas, the Center for American Progress has provided guidance on implementing the federal Justice40 program under President Joe Biden, which seeks to advance environmental justice and economic opportunity across the United States; and

Whereas, in 2019 the State of New York signed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA or Climate Act), which committed New York State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure 35% of all energy and climate investments are directed to Disadvantaged Communities; and

Whereas, the UCLA Luskin School for Public Affairs and Innovation released guidance on the equitable implementation of the federal Justice40 program that prioritized direct financial investment over trickle-down benefits; and

Whereas, participatory budget program have proven to increase government engagement among traditionally difficult to reach communities such as communities of color, immigrants, and youth; therefor be it

RESOLVED, that the City of Ithaca commits to enforcing the Justice50 program, a whole-of-government approach to implementing the IGND in a way that benefits all residents; and

RESOLVED, that the City of Ithaca hereby adopts the Justice50 policy framework, consisting of the following elements:

- Establish a minimum investment floor of 50% of total IGND program funding to be allocated to serving Climate Justice Communities, as defined by the City of Ithaca
- Establish a goal of 40% representation in all green workforce training and development program by climate justice communities, including populations that do not meet the CJC criteria but still experience substantial economic burden, such as individuals who were formerly incarcerated or underemployed single parents.
- Establish a minimum investment floor of 50% of the City's total capital project budget to service Climate Justice Communities, as defined by the City of Ithaca
- Allocate 10% of the City's capital project budget to participatory budgeting, which will be designed in collaboration with community members; and

RESOLVED, that City staff are directed to create a capital project prioritization rubric and reporting structure; establish and populate a working group on participatory budgeting; facilitate meetings of the working group; and provide periodic tracking and/or reporting of Justice50 progress to Common Council; and

RESOLVED, that the City will continue to support the development and implementation of strategies to accelerate the development of programs to meet the goals established in the Ithaca Green New Deal.