

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT DIALOGUES

**Summit Purpose**

Convene various stakeholder groups to identify priorities and ensure that CCRPC’s equity work is informed by the lived experience and perspectives of a broad range of people who live or work in Chittenden County

**Summit Agenda**

Time	Activity
8:45	Gather
9:00	Welcome
9:15	Introductions - <b>Table Conversation 1</b>
9:30	Working Towards Equity & Justice in Chittenden County: Snapshot of Local Efforts
9:45	Undoing the Racist Legacy of Planning
10:05	<i>Break</i>
10:10	Issue Discussion - Planning for Equity - <b>Table Conversation 2</b>
10:55	<i>Break</i>
11:00	Role & Impact of Regional Planning Commissions & CCRPC
11:20	Recommendations for CCRPC - <b>Table Conversation 3</b>
11:50	Closing
12:00 noon	Adjourn

**PARTICIPANTS**

Approximately 75, including students, community members, planners, and municipal leaders.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

[Summit Flier](#) | [Participant Guide](#) | [Facilitator Guide](#)

# Feedback from Participant Dialogues

## RECOMMENDATIONS/POTENTIAL ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

In Table Conversation 3, participants were asked to share their ideas for actions or strategies that CCRPC and its partners can take to help Chittenden County make progress towards building racial and economic justice.

### Community/Stakeholder Engagement (15 comments)

Engaging community members and stakeholders was the strategy most commonly noted by participants. There are barriers that exist which limit public participation in the planning work that happens in communities. Participants shared specific suggestions to overcome these barriers such as: providing stipends, reaching out to specific groups, providing translation services, and offering multiple ways for people to participate.

*“We need to have honest conversations on race and increased engagement of BIPOC residents in planning.”*

### Embedded Equity Work (10 comments)

The next strategy that was mentioned most commonly by participants was the need to embed equity work throughout organizational structures. Equity audits and the application of an equity lens should be applied to all aspects of planning and development, and that the CCRPC could potentially assist municipalities with this work.

*“Incorporate our equity goal within other goals (housing, economic development, transportation), rather than simply having equity as its own goal tacked on to the end of a list.”*

### Local/Municipal Initiatives (10 comments)

In addition to ensuring an equity lens is applied to all future planning and development work, participants noted the need for local/municipal committees or groups that would provide

oversight. Committees such as the Burlington Racial, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee were referenced.

*“It would be great to hear more about the accomplishments of various committees or boards that are addressing racial equity at a municipal level.”*

### **Policy Change (10 comments)**

Making lasting, systemic change also requires work at the policy level. Specific examples included changes to Act 250, the banking and lending system, and protection for renters.

*“[The] system needs to change, not the BIPOC community. Change the system so that BIPOC can feel more comfortable and not like they need to go super far out of the way to just get the same benefits as someone who is Caucasian.”*

### **Zoning and Development (7 comments)**

Many participants also identified areas for improvement in current zoning and development rules and regulations. Examples included: Easing requirements for water and sewer permitting, making it easier to build accessory housing units and looking at municipal minimum lot size requirements.

*“In addition to tax incentives, maybe direct construction subsidies for affordable and accessible units”*

### **Education and Communication (5 comments)**

Several participants pointed out the need to educate the public, planners and commissioners, in a clear, transparent way that avoids jargon, provides a shared understanding of the issues, and offers concrete examples of what change could look like.

*“Understanding of fair housing laws is crucial (can the CCRPC help?).”*

### **Concrete Investment (5 comments)**

Several Summit participants suggested concrete investments as a strategy for change. Examples included using funds from the American Rescue Plan on equity issues, hiring an organization to give equity related feedback on projects and initiatives and more general investment on housing and schools. Participants encouraged the city of Burlington to consider making concrete investments in equity related programs, such as affordable housing and schools with the millions of ARP funding.

*“The areas where rich people are living are nicer – roads are nicer. Go where we live and the roads are bad and it is not as nice. Why? Need better planning. Understand that infrastructure is not changing but give help to people. Disparities in housing and health.”*

### **Board/Leadership Diversity (5 comments)**

Participants of the Summit relayed the need for more diversity on local boards and municipalities and emphasized the importance of including voices of folks with lived experience in positions where local policies are made. It was also noted that compensation is a key component of ensuring diverse participation.

*“Undo structural racism within government by having people of color as decision makers in those governmental systems.”*

### **Accountability (3 comments)**

A few Summit participants raised the importance of accountability and asked that processes that are in place be reviewed at regular frequencies with an equity lens. A desire to hold city, municipal and state governments accountable to equity policies that currently exist was also shared by participants.

*“There needs to be more accountability in the design (referring to Burlington’s REIB Dept or the States Office of Equity and Inclusion) that currently exists for “quasi” government entities at the county level.”*

### **Environment v Housing (2 comments)**

There were a few comments from participants related to environmental preservation and how they interact with development. Innovative solutions are needed to balance the need for dense,

mixed-use communities to address the housing affordability and shortage in Vermont with environmental and climate concerns.

### **Transportation (2 comments)**

Participants noted that transit-oriented development in our downtowns and village towns can help address housing challenges by allowing for the creation of more housing options in walkable communities that are accessible to public transit. A suggestion was also made for CCRPC to review other transportation organizations in similar settings for ideas and best practices.

### **Uncategorized (5 comments)**

The following suggestions were made by participants that did not fall into any specific category noted above, highlighting the participants' desire to have CCRPC prioritize equity in their work.

- Compounding effect. Even if you change what's happening today, it will take generations to take effect
- Once CCRPC has capacity, support folks sitting in staff and volunteer spaces with a specific focus on equity work with others in the region similar to the housing commission convening (e.g. equity commission convening or equity liaisons convening)
- Revolution!
- No development in Vermont. Kids say it is a dead state. We need development or kids will leave.
- Affinity spaces – safe spaces for LGBTQ/BIPOC groups

## CONDITIONS HOLDING THE PROBLEM IN PLACE

In Table Conversation 2, participants were given the opportunity to analyze a planning challenge with an equity lens and identify conditions holding this problem in place, with the intent of gathering feedback to inform CCRPC's thinking about how to embed an equity lens in their planning work.

### Housing (27 comments)

Participants overwhelmingly identified housing as a condition that is holding the problem in place. Although cost and access to housing were noted most frequently, participants also noted housing policy, stigma towards renting, and second home ownership as contributing factors to the housing challenges in Chittenden County.

*“Housing is expensive because developers are made to pay for sidewalks and parks as part of their developments. This is something we do in New England, not other places in the country. Impact fees, open land requirements, sidewalks, roads, etc. cause the price of housing to be very high because developers pass on this cost to the home buyer. Then there are association fees that the people in the new developments pay for maintenance. Municipalities also have to hire more people and buy more equipment to maintain all the new paths and sidewalks. In Denver, homeowners are responsible for clearing the sidewalks in front of their homes or after a certain amount of time receive fines.”*

### Zoning and Development (10 comments)

Many participants of the Summit indicated that Zoning and Development laws contribute to holding the problem in place. It was noted that Zoning laws are designed to restrict and can be prohibitive. Participants reflected that preferences for single-family homes and larger lot sizes are factors that can be changed to encourage more multi-unit housing to be built which will help the housing supply challenge.

*“Zoning is prohibitively restrictive. To incorporate diversity and tackle housing affordability, zoning needs to change.”*

### **Banking/Lending Structures and Practices (7 comments)**

Banking and lending structures and practices were noted by several Summit participants as a condition that holds the problem in place. Lack of credit history, creative lending practices, and regulation were mentioned as contributing factors in preventing immigrants and BIPOC individuals from access to home loans.

*“Banks won’t loan money to you if you don’t have a credit history but as an immigrant how do you get that?”*

### **Community/Stakeholder Engagement (7 comments)**

Several Summit participants believe that robust community and stakeholder engagement can have a positive impact and help gather creative ideas and solutions to many of the problems that affect the BIPOC community. It was also noted that concrete investments such as stipends and flexible scheduling must be made to ensure robust and regular community engagement.

*“People that have needs are working more, but can’t speak out b/c working”*

### **NIMBY (6 comments)**

The Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) phenomenon was noted by several Summit Participants as a condition that is holding the problem in place. Often residents of a neighborhood, who will likely have more resources, challenge affordable or denser housing in their local area which contributes to the lack of diversity.

*“Because of homogeneous neighborhoods, it makes it challenging to see how other neighborhoods are faring.”*

**Policy Change (5 comments)** Participants noted several places where policy change is needed in order to alleviate the racial disparities in housing and home ownership in Vermont. Updating curriculum, planning for growth and more equitable housing and development policies were noted examples.

*“Policy change is needed...[but] policy change is slow”*

**Education and Communication (4 comments)** Participants pointed out that there is a lack of consumer education about processes like banking/lending, as well as a need to help people understand the ways that structures and past practices like zoning regulations have created unequal access to housing.

*“People get angry and want change, but then zoning changes...are resisted by the community...”*

**Environment vs. Housing (4 comments)** A number of participants identified the struggle between preservation and development that exists in Vermont.

*“Can we be green and have development? We want green spaces, but we also need development to address the affordability crisis.”*

**Income (2 comments)** The disparity in income between BIPOC and white Vermonters was identified as a condition that is holding these issues in place.

*“[My] income is not allowing me to get the housing we want.”*

**Uncategorized (14 comments)** The following suggestions were made by participants that did not fall into any specific category noted above, highlighting the wide range of conditions that contribute to racial disparities in Vermont housing and home ownership.

*“There is so much happening in our system...this is a long game”*

- Need help with heating costs, help to fund schools.
- Consumers have real power.
- Vermont is owed a lot of money that could be given to communities. Tina Cook is building the data and evidence to show us. PA is doing a good job of allowing the money to flow to communities.
- How do we level the playing field and open opportunities to everyone from a local standpoint?
- Politics are messy, how do we get direct action?
- Race and national origin can be used as one of several factors for determining program services, benefits, loans, grants, etc. It cannot be the primary or only factor for consideration. Quotas are not ok.
- Rural towns have difficulty with applying some of these efforts/communicating across isolated areas.
- Continued devaluation/disinvestment in/for communities with people of color by white people/acceptance of the status quo.
- Legacy/history of racism perpetuating the situation.
- County level government is non-existent, non-elected.
- There is a psychological impact from all of this.