

Introduction

Rep. Fue Lee and John Huot, thank you for allowing me to speak and provide written testimony today before the MN House Capital Investment Committee. My name is Linda Garrett-Johnson and my background is as an Organization Development/Certified Lean Six Sigma Process Improvement consultant. I have over 25 years' experience in this space. My focus has been on **authentic community engagement** which means engaging communities in two-way, continuous conversation in policy and planning, creating spaces for all voices to be able to influence key decisions that impact their life. It uses strategies that would facilitate the community feeling that the project and/or initiative is being developed with them, versus happening to them.

Overview

After a brief, high level look at the Capital Investment process, I believe that in order to achieve equity in Capital Investments you must address how funds are made available and distributed. When we say “achieving equity” we mean understanding how State Capital Investment resources are being directed and utilized in State Agencies and Local Units of Government. For example, it would be asking questions like does a project or initiative meet the community's standard for equity. It would ask for examples of how a Project and/or Initiatives identification included engaging BIPOC community using strategies beyond just having them react to a proposal, but getting them involved in identifying Projects and/or Initiatives so they are helping to inform and design the Project and/or Initiative.

This would also include:

- Reviewing the Bonding application and application process
- Setting equity expectations for Project or Initiative Identification
- Authentic culturally appropriate engagement of the BIPOC community, as well as unengaged/marginalized communities, in project identification and selection at the Local Unit of Government level
- Utilization of an **Equitable Development Scorecard**, both for State Agencies and especially for Local Units of Government
- Recognize that most Local Units of Government are not managed or administered by BIPOC Leadership, so there most likely is a gap in equity lens in the identification of projects
- Providing equity technical assistance and guidance to both State Agencies and Local Units of Government

NOTE: There is a Scorecard that was created by Twin Cities, MN community leaders to ensure that the principles and practices of equitable development, environmental justice, and affordability are applied in all communities as they plan for economic development and wealth creation that benefits everyone. I can help you get access to the Scorecard.

Closing

Conversations that focus on understanding how BIPOC communities are impacted by Capital Project decisions are not intended to divide, it is intended to educate. And sometimes these conversations can be difficult to have (and to hear).

Let me leave you with a few examples. Consider how zoning policies and planning in suburban communities may have unintentional consequences on BIPOC and other marginalized people. For example:

- Development of housing - in ways that might be exclusionary to specific income levels (making them unaffordable)
- Development or redesign of parks and green spaces and whether those projects are occurring in areas that are close to mobile home communities or older apartment complexes

For more information, please contact Linda Garrett-Johnson at lgjcommunitybuilder@gmail.com. You can visit my website also <https://www.applytheword.com>