

Metro DNA Equity Discussion
December 14, 2016
DU School of Social Work

What value, if any, is there in using an equity lens when discussing data?

- Identify gaps in the data
- Values the insights of diverse and often marginalized communities—builds a level playing field
- Helps to connect with the understanding of diverse perspectives about the outdoors
- Helps explain and hopefully overcome the different levels of access to nature that different people have
- To overcome barriers to access, we have to understand how they are perceived
- Unmasks assumptions about nature and access to it (e.g. a given feature, like a park, is not automatically a benefit if not perceived to be one)
- Maps showing concentrations of high density and low incomes suggest greater need for resources
- Helps clarify our concepts—e.g. we need to define “engage with nature” in a way that is meaningful to all people
- Because one size does not fit all, we must use an equity lens to look at the data or else we will end up recommending solutions where they are not valued and/or perpetuate the inequitable distribution of resources
- The definition of “quality nature” is inherently subjective and requires an equity lens to make sense of it
- An equity lens is necessary because of the inequitable distribution of resources to begin with—the lens helps reveal this reality so we don’t miss it
- An equity lens drives toward reasons for direct engagement with diverse communities, which is critical for long term effectiveness for this effort
- Helps explain, and potentially might help address, complex patterns like gentrification—where greening an area can displace current residents
- It diversifies the conversation
- Decisions Metro DNA makes should reflect diverse perspectives, so taking an equity lens when viewing data helps promote this
- More sustainable solutions will result from broad understanding and buy in

What additional data should be captured to inform our work through an equity lens?

- Not just dominant data, but also stories—gather qualitative as well as quantitative
- Ask people explicitly what they want in their communities—how they define quality nature
- Gather existing sources of data from large cultural institutions—what are they already collecting?
- Information about the nature of barriers—physical, but also in terms of money, comfort, time, etc.
- Baseline data about who is using public spaces now—start with current use, understand that, and move into planning
- What are goals and what are needs—e.g. people’s needs for garden space vs. mountain bike trails
- Measure both external and internal measures of success—how many people are reached but also who is in the room

- Whatever new data gets collected, Metro DNA will need diverse partnerships to collect it
- This quickly connects with issues of housing and transportation—keep it all linked
- Collect data about the ethnic makeup and background of communities

Other advice and recommendations

- Metro DNA needs to use an equity lens in planning meetings—e.g. teachers, residents, low income people won't be able to attend 1:00 meetings on Wednesdays at DU
- We need to take on complex issues around gentrification—these are critical issues related to this work
- We need to invite neighborhood groups, not just large nonprofit orgs