

AN EQUITY ACTION GUIDE

# Creating Thriving Communities in Colorado



**COLORADO**

Office of Health Equity

Department of Public Health & Environment

**2018**

DEDICATION

Dedicated to those who made this report possible. Thank you to the people of Colorado for sharing your experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of our partner agencies who participated on the Advisory Committee.

We wish to extend our gratitude to the many individuals, representing a variety of perspectives, who took the time to read and respond to this report.

This report was funded by generous support from the Public Health National Centers for Innovation and Telligen Community Initiative. We thank them for their support and acknowledge that the conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily reflect their opinions.

Thank you to One K Creative for helping us creatively tell the story of Coloradans through the design and layout of this report. Together we are catalyzing conversations.

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**ACTION ALERT!**  
Keep an eye out for this bullhorn symbol noting action steps you can take today. Turn to **page 52** for a full list of suggestions.

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The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment acknowledges that generations-long social, economic and environmental inequities result in adverse health outcomes. These inequities affect communities differently and have a significant influence on health outcomes. Reducing health disparities through policies, practices and organizational systems can help improve opportunities for all Coloradans.



MISSION

Build partnerships to mobilize community power and transform systems to advance health equity and environmental justice.

VISION

Every Coloradan has equitable access and opportunity to thrive regardless of who they are or where they come from.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE



ACHIEVING EQUITY IS UP TO ALL OF US.  
WHETHER YOU ARE A COMMUNITY RESIDENT,  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, GOVERNMENT  
STAFF, OR IN PHILANTHROPY—YOU ARE IN  
THE EQUITY BUSINESS.

## Letter from the Advisory Committee

*How can we work together to remove barriers so Coloradans can thrive rather than just survive? Shouldn't all Coloradans have the opportunity to reach their full potential?* It is with these questions in mind that we came together to lift up the voices of Colorado communities and research ways to take action. We are an advisory committee representing a variety of agencies, bringing the perspective of various social identities and lived experiences; and coming from diverse communities all over the state. Above all we value the experiences of Coloradans and formed this partnership to catalyze conversation and inspire innovation that will create opportunities for all Coloradans to thrive.

We began by asking you, Coloradans, about your concerns and how you'd take action, because we understand that numbers and stories are powerful ways to depict these experiences. And, we also realize the importance of proposing actions and solutions to ensure that as we move forward Colorado policies, systems and programs create conditions where all Coloradans have the opportunity to thrive, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

These pages tell the complex and interwoven stories of the economic, social and environmental conditions that create health and well-being. Many inequities in Colorado are avoidable and the result of historical laws and rules that created an unequal distribution of money, power and resources. For too long we have applied solutions without including the voices and perspectives of those most impacted, or considering the unique needs of different groups of people. This means we have missed critical opportunities to foster honest dialogues about historical injustices. This

Equity Action Guide aims to present a more inclusive picture, and by doing so, we hope a more equitable vision for all Coloradans.

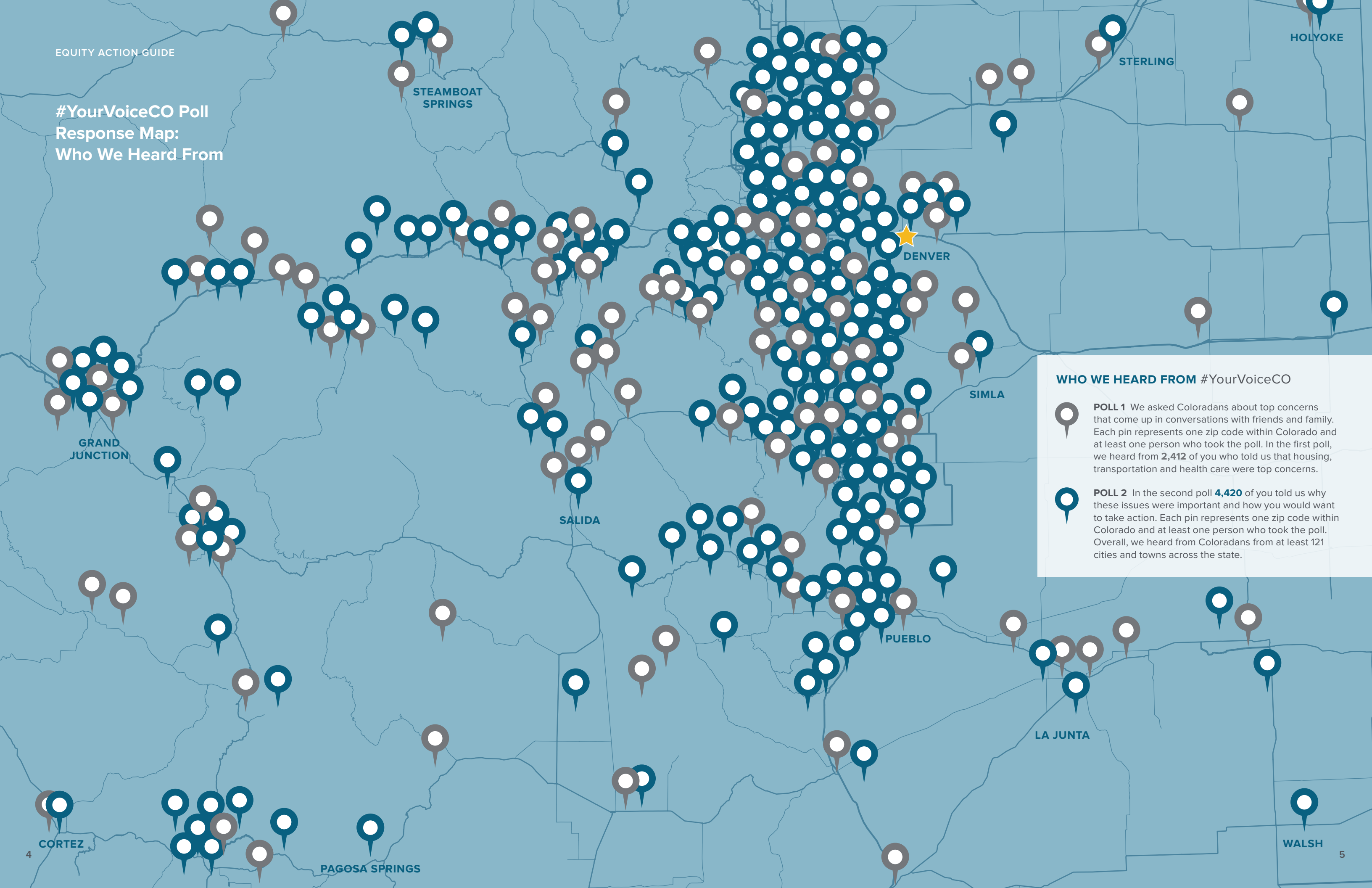
Achieving equity is up to all of us. Whether you are a community resident, organizer, government staff, or in philanthropy—and whether you work in the field of housing, transportation, education, criminal justice, or something else—you are in the equity business. This Equity Action Guide is just one step toward future change, but we urge you to start a conversation about equity within your families, communities, and organizations today. You'll find a bullhorn symbol throughout this guide indicating suggested action steps you can take—they are also summarized at the end. In addition, we've bolded terms that are often used when talking about equity and defined them in the glossary. So let us know how you're using the Equity Action Guide to start a conversation about equity and take action in your community with #YourVoiceCO.

We are under no illusion that there is a quick fix to the inequities we face. But we are confident that by working together and being fearless and tireless partners in our efforts, Colorado can lead the nation in achieving equity and justice.

Thank you,

Handwritten signatures of the Advisory Committee members, including Angela Rayner, Andrew C. (C. C.), Kellyn Redhouse, and others.

#YourVoiceCO Poll  
Response Map:  
Who We Heard From



WHO WE HEARD FROM #YourVoiceCO



**POLL 1** We asked Coloradans about top concerns that come up in conversations with friends and family. Each pin represents one zip code within Colorado and at least one person who took the poll. In the first poll, we heard from **2,412** of you who told us that housing, transportation and health care were top concerns.



**POLL 2** In the second poll **4,420** of you told us why these issues were important and how you would want to take action. Each pin represents one zip code within Colorado and at least one person who took the poll. Overall, we heard from Coloradans from at least 121 cities and towns across the state.



## Chapter 1

# Executive Summary: Inequity Hurts All Of Us

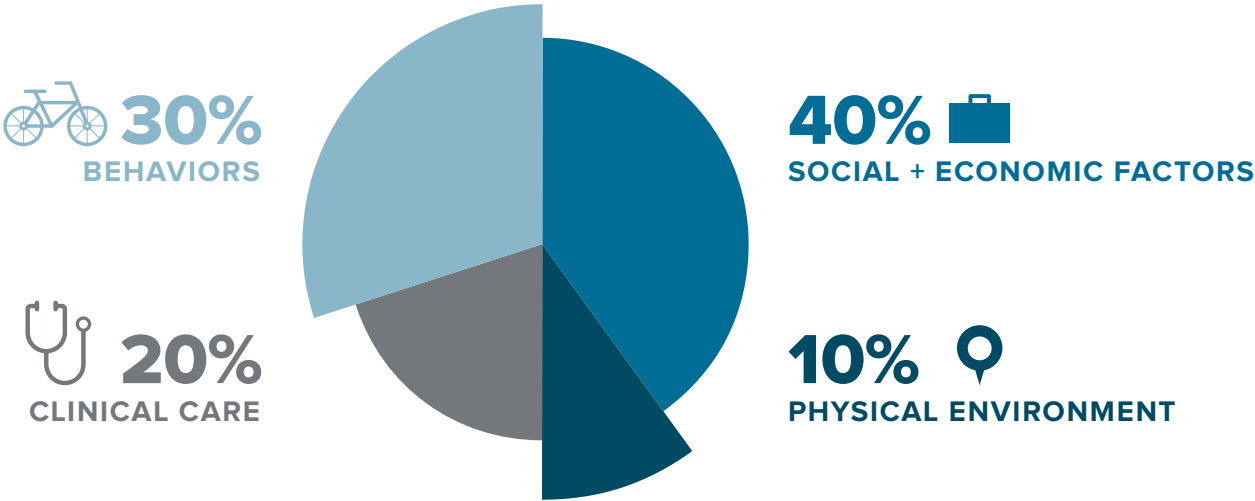
Health and well-being are created in the community by people like us working together to ensure no one is treated unfairly or given fewer opportunities because of who they are or where they come from. Where we live, work, learn and play determines nearly 80% of our health.<sup>144</sup> While individual responsibility is important, the choices we have available are determined by environmental, social and economic factors. And these factors are linked to social norms and systems that have left many of us behind. Not all communities have had the opportunity to participate in the making and telling of our collective history or to shape what we experience.

There are many ways to tell the story of our past and who we are today. But we know that only **Coloradans**, in their own voices, can tell us the whole story.

To highlight the stories of Colorado communities and create this narrative, the Colorado Office of Health Equity collaborated with partners across the state who make up our Advisory Committee. Using online polls, we asked Coloradans what concerned them most in their daily lives and how they would choose to take action. Coloradans told us they were most concerned with how the cost of homes, available transportation and health care costs affect their quality of life. Coloradans also told us how this shapes their ability



**HEALTH IS MORE THAN HEALTH CARE** When we say where we live, work, learn and play determine nearly eighty percent of our health, we mean that data shows factors like income, education, and neighborhood determine our opportunities, including the choices we have.<sup>144</sup> And the choices we have determine our health behaviors. All of these combined ultimately determine how healthy we are.



to get to work, breathe clean air, eat nutritious foods, feel safe in their communities, and ultimately, to remain healthy. Anonymous quotes from Coloradans who responded appear throughout this report.

Hearing these concerns, we reviewed a wide range of data and literature to learn more about the inequities in housing, transportation and health Coloradans described. We learned that behind these inequities are policy decisions that have given less opportunity to some communities over others based on factors such as age, race, gender identity, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation and where we live—just to name a few. **Our research revealed that the most well documented inequities are based on race, and so these are the ones we are able to highlight here.** Together, the voices and data we gathered and examined tell a story about how racial inequities in particular have shaped our Colorado communities.

But more data need to be collected on inequities based on other factors, like age, gender, sexual orientation, etc. And while our polls gathered information about the experiences of Coloradans from across the state, we acknowledge that these experiences don't represent everyone's story. This is just the beginning, and we invite you to contribute to telling Colorado's story.

Although history has shaped inequitable policies, we have the power and responsibility to reshape our

future. Because when a system is designed equitably, it works better for everyone. Research shows that when government entities enact equity-focused programs and policies, there are many economic benefits because residents have more chances to prosper and contribute to society. For example, studies show:

- Regions with more equity experience stronger, sustained growth
- Health equity can lead to big cost-savings from reductions in health care spending
- All citizens are healthier when a region has lower economic inequality
- Regions with less racial segregation could see greater income, lower homicide rates and more bachelor's degrees.<sup>139, 109</sup>

WHAT IS AN EQUITY APPROACH ABOUT?

EQUITY <u>IS</u> ABOUT	EQUITY IS <u>NOT</u> ABOUT
Meeting people's needs based on their unique circumstances to create success.	Giving everyone the same. This is equality.
A process and results that are both fair and just.	Having good intentions with no follow-through.
Removing barriers so everyone can thrive.	Helping people survive.
<i>What you do and how you do it.</i>	Doing something just to get the job done. Checking the box.



**ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT + FUNDERS**  
Invest in closing data gaps, including collecting data on inequities based on demographics such as gender, sexual identity, age, and others.

COLORADANS LIKE YOU, SAID YOU WOULD...

"ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY EFFORTS."  
"CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS."  
"WORK WITH COUNTY GOVERNMENT TO EXPAND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS."  
"VOTE FOR DIFFERENT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS."

An equity approach often "levels the playing field" based on different starting points and needs in order to remove barriers to opportunity. Addressing inequities is important for the health, resiliency and longevity of Coloradans.

For Colorado to thrive, we need everyone's skills and potential. Neighborhood development, like new housing, bike lanes, grocery stores or new restaurants, is not a bad thing. But in order to avoid creating greater inequities for Coloradans, it is critical for community voices to weigh in on decisions about how we use our land and what we develop so that we can proactively prevent displacement. This means understanding the history and needs of existing residents and making sure development projects give everyone the opportunity to live in strong neighborhoods. Our most effective strategy is to reshape our future in partnership with communities most impacted by inequities.

And Coloradans are ready to act. You told us you want to take action in various ways, such as voting on ballot issues, talking with friends and family, and contacting officials or participating in town halls. You want to create more opportunities for home ownership and reliable transportation so you can remain connected to your communities. By focusing on community-centered development and promoting healthy neighborhoods, we can give all Coloradans the opportunity to have a strong future.





## Chapter 2

# Home Is More Than Where The Heart Is

Our health and well-being—as both individuals and as communities—continue to be impacted by the events, decisions and experiences of the past. Many historic laws, policies and practices have given fewer opportunities to certain communities for generations. When this happens to groups of color, we call this **structural racism**. But because these systems were created by people, it is also people like us who have the power to change them. We have the power to advance equity and create a Colorado that is vibrant and healthy for us all. First, we must understand where we've been and how we got to where we are today.





## Inequitable Policies Have Impacted Colorado Communities Throughout History

This timeline highlights some of the major historic events and policies that have harmed Coloradans.

1830

### Displacement of American Indian Communities<sup>44,127,143</sup>

Land has been systematically taken from American Indian communities across the U.S., including in Colorado, throughout our country's history. For example, the **Indian Removal Act of 1830** was used to displace native communities from tribal lands.

1930s

### Deportation of Mexican-Americans<sup>105,108</sup>

Colorado residents and farm workers of Mexican origin, including immigrants and U.S. citizens, were deported due to **racial and economic tensions**.

1942–1945

### Japanese Internment Camp in Colorado<sup>7</sup>

During World War II, one of the internment camps detaining Japanese Americans was **located in the small town of Granada** in southeastern Colorado.

1964

### Making Redlining Illegal

Redlining was made illegal with the 1964 Fair Housing Act, however, **families of color still feel the impacts of redlining today**.

1800s

### Anti-Chinese Riots<sup>42</sup>

Anti-Chinese riots in Colorado mining towns displaced many to Denver, where **racially motivated violence** continued, including during the 1880 Denver anti-Chinese riot.

1934

### Redlining is Established

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) began the practice of **drawing red lines on maps between neighborhoods to separate communities**. Redlining marked neighborhoods where families of color lived as undesirable.

1945–1950s

### Denied GI Bill Benefits<sup>147,166</sup>

After World War II, returning military veterans who were **not white** were **denied the opportunity to receive homeownership loans**.

2008

### Predatory Lending<sup>100,149</sup>

**Predatory lending practices fueled the 2008 housing crisis** and could be considered modern-day redlining.





In 1934 the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) began the practice of drawing red lines on maps between neighborhoods to separate communities. This legal practice was named *redlining* because the FHA would draw red lines around neighborhoods to mark them as undesirable and “risky” places for home builders to build new homes. These were the same neighborhoods where families of color lived. When home builders wanted to build new homes the FHA would only give them money to build far away from these neighborhoods. Banks also used these maps to deny families of color loans to buy homes in these newly built neighborhoods. Even our military veterans who served in World War II and who were not white were denied the opportunity to receive homeownership loans.<sup>147,166</sup>

These discriminatory practices took place in Colorado as well. Throughout Denver neighborhoods, families of color were forced to live in separate neighborhoods that were not improved by the development of affordable homes, schools, grocery stores and parks.<sup>17,71,148</sup> In fact, building restrictions, also called *zoning laws*, allowed industrial factory sites to be built in neighborhoods where families of color, instead of in neighborhoods where mostly white families lived.<sup>147</sup>

Redlining prevented low-income Colorado families, including people of color, from being able to buy homes and choose where they wished to live. It also prevented developers from improving neighborhoods where families of color lived. This separation is called **neighborhood segregation**. This meant the neighborhoods that saw improvements such as new and safe homes, grocery stores, good schools, and parks were areas where white families lived.<sup>147</sup> Neighborhood characteristics such as parks aren’t simply something that is nice to have. Research shows that naturally green spaces and outdoor recreation provide important opportunities for exercise and managing stress. Furthermore, when parks are well-maintained, neighborhood crime rates can go down.<sup>160</sup>

"MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE CONCERNED WITH GENTRIFICATION, DISREGARD FOR THE HOMELESS, HAVING NO REGULATIONS FOR PREDATORY/DISCRIMINATORY DEVELOPMENT AND RENTALS."

—COLORADAN

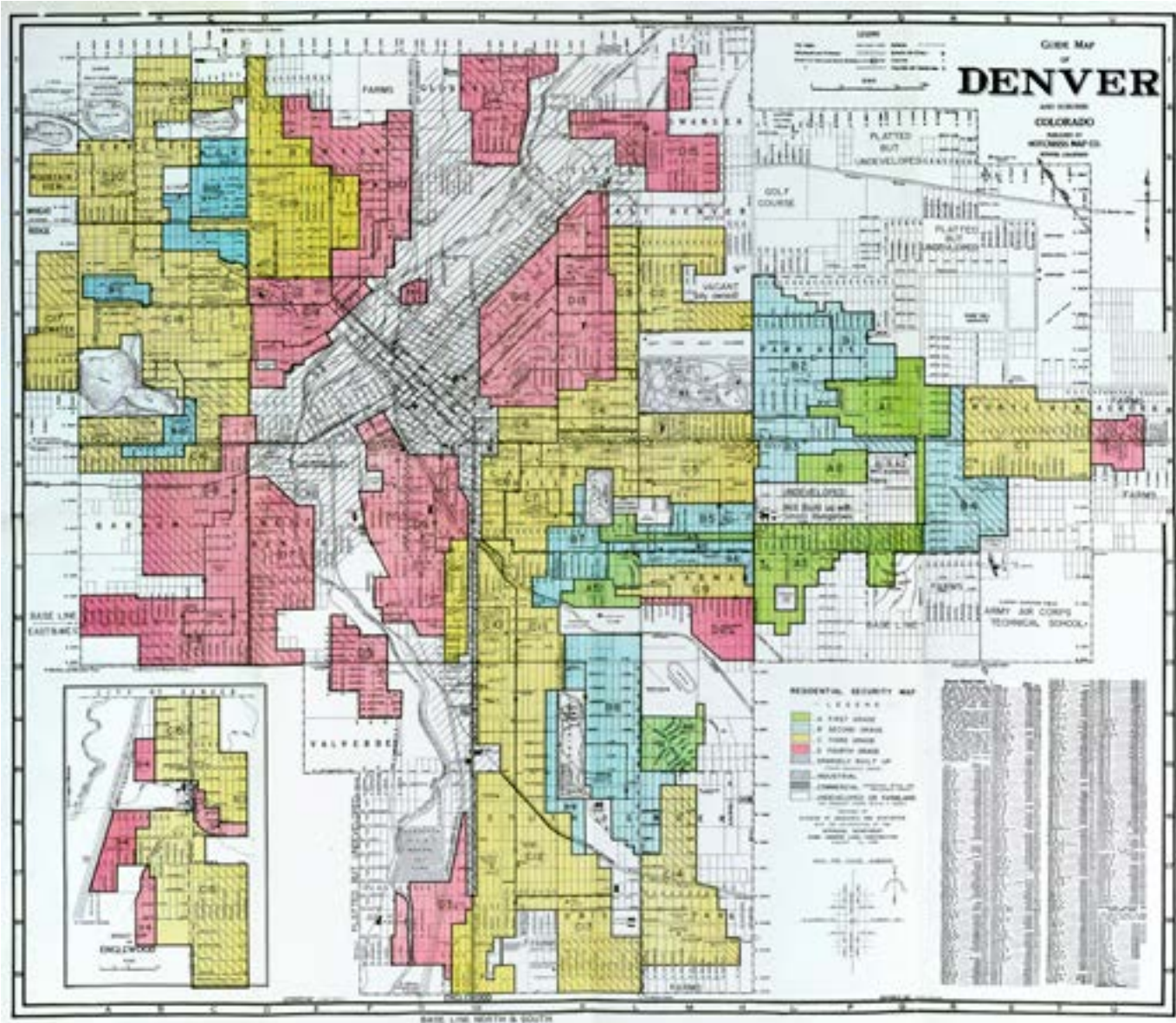


**ACTION FOR INDIVIDUALS**  
How does redlining connect to your story? Your family’s story? Your neighborhood’s story? Share these stories with organizers and elected officials.



**ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT**  
Ask questions by using an equity impact assessment. For a list of suggestions, refer to The Colorado Office of Health Equity’s *Checking Assumptions to Advance Equity*, found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools>.

HISTORIC MAP OF REDLINING IN DENVER <sup>71</sup>



Although redlining was eventually made illegal with the 1964 Fair Housing Act, families of color still feel the impacts of redlining today. Because redlining denied families of color home loans, they were unable to have the opportunity to build wealth through homeownership. In the United States, wealth and financial stability are tied to homeownership.<sup>94</sup> Removing opportunities for homeownership diminishes a family’s opportunity to be financially and economically healthy, which can have negative impacts on overall family well-being. We also start to see an effect across generations because children whose parents and grandparents lived in redlined neighborhoods are more likely to grow up in these same neighborhoods today.<sup>23,150</sup> Additionally, we know that today, families of color are still denied mortgage loans to buy homes more often than white

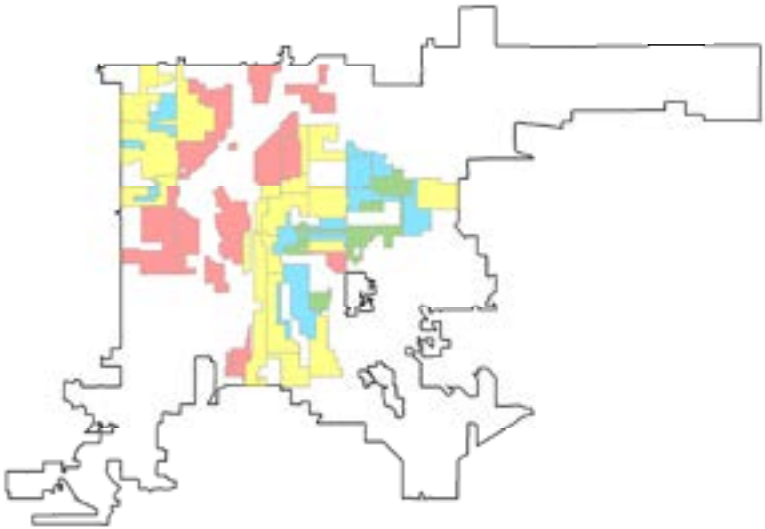
families.<sup>94</sup> Predatory lending practices fueled the 2008 housing crisis and could be considered modern-day redlining.<sup>100,149</sup> Outside of Denver as well, restrictions were placed on where people could live because of how they looked. Historic policies and practices kept communities of color from owning farm land and homes. For example, covenants across Colorado placed restrictions on property ownership based on race.<sup>102,169</sup> Families of color in rural Colorado also experienced loss of land and displacement. Land has been systematically taken from American Indian communities throughout the U.S., including in Colorado.<sup>44,127,143</sup> These historic losses have contributed to ongoing disparities in mortgage lending and homeownership rates on tribal lands across the country.<sup>90,143</sup>





**PRESENT-DAY IMPACT OF REDLINING** Compare the historic map of redlined Denver to the current maps of Denver below. Do you notice any neighborhood trends with the Denver maps on these two pages? Do you notice certain Denver neighborhoods that consistently have darker shades across maps?<sup>183</sup>

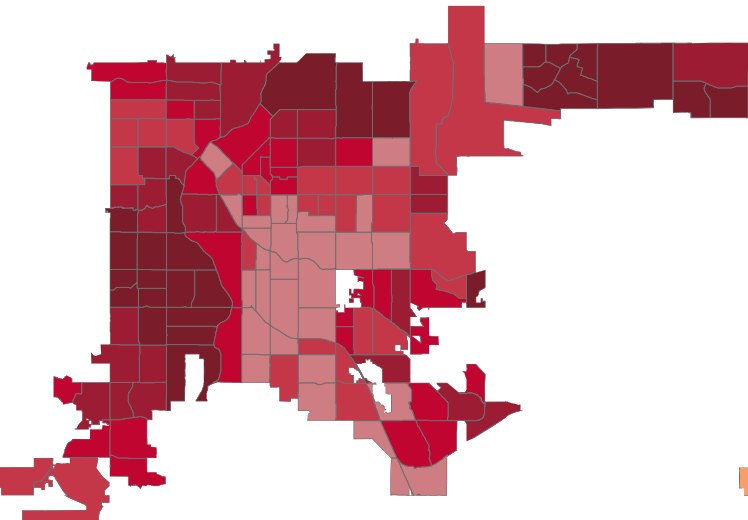
WHERE HISTORIC REDLINING TOOK PLACE IN TODAY'S DENVER



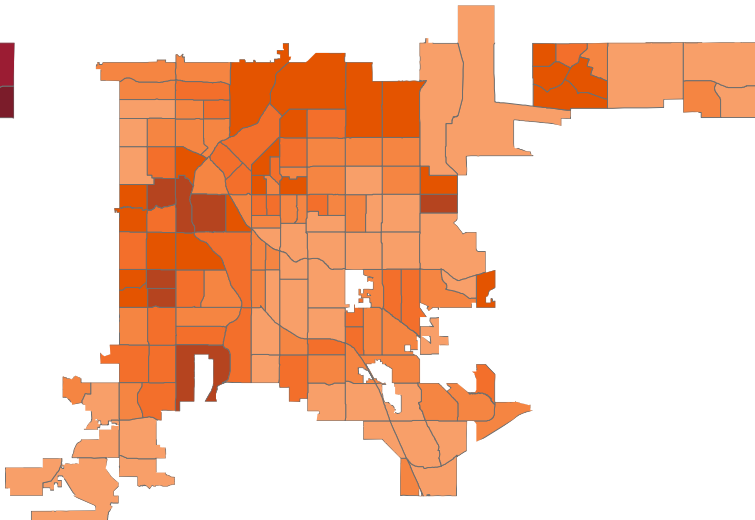
Terms used to designate neighborhoods on historic redlining map:

- “Best”
- “Still Desirable”
- “Definitely Declining”
- “Hazardous”

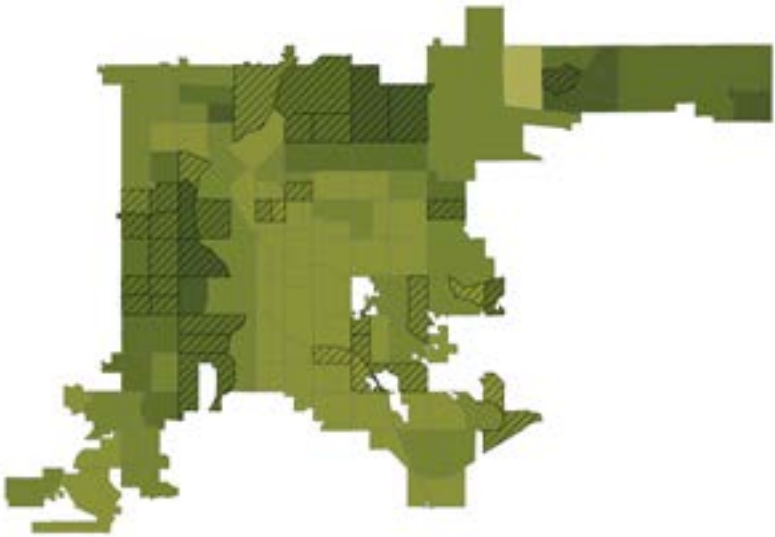
DENVER TODAY: % OF PEOPLE OF COLOR<sup>182</sup>



DENVER TODAY: % OF PEOPLE BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE<sup>181</sup>



**DENVER TODAY: % OF PEOPLE REPORTING POOR MENTAL HEALTH** This map shows where Denverites who report not having good mental health over the last month are living. If a neighborhood has a diagonal line, it means the area is also low-income.<sup>187</sup>



**DENVER TODAY: % OF ADULTS WITH DIABETES** This map shows the percentage of adults with diabetes. If a neighborhood has a diagonal line, it means the area is also low-income.<sup>186</sup>

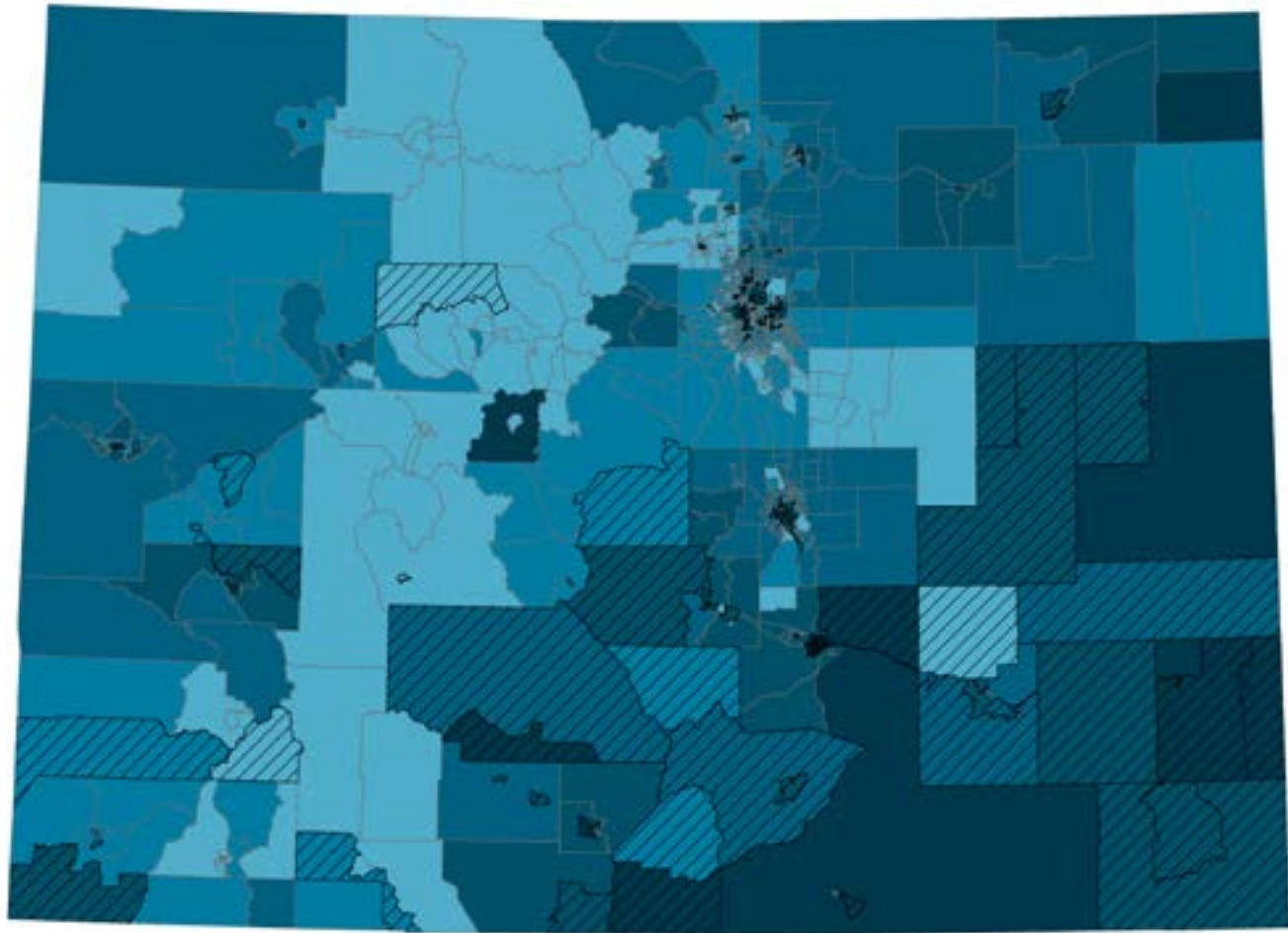




**COLORADO: % OF PEOPLE REPORTING POOR MENTAL HEALTH** This map shows where Coloradans who report not having good mental health over the last month are living. If a county has a diagonal line, it means the area is also low-income.<sup>185</sup>



**COLORADO: % OF ADULTS WITH DIABETES** This map shows the percentage of adults with diabetes. If a neighborhood has a diagonal line, it means the area is also low-income.<sup>184</sup>



Do you notice any trends with these two maps? That is, do you notice that certain counties consistently have higher amounts of poverty, diabetes, and poor mental health?



Today in Colorado, families in both larger and smaller communities across the state face significant challenges when it comes to housing. Affordable homes are of particular concern for women; single parents; elderly; people living with disabilities; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community; veterans; and the homeless.<sup>19,25,36,124,164</sup> But when it comes to housing unaffordability, low-income individuals and families with children—particularly families of color—bear the greatest burden.<sup>69</sup> When affordable homes are not available, families are forced to compromise how much they spend on food as well as physical and mental health care.

In addition, evictions more often affect people of color, and in Denver they are mostly happening in

communities that are undergoing **gentrification**.<sup>19</sup> Gentrification is the process of improving a neighborhood which can bring certain benefits; however, gentrification often increases chances that long-term residents will be **displaced**. This means rising home costs are forcing low-income residents out of their homes. Displacement affects the entire community through the loss of social connections, local businesses and the knowledge and culture of long-term residents.<sup>21,70,104</sup> The stress caused by this instability has negative impacts on health—including greater risk of substance abuse, anxiety and depression, inconsistent medical care, and lowered ability to manage chronic health conditions—and can persist across generations.<sup>170</sup>

**THE LEGACY OF INEQUITY: HOW ARE INEQUITIES PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS?**<sup>23,150,170</sup> Over time, and across generations, living in unhealthy and unsupportive environments worsens health, lowers well-being, and limits opportunity and community potential. Without policies that create opportunities and reverse inequities, families and communities become stuck in these spaces.

Let's take Carlos for example (below). Carlos lives in a neighborhood with few opportunities. His parents also grew up here because decades ago, due to redlining, his grandparents had no other options for where to live. Since then, his family has not been able to afford to move anywhere else because of the high cost of homes. Since Carlos grew up in this neighborhood, Carlos faces a number of challenges that affect his health and opportunities to thrive. These difficulties follow Carlos when he starts a family of his own, limiting his ability to support his children. In this way, the cycle of poor health and diminished opportunity continue, and inequities are passed down from one generation to the next.



**UNHEALTHY HOMES** Families that lived in the poorest neighborhoods a generation ago are more likely to live in poor and unhealthy neighborhoods today and face increased risk for evictions and displacement. And when families have to move multiple times, they have to travel farther to their jobs, schools, and health care providers.



**LIMITED INCOME** Families with lower incomes have fewer opportunities to generate wealth. This, in turn, impacts income opportunities for future generations.



**BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT** Being exposed to neighborhood poverty during childhood often means poorer performance at school, interruptions in literacy development, and limited extracurricular or enrichment opportunities. For adults, it means fewer opportunities to services such as health care, child care, schools, healthy foods, transportation, and healthy homes.



**CHRONIC ILLNESS** Living in poor and unhealthy neighborhoods over time means greater exposure to environmental pollution and stresses, like air pollution, industrial smells and sounds, and broken sidewalks, as well as less access to healthy spaces and services like parks and quality health care. This increases risk for chronic illnesses. And when it is hard to find spaces to exercise, good doctors, and nutritious foods, it is hard to stay healthy.



**TOXIC STRESS** Experiencing stressors such as poverty, displacement and limited social support has an effect on a person's overall well being. When an individual experiences these stressors for a prolonged period of time, this is called toxic stress. Toxic stress puts a person at greater risk for substance abuse, anxiety and depression, diminished well-being, and lowered social support.



**DIMINISHED OPPORTUNITY ACROSS GENERATIONS** All of these inequities affect individuals' and families' ability and opportunity to transition out of these circumstances and to thrive. The cycle of toxic stress and diminished opportunity continues across generations.



Being able to own a home should be an opportunity available to all of us. Yet Coloradans who earn high incomes are the people most likely to own a home.<sup>155</sup> While Colorado is seeing great gains in job growth, most of that growth is in low-wage jobs.<sup>19</sup> A recent estimate from the Colorado Department of Labor shows that over 70 percent of new jobs will have a starting annual salary of less than \$36,000.<sup>198</sup> This means many Coloradans are still not earning enough to afford homes.<sup>25</sup> We also see significant pay inequities for women in Colorado. Across the state, women working full-time, year round, earn 79 cents for every dollar a man earns. The wage gap is even greater for women of color: African American women are paid only 61 cents, and Latino women only 53 cents, for every dollar paid to white men.<sup>28, 178</sup>

"NOT ENOUGH HOUSING AND COST OF HOUSING ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT AND REALLY DESPERATE ISSUES IN FORT COLLINS."

"SHELTER IS ANOTHER MAJOR PROBLEM—THERE IS NO SAFETY NET FOR TRANSGENDER WOMEN."

"WE NEED AFFORDABLE QUALITY HOUSING FOR DIFFERENT ECONOMIC GROUPS, INCLUDING THE HOMELESS."

—COLORADANS

HOUSING COSTS ARE TOO HIGH FOR MOST

**COLORADANS**<sup>19, 155</sup> Around three quarters of all Colorado renters are spending more than a third of their household incomes on housing. When someone who is renting has to spend more than 30% of their income on housing, it means that rental costs are unaffordable. Around three quarters of all Colorado renters are in this situation.

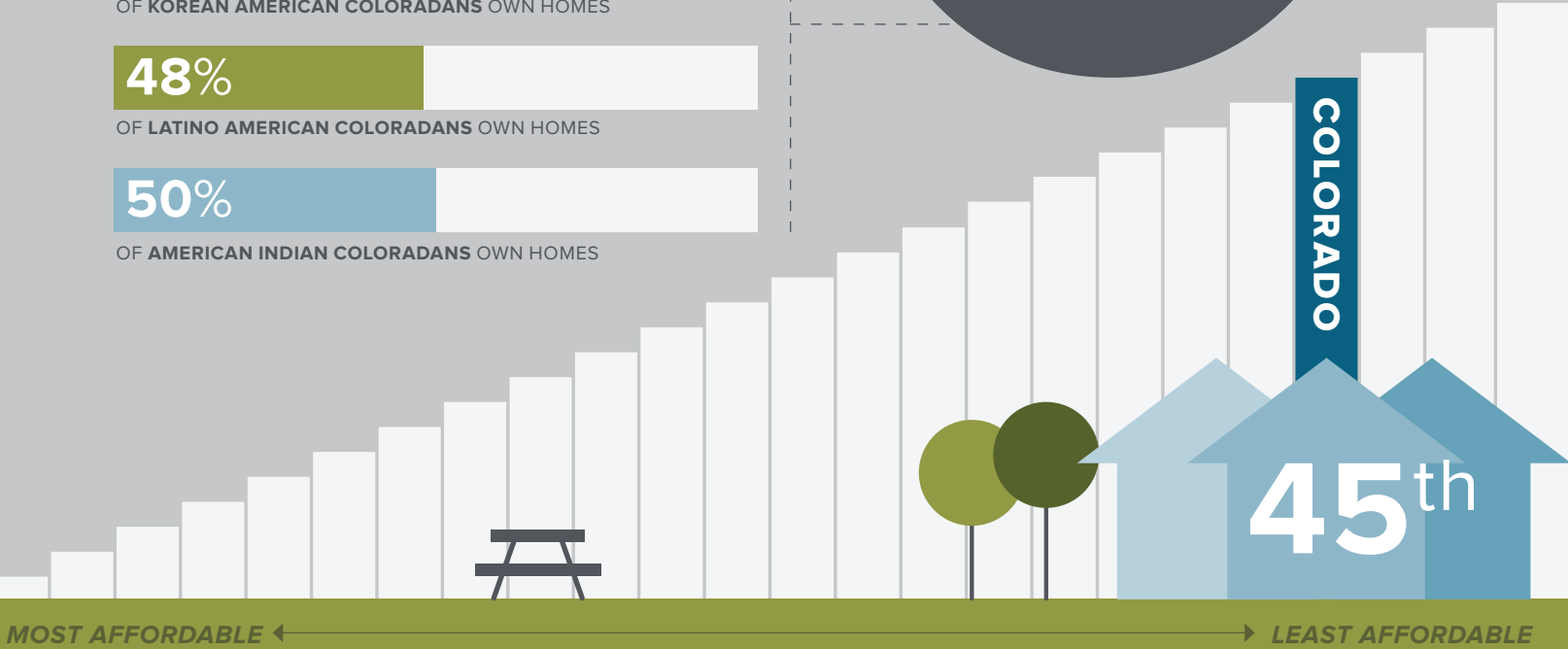
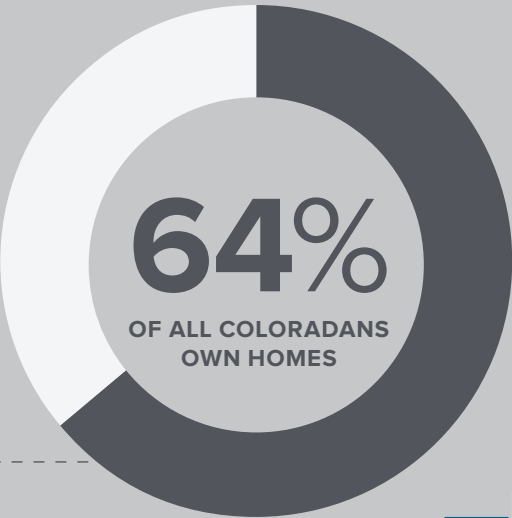
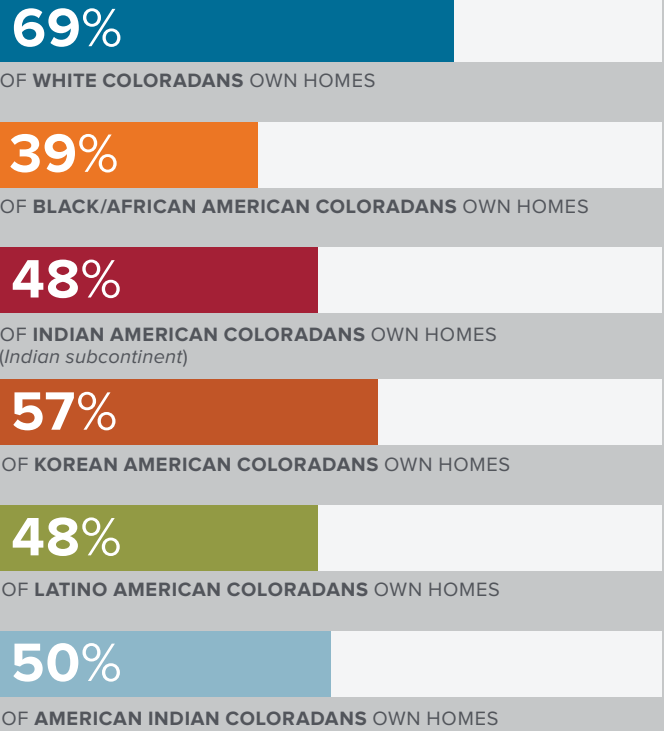
**75%** OF ALL COLORADO RENTERS CANNOT AFFORD HOUSING



CAN ALL COLORADANS ACHIEVE HOMEOWNERSHIP?<sup>138a</sup>

When individuals and families have the possibility of owning homes, they are on the path towards economic security and social stability. In Colorado, communities of color face major barriers to opportunities for homeownership. Many of these

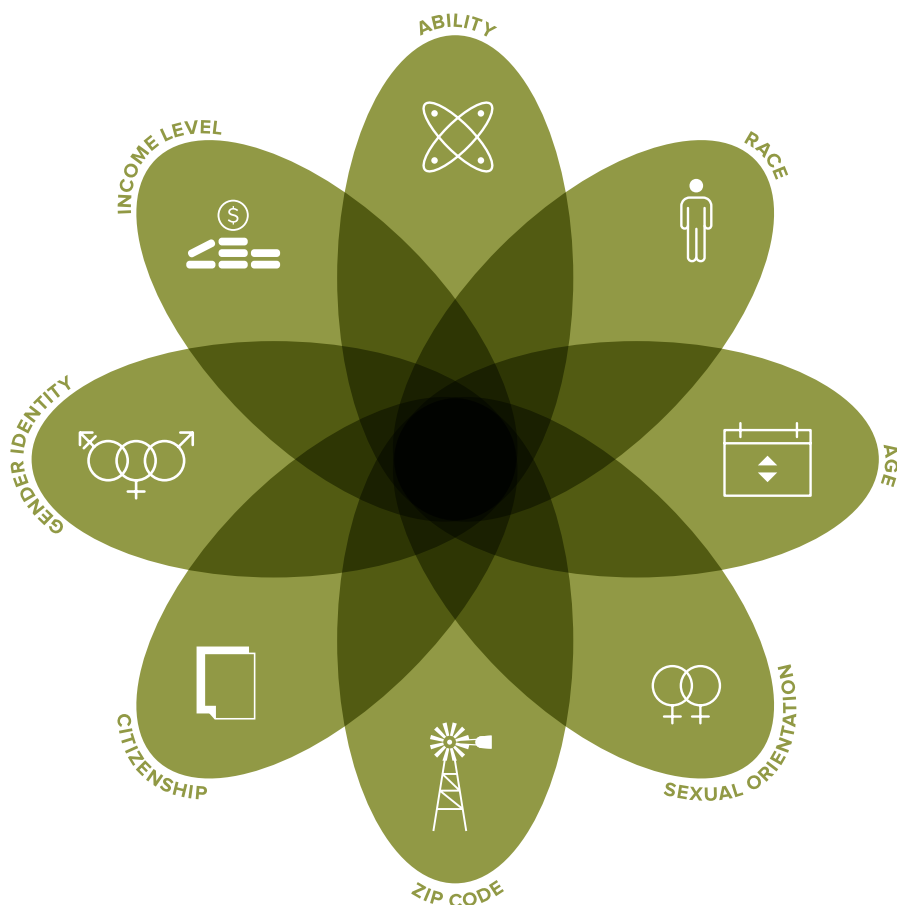
barriers grew out of historic policies. Here you can see the proportion of Colorado residents within each racial/ ethnic group that owns homes, as well as the state average. (We show two groups of Asian American Coloradans to highlight the groups facing greater challenges).



**HOW DOES COLORADO MEASURE UP IN HOUSING AFFORDABILITY?**<sup>142</sup> Colorado ranks 45th in the nation when it comes to housing affordability, when comparing home values to household incomes. This means Colorado is one of the least affordable places to live in the country.



In small and resort communities in Colorado, there are often fewer opportunities for the development of lower cost homes because of how land is valued or made available. Fewer options, along with lower incomes, make it even harder for residents of these towns to find homes they can afford.<sup>61</sup> Rural inequities are a great example of the intersectionality of factors that contribute to disparities. For example, rural southeastern and central Colorado has the greatest share of Coloradans living with multiple chronic conditions—these are also some of the lowest income areas of our state.<sup>192, 193</sup> It is hard to be low-income, harder to be low-income and a person of color, and even harder to be low-income and a person of color, undocumented, living in a rural area with limited educational opportunities, and with no transportation or health care options. We need to consider the whole person and the intersectionality of inequities when we think about how to address inequity.



**INTERSECTIONALITY OF IDENTITIES AND INEQUITIES** Each of us has a unique life experience based on where we were born, where we live, what language we speak, how old we are, and our gender, sexual identity, religion, race, income level, and so forth. These life experiences shape our many social identities, some of which are more often discriminated against than others. Having more of these identities means facing greater barriers. When we face more systemic barriers, the impacts of inequity are compounded, and we have fewer opportunities available to succeed and thrive.



**ACTION FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS**

Use this Guide to mobilize community voice around what creates health and drives change.



**ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT**

Lived experiences are data. Acknowledge community power and wisdom when designing policies, practices and programming, by incorporating community voice in decision-making. For ideas on how to do this, refer to The Colorado Office of Health Equity's *Authentic Community Engagement to Advance Equity*, found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools>

SUCCESS STORIES

# Engaging Community in Development Decisions

*Communities that face challenges also have the knowledge and power to develop creative solutions. We can partner with each other across sectors to tackle the root causes of inequity. Here is just one example of a Colorado community responding to inequities in health, housing and transportation.*

In Denver, neighboring Five Points and Elyria Swansea are examples of **communities that have been resilient in the face of significant demographic changes, development and displacement**. Both neighborhoods have a history of redlining and housing segregation and disruptions caused by infrastructure development. More recently, both have experienced rising housing costs and displacement due to gentrification.<sup>43,151,154</sup>

Focus Points Family Resource Center is a community-based organization for low-income families in Globeville and Elyria Swansea. Focus Points partners with Spanish-speaking Coloradans in these neighborhoods, many

of whom are immigrants from Mexico. Residents often have a hard time communicating with teachers, doctors and potential employers because of limited English skills. Focus Points works with parents and children to help them learn English and prepare for school and jobs. Focus Points relocated from Five Points to Elyria Swansea to support those who had been displaced due to gentrification. To further respond to development projects taking place in the community, Focus Points has facilitated planning meetings among residents and public officials. By promoting **community-led efforts**, Focus Points supports residents in making their voices heard and strengthens residents' ability to influence policies affecting them.<sup>91, 175</sup>

**THE HIGH COST OF UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING** When families spend too much money on housing, they can't invest in local businesses, and the local economy suffers. This hurts everyone.

In Colorado, \$745 million is lost on housing costs among households of color earning less than \$50,000 a year.<sup>174</sup>

**HOUSEHOLDS**

High housing costs **prevent families from being able to invest** in other important areas such as:

- HEALTH CARE
- TRANSPORTATION
- HEALTHY FOODS
- SCHOOL
- CHILDCARE

**LOCAL BUSINESSES**

When individuals and families have to pay for unaffordable housing, they are **unable to support local and small businesses**.

**LOCAL ECONOMY**

When residents of a community lose spending power, and when local businesses suffer, **local and state economies lose out** on money from sales taxes. Depleted economies hurt all of us.





## Chapter 3

# Paving The Road To Opportunity

Reliable and affordable transportation is the bridge to daily activities that keep us healthy, including having a variety of food choices, safe environments, services, jobs and schools. Transportation also has many impacts on safety, such as the condition of sidewalks and roads, bike paths, air pollution from cars, and enough bus shelters for people taking public transit. All Coloradans need safe and affordable transportation options, but not everyone has the same access.

Across the country, as well as in Colorado, American Indian and African-American households are particularly impacted by poor transportation options and the costs of owning cars.<sup>138b, 138c</sup> Many communities of color also face difficulties obtaining a driver's license. These challenges make it hard for people living with disabilities, older adults, families of color and those with lower incomes, to get to work, school, health care and elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> In the U.S., low-income households spend more than double their income on transportation compared to others. This means they have less money to spend on food, health care, children, and so on. And on any given day, about half of all older adults in the U.S. who do not drive stay home because they do not have any other way to get to where they would like to go.<sup>171</sup>

Past policies in road and highway development have contributed to this burden. Decisions to invest in the development of highways instead of public transit in cities made it more difficult for low-income families to get jobs outside of their neighborhoods.<sup>147</sup> Without the option to travel for better work, low-income





families have less opportunity for career growth and less opportunity to earn higher wages to support their families. Simply having public transit is helpful, however public transit also needs to be affordable, timely, and well located. By using an equity lens we can work to build transit options that are inclusive of everyone's needs.

Public transportation and driver's licenses are not just important for Coloradans who live in cities. Limited options for transportation have a significant impact for families living in rural towns and cities. When we need to get to work or to the doctor, we need reliable and affordable transportation. When public transportation is hard to find, Coloradans must spend a large part of the money they earn on owning a car. When it is hard to own a car or even get a driver's license, Coloradans are left with very few affordable alternatives. In small Colorado towns and cities, not having enough transportation options has made it difficult for many to live in affordable communities and still get to work, school, doctors' offices and elsewhere.<sup>39, 50, 88, 159</sup> Since there are often fewer doctors, health clinics, and specialists in rural communities, it is especially important that we provide ways for residents to travel to them.<sup>66</sup>

In Denver, as neighborhoods continue to grow and improve, we not only see improvements in the quality and safety of homes, but we also begin to see infrastructure development. Infrastructure development includes creating more public transportation options as well as grocery stores, bike paths, health care services, roads and highways. While these improvements certainly bring benefits to communities, they can also contribute to gentrification. Very often, long-time, low-income residents and families of color are forced out of neighborhoods because of the growing cost of living and are then unable to benefit from improvements in public transit options or new grocery stores.<sup>21, 104</sup>



**ACTION FOR FUNDERS**

Funding flexibility can lead to innovative solutions to complex problems. Consider funding organizations and ideas that are led by the people most impacted by inequities.



**ACTION FOR INDIVIDUALS**

Do you have an innovative transportation solution, such as car sharing? Share those ideas with elected officials.

# How does transportation affect health and opportunity?

Better transportation options mean better access to opportunity. When transit options are built with accessibility and affordability in mind, the benefits ripple far and wide through increased jobs, stimulating the economy, and connecting communities to schools, business and services.

## SOCIAL EFFECTS



ACCESS TO BETTER JOBS



ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR KIDS



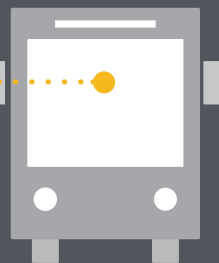
ACCESS TO A LARGER VARIETY OF FOODS



ACCESS TO SERVICES  
(i.e. doctor, childcare, etc)



AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT OPTION



ACCIDENT-PRONE ROADS



## PHYSICAL EFFECTS

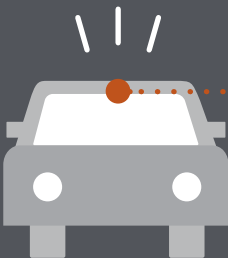
AFFORDABLE TRANSIT OPTIONS



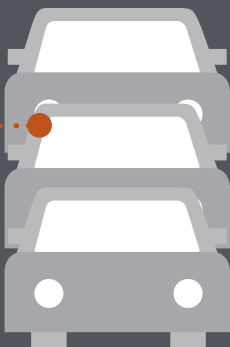
AIR POLLUTION



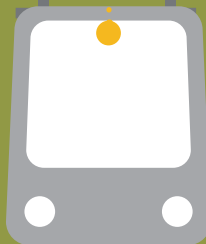
NOISE POLLUTION



COMMUTING TIME + STRESS



AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT OPTION





"DURANGO IS TOO EXPENSIVE TO LIVE IN, SO WORKING CLASS AND MANY MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE HAVE TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE CITY, WHICH MEANS MORE TIME AND MONEY SPENT DRIVING, GREENHOUSE GASES CREATED, AND TIME SPENT AWAY FROM FAMILY BECAUSE OF LONG COMMUTES TO RURAL AREAS."

—COLORADAN

37%

The percentage of income households who earn \$20k-\$35k a year and live far from employment centers, spend on transportation



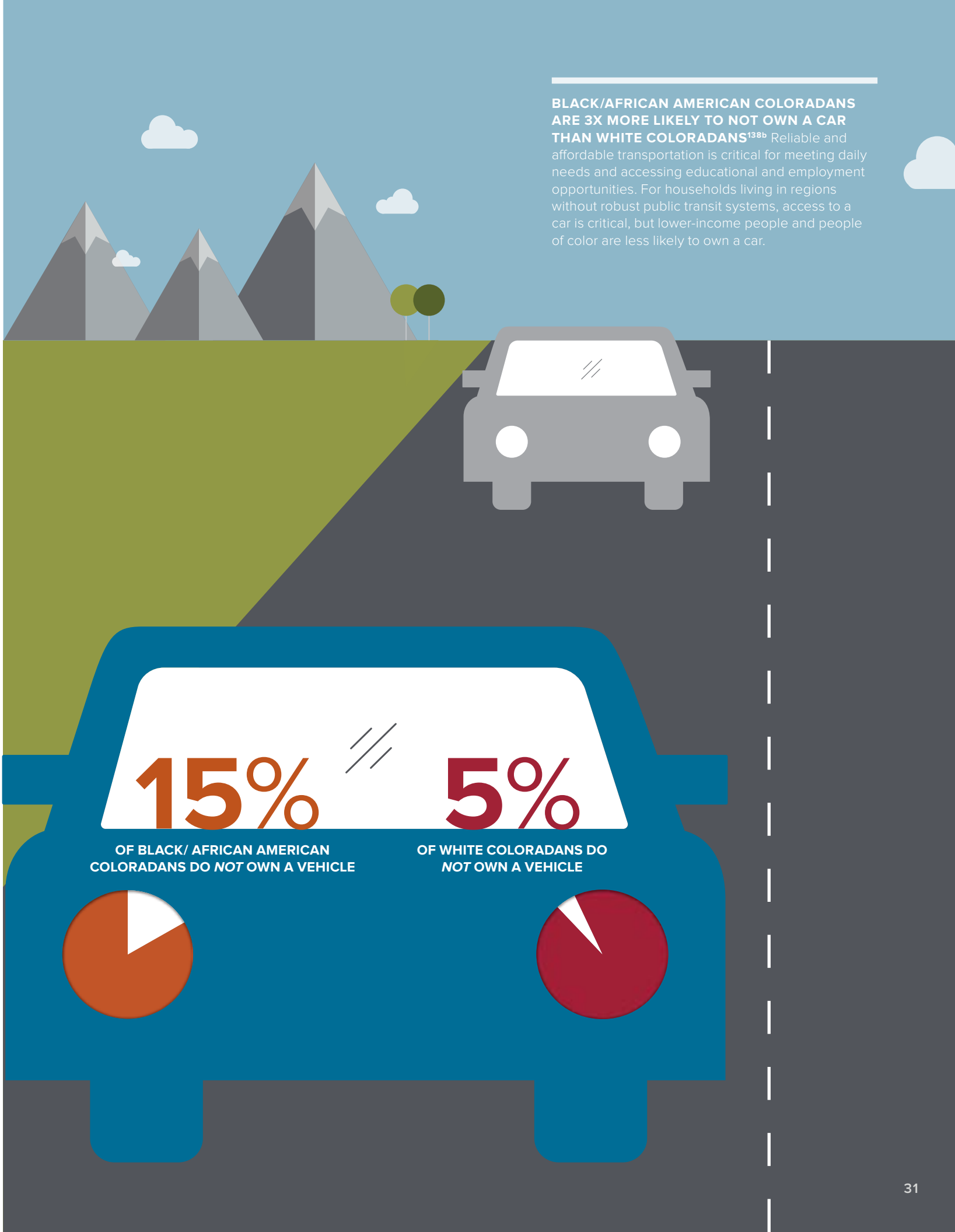
18%

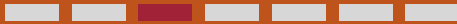
The percentage of income the average household spends on transportation<sup>171</sup>



**ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT + FUNDERS**  
Consider collecting data on a wider variety of transportation experiences such as: travel time to work, school, and doctors in rural areas. Work with each other and with organizers to build community capacity around using data. Train community groups about what relevant public data are available, how to request it and how to use it.

**BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN COLORADANS ARE 3X MORE LIKELY TO NOT OWN A CAR THAN WHITE COLORADANS<sup>138b</sup>** Reliable and affordable transportation is critical for meeting daily needs and accessing educational and employment opportunities. For households living in regions without robust public transit systems, access to a car is critical, but lower-income people and people of color are less likely to own a car.





SUCCESS STORIES

# Linking Isolated Communities through Public Transit

Communities that face challenges also have the knowledge and power to develop creative solutions. We can partner with each other across sectors to tackle the root causes of inequity. Here is just one example of a Colorado community responding to inequities in health, housing and transportation.

Eagle County residents, in the central mountain region, successfully linked isolated communities that lack regular transportation to jobs and services. **Community outreach and advocacy resulted in the reinstatement of a public transit service**, the Eagle County Transit bus

service, to the small, rural community of Dotsero. Without affordable options for travel, residents were isolated from schools, jobs and doctors. **Now residents can travel from two bus stops in Dotsero to the resources they need.** The Eagle County Public Health Department encouraged community-led outreach, and the County's Transportation Department responded to community-expressed needs. Eagle County Public Health continues to support community organizing and advocacy efforts to advance healthy environments and strengthen neighborhoods.<sup>2,67,128</sup>

"PLEASE CONNECT OUR COMMUNITY WITH BIKE PATHS! BETTER FOR OUR HEALTH. BETTER FOR AIR QUALITY. BETTER FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION. [SUPPORT] THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO BIKE TO GROCERY, RESTAURANTS, AND ERRANDS IN TOWN."

—COLORADAN

RURAL COUNTIES IN COLORADO HAVE LESS ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS<sup>66</sup>

Of the **47 rural counties** in Colorado...

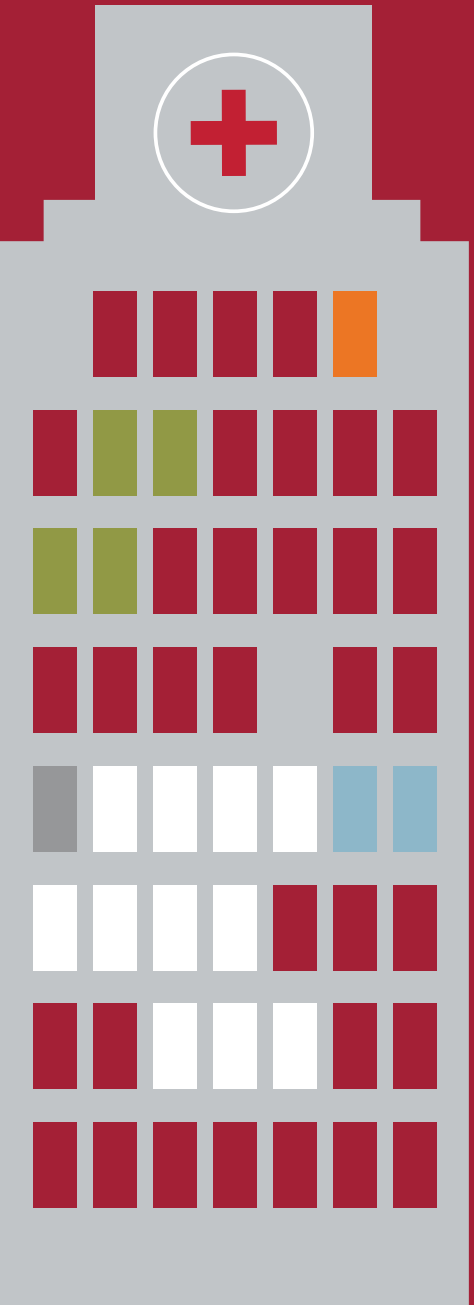
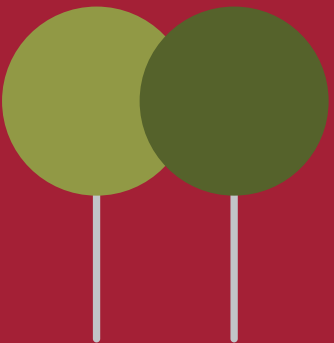
**11** have  
NO HOSPITALS

**2** have  
NO HOSPITALS  
or CLINICS

**1** has  
NO MENTAL HEALTH  
PROVIDERS

**4** have  
NO DENTISTS

**1** has  
NO MENTAL HEALTH  
PROVIDERS, DENTISTS  
or DOCTORS







## Chapter 4

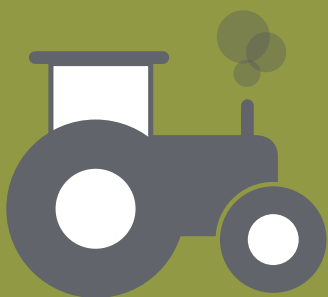
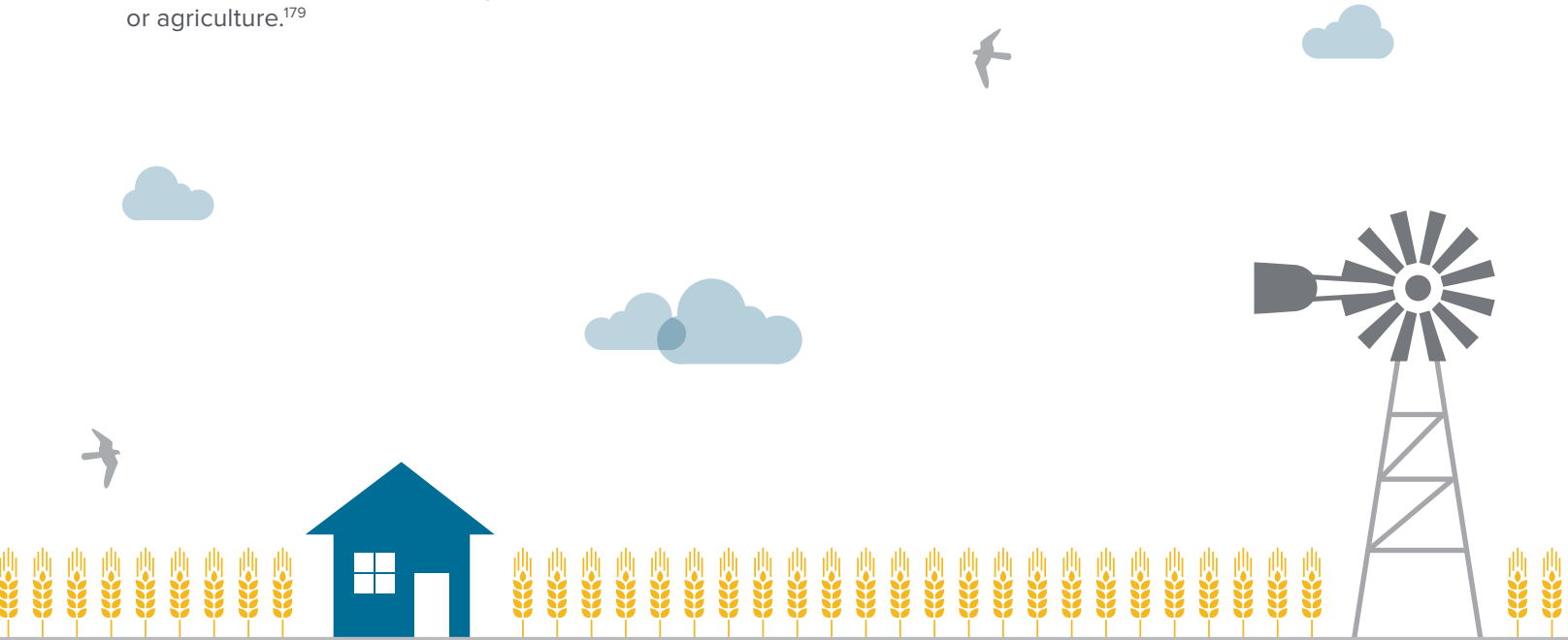
# Where You Live Shouldn't Determine How Long You Live

Housing, land use and transportation are all closely tied to our health. Neighborhood poverty, **segregation** and **gentrification** limit opportunities for growth and negatively impact our health and well-being. Low-income families may become stuck in unhealthy and unsafe neighborhoods over generations without options to move to healthier environments.<sup>150</sup> To understand how where we live affects our health, we just need to think about the air we breathe.





Breathing in unclean air can increase the chance that a person becomes ill and can greatly affect their daily life. People living in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to air pollution and indoor allergens because of lower quality housing and zoning laws that more often allow low-income housing near factories or freeways.<sup>194,196,202</sup> Low-income neighborhoods are also more likely to have harmful environmental poisons in water, soil, and in the pipes and walls of homes.<sup>68,97,147</sup> Working outdoors can also increase a person's risk for breathing in air pollutants, and it's important to consider the types of people who tend to work outdoors, such as jobs in construction or agriculture.<sup>179</sup>



Let's look at a specific health example: asthma, a condition affected by the air we breathe. **Black/African American children in Colorado are twice as likely to have ever had asthma compared to white children.**<sup>188</sup> Poverty seems to be related to asthma rates. The parts of Colorado that are lowest income also have the highest adult asthma rates.<sup>190,193</sup> Having less income also means less access to ongoing quality care, which can result in more ER visits and hospitalizations to treat asthma.<sup>194,196</sup> We see this happening in areas of Denver—including historically redlined areas, as well as southeastern Colorado.<sup>189,191</sup>

The fact that many communities of color tend to have higher poverty and exposure to environmental pollutants is not a coincidence—it stems from discriminatory government practices such as redlining, described in chapter two. But thriving neighborhoods can be created, partially through planning efforts such as zoning practices (see chapter five for further explanation).



"OVER-BUILDING AND OVER-CROWDING LOWERS QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE AND ANIMALS AND DESTROYS THE WILDERNESS AS WELL!"

—COLORADAN

# What Makes A Thriving Community?<sup>19, 104</sup>

For Colorado communities to thrive, we must work together to create economic, social and environmental conditions that are just.

## HEALTHY LIVING CONDITIONS

Where we live matters. A flourishing community is one that preserves the natural beauty of its physical environment, provides connections to good jobs, schools, and mental health care, has safe and stable housing, and is pollution free.

## STRONG SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

We need each other to survive and to thrive. Where we live, work, learn and play determines how we connect with our families, co-workers, friends, and neighbors.

## EQUITABLE SYSTEMS

When institutions create circumstances that allow those who have been left behind to participate and contribute fully, then everyone wins. This also means when we ignore the challenges faced by the most vulnerable Coloradans, those challenges become bad for the economy, prosperity and well-being of all Coloradans.

## SENSE OF BELONGING

When we feel a sense of belonging to places, we feel safe and stable, which is important for our mental health.

## AFFORDABILITY

To achieve healthy living environments, we must eliminate residential segregation and ensure that each of us can afford to live in clean and safe places.





## Chapter 5

# Where Do We Go From Here?

The communities and neighborhoods where we live, learn, work and play determine what we are able to accomplish in life and the quality of our lives. These opportunity structures are a web of influence beyond our control that shapes our ability to succeed.<sup>99</sup> They create advantages for some and disadvantages for others. Often, opportunity structures are more important than the choices individuals make. We may not have been the generation who created these systems and structures, but we do have a responsibility to fix them because inequities have a high cost for all Coloradans.

Colorado communities need solution-oriented policies, but we also need to expand the conversation on equity in our communities, organizations and institutions.<sup>36</sup> These are difficult problems to solve, but promising tools and strategies exist. Based on what we learned through researching existing resources, the following ideas seem to best fit the needs of Colorado communities.





## Housing policy is health policy. Transportation policy is health policy. Decisions about transportation, housing and health should be made at the same time.

**All Coloradans need safe and affordable housing and transportation options to be healthy, but not everyone has the same access.**

Colorado is growing. And while development is not a bad thing, without understanding the history and needs of existing residents, development projects may not give everyone the opportunity to live in strong neighborhoods.

Land use planning shapes how an area is zoned for development decisions. For example, an area may be zoned to allow the development of new homes that are not specifically affordable housing. In this case, a developer can build according to this land use code and is generally not required to get community input. Safeguards should be put in place to proactively prevent displacement. One such safeguard may be inclusionary zoning, which is an approach that builds a diverse housing market, develops economically and racially integrated communities and fosters the kind of development that can be used for living, working, and recreation.<sup>24, 133</sup> For example, it could mean that when a developer is building a new apartment building, a certain number of those apartments must be reserved for low-income residents.<sup>96</sup> This type of decision could be influenced by community input when municipal governments are creating land use planning documents.

When thinking about creating other options for transportation, we need to think about how they affect the health of all groups in a community.<sup>15</sup> For example,

we should consider whether options such as bike lanes have a positive impact for all residents of a community, including low-income residents, versus increased public transit.<sup>14, 162</sup> Transportation that is designed mainly around cars could be preventing certain community members from opportunities such as accessing jobs, grocery stores and schools. Transportation-oriented development is an approach that integrates housing and transportation so that affordable housing is linked to many transit options.<sup>82, 121, 136</sup> This is being done in some parts of Colorado, such as the Eagle County story described earlier.<sup>67</sup>

Infusing both public participation and an equity lens helps decision-makers avoid unintentionally increasing inequities. **Using an equity lens in decision-making could look like:**

1. Creating and preserving affordable homes through a combination of new construction and local policies (such as rent control and right of first refusal).<sup>24, 131</sup>
2. Investing in historically underdeveloped neighborhoods while ensuring policy safeguards are in place to keep existing community residents in their homes (such as property tax adjustments).<sup>24, 121</sup>
3. Bolstering the role of community residents by ensuring ownership of planning processes and the land itself (such as community land trusts).<sup>129</sup>



### **ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT**

Planners and decision-makers should consider health, transportation and housing development concurrently in local, regional and statewide planning efforts.<sup>111, 163</sup>

"CONSIDER THE LOCATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF HOUSING IN RELATION TO SHOPS, BUSINESSES, FRIENDS, PARKS, ROADS ETC. SO THAT PEOPLE CAN NATURALLY BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE AND LESS SOCIALLY ISOLATED, KIDS HAVE MORE FREEDOM TO GO PLACES, AND THE ELDERLY CAN GET OUT TOO; THIS ALSO LENDS ITSELF TO AFFORDABILITY."

—COLORADAN



## Coloradans told us that they would take action by...

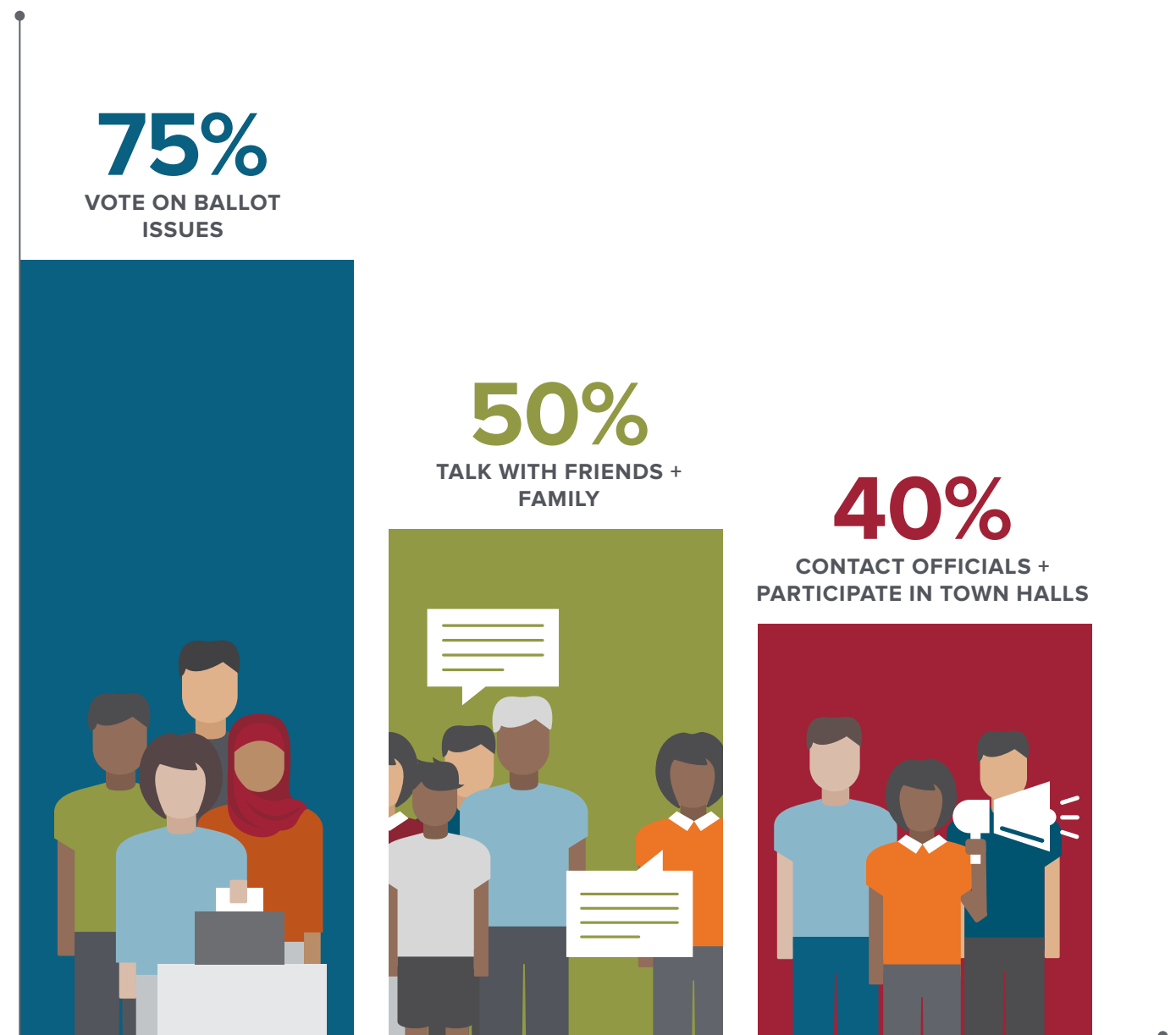
"OFFERING ROOM SHARES VIA SOCIAL MEDIA SITES TO THE COMMUNITY."

"PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY EVENTS THAT PROVIDE HELP AND SERVICES TO THE HOMELESS POPULATION."

"ENSURING VOICES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH MOBILITY ISSUES ARE INCLUDED IN ALL CONVERSATIONS."

### HOW COLORADANS WANT TO TAKE ACTION

In Poll 2, we heard from 4,420 Coloradans on how they would like to take action on issues of housing, transportation, and health. Of the responses we received 75% told us they would prefer to vote on ballot issues, 50% told us they would prefer to talk with friends and 40% said they would prefer to contact officials and participate in town halls.



# Community voice and power should be an integral part of planning and development processes.

To avoid creating new inequities or perpetuating current ones, we need to consider how policy, systems and programming decisions will impact different communities. It is crucial to consider community wisdom and experience alongside technical expertise in decision-making.

Community residents, particularly those who have been historically marginalized from society and opportunities to thrive, are key partners who should be involved in planning efforts and local ownership of projects. An example of this is the community engagement story described earlier. Strategies such as *community land trusts* educate and tap into the power of local residents, provide community stability and reduce displacement.<sup>121</sup>  
<sup>129</sup> Community residents should be actively involved in planning processes to ensure that:

- 1. Buses, light rails, roads and other commuting methods are well-connected to culturally relevant businesses and services for all people.
- 2. Smooth transportation transfers exist between neighborhoods, job centers and schools.
- 3. Affordable and accessible transit routes are available to all residents.

It's important to protect future generations by putting anti-displacement safety guards in place such as renter protections, community land trusts and community ownership models, commercial neighborhood stabilization, inclusionary zoning and other equitable development strategies. A community based approach is key to equitable decision-making.



## ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT + COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

Partner with each other to build community capacity around using data. Train community groups about what relevant public data are available, how to use it, and how to request data and information from public agencies.



## ACTION FOR FUNDERS

Work on getting more granular data by zip code.

"THE CITY COUNCIL AND GOVERNMENT NOT TAKING THE WANTS AND NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS INTO ACCOUNT AND REALLY JUST DOING WHAT THEY WANT AND PUSHING THINGS THROUGH WITHOUT COLLABORATION. WE WANT TO SEE INCREASED PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NEIGHBORS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN CREATING A VISION FOR OUR COMMUNITY."

—COLORADAN

# Integrate an equity lens in decision making.

Racial and economic inequities will continue to persist unless equity is considered in decisions related to development, funding and programs.

Past events and decisions influence Coloradans' ability to thrive in today's environment. Tackling inequities is not always easy, but it is necessary for building the kinds of communities in which we want to live. Local and state government officials may not have historically used tools such as equity assessments to apply an equity lens. But when government institutions partner with community organizers and integrate these tools into decision-making, we can accomplish a great deal. It is also critical to include people with diverse lived experiences in decision-making positions. Doing so improves retention of diverse staff, brings more diversity of perspectives to the decision-making table, and strengthens relationships with affected communities.

Certain policies and institutions have benefited some groups of people while decreasing opportunities for others. We need to talk frankly about how our institutions have biases and try to understand what success looks like for different populations. Government officials should prioritize transportation and housing opportunities in historically under-invested neighborhoods, including communities of color and low-income communities, which often overlap.

Achieving equity requires using innovative thinking. For all of the suggestions in this section, it's important to evaluate impact. This includes comparing how more and less advantaged groups are faring after a program or policy change. Using both short and long-term measures is also important. Finally, it's critical that we share lessons and successes with one another.



## ACTION FOR GOVERNMENT

Ask questions by using an equity impact assessment. For a list of suggestions, refer to The Colorado Office of Health Equity's *Checking Assumptions to Advance Equity*, found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools>



## ACTION FOR EVERYONE

You can participate in the evaluation process too. Take a look at the action resources in the next few pages. Use the hyperlinks on the back cover to share what actions *you're* taking in your community, what's worked, and your thoughts on this *Equity Action Guide*.

"THERE IS LIMITED DIVERSITY OF VOICES IN PUBLIC DECISION MAKING THAT REFLECTS THE ACTUAL DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS THAT EXIST IN TOWN."

—COLORADAN





Chapter 6

# Moving Toward Equity: We’re All In This Together

When a system is designed inequitably, it holds all of us back. But when a system works equitably, it works better for everyone. We all create health by working together to ensure just economic, social and environmental conditions. The well-being of Coloradans today is partially determined by events, decisions and experiences of the past. Because these forces were created by people, it is also people who can shape these forces to advance equity. **Change is possible.**

For Colorado to prosper, all of us need to be given opportunities to thrive. Different people have different barriers, and we need to remove those barriers. Economic, racial and geographic disparities are a threat to our state’s development. **We’re all in this together.**

.....

**By embracing Colorado’s diverse voices, we will all have a stronger future. Let’s create conditions in which all Coloradans can reach their full potential.**







## Chapter 7

# Action Steps: Here's What You Can Do

On the following pages you will find some resources and tools to help us think through how we can partner together to remove barriers to opportunity.

"WE'LL NEVER ACHIEVE ANYTHING IF WE'RE ALWAYS PITTED AGAINST EACH OTHER. WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH TOUGH ISSUES."

—COLORADAN







# Use your power, use your voice!

The action items below are intended to be steps you can take today to reduce inequities and make changes in your community and beyond. Multi-sector partnerships at all levels are an important step to creating change. If you work for a

government organization, think about how you could partner with community organizers. If you're an individual, there may be ways for you to partner with community organizers, and so on.

## FOR INDIVIDUALS + FAMILIES .....

- 🗣️ Talk to your neighbors: ask them what they think about the impacts of housing, transportation, development, etc. on health to get the conversations going.
- 🗣️ How does this connect to *your* story? Share your story with neighbors and elected officials at community events, city council meetings, public forums, etc. to influence change in zoning and development. How is your neighborhood thriving in spite of difficult conditions?
- 🗣️ Connect with community organizers at trainings, community events, public forums, etc. Community organizers can provide you with skills-based training to help you mobilize and leverage your power and voice to create change.

- 🗣️ Seek out resources such as **webinars** and community organizing trainings to learn how policies are made and to gather tools for creating a healthy community for all Coloradans.
- 🗣️ Check out the “Calls to Action” in the **Colorado Civic Health Index** (see page 5).
- 🗣️ Contribute to large, “crowd-sourcing” sets of data, such as using the **Streetwyze** app.

## FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS .....

- 🗣️ Use this narrative to mobilize community voice around what creates health and drives change.
  - Train other organizers, community residents and elected officials on the data behind connections between housing, transportation and health. Help these groups understand how this information can be used during town hall meetings, public forums and hearings, and in campaigns to advocate for equitable change.
  - Educate elected officials to understand the importance of using an equity lens, acknowledge that lived experiences are data, and recognize community power and wisdom when designing policies, practices and programming.
- 🗣️ Partner with government organizations to build community capacity around using data. This could include:
  - Guiding community groups in creating, implementing, analyzing, and reporting on a community survey, focus group, or other research tool to gather information on local issues.
  - Training community groups about what relevant public data are available, how to use it, and how to request data and information from public agencies.
- 🗣️ Work with funders and residents to close data gaps and collect more neighborhood level data.

**Note:** Certain resources are hyperlinked. For the full hyperlink, please reference the electronic copy of this report, located at: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/equity-action-guide>.

## FOR GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS .....

- 🗣️ Ask questions by using an equity impact assessment. For a list of suggestions, refer to The Colorado Office of Health Equity’s *Checking Assumptions to Advance Equity*, found at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools).
- 🗣️ Lived experiences are data. Acknowledge community power and wisdom when designing policies, practices and programming, by incorporating community voice in decision-making. For ideas on how to do this, refer to The Colorado Office of Health Equity’s *Authentic Community Engagement to Advance Equity*, found at [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/suite-of-tools).
- 🗣️ Partner with organizers to build community capacity around using data. This could include:
  - Guiding community groups in creating, implementing, analyzing, and reporting on a community survey, focus group, or other research tool to gather information on local issues.
- Training community groups about what relevant public data are available, how to use it, and how to request data and information from public agencies.
- 🗣️ Invest in workforce development (e.g. trainings) so staff are familiar with how to use an equity lens and talk about the connections between health, land use, transportation and housing.
- 🗣️ Encourage multi-sector partnerships to break down silos and spur innovation. Convene cross-disciplinary groups to build relationships and incorporate diverse perspectives.
- 🗣️ Invest in research tools such as *Environmental Impact Assessments* (EIA) or *Health Impact Assessments* (HIA) on proposed land use or transportation plans. These efforts should include significant community outreach and engagement to help tell the story of those impacted by the policy or plan.

## FOR FUNDERS .....

- 🗣️ Invest in information gathering and closing data gaps, including collecting neighborhood level data and data on inequities based on demographics such as gender, sexual identity, age, and others.
- 🗣️ Ensure funding flexibility. This could include distributing funding for:
  - General operating expenses, especially to small, grassroots organizations. Consider organizations that are led by the people most impacted by inequities, i.e. “By us and for us.” Remember that only funding “evidence-based” strategies can easily perpetuate inequities, so consider changing the way “evidence” is defined, e.g. lived experiences are data and community power and wisdom should be considered when designing programming.
  - Policy change can take a long time. Provide long-term funding to 501(c)4 groups who can play a role in shaping policies that affect those most impacted by inequity.
- Projects that have long-term impacts on systems and policies that promote thriving communities. Tackling inequities don’t always have traditionally “measurable” impacts in the short-term, so multi-year funding commitments are important.
- Multi-sector collaborations.
- 🗣️ Promote equity through community engagement. Read more at [http://www.nfg.org/equity\\_community\\_engagement](http://www.nfg.org/equity_community_engagement).
- 🗣️ Consider strategically addressing gentrification and displacement through community stabilization efforts, community-led planning, and community control and ownership. Refer to the **Democratic Development for Thriving Communities** framework.

## FOR EVERYONE .....

- 🗣️ For more information on how community developers are partnering with people in health, transportation and housing, subscribe to the **Build Healthy Places Network** newsletter.
- 🗣️ Tweet & share data from the Office of Health Equity’s **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram** pages.
- 🗣️ Take the evaluation and use **#YourVoiceCO** to show us what makes your community thrive!

# How policies are created...

There are many ways to create policy change: within organizations and agencies, local government, state and national government, and much more. Here we focus on how policies are created at a state or national level and how we as individuals can influence that process. But it's important to keep in mind that organizational and agency level policies serve as an example for policies that are passed on a state or national level. Therefore, focusing on passing policies on a smaller scale within our organizations and agencies is critical as well!



STEP 1

## AGENDA BUILDING

Policies are most often created in response to problems that exist. Therefore, before a policy is created, these problems must be brought to the attention of policy-makers. In some cases, public voices may be expressed through demonstrations, coalition building and organizing. At other times, a problem might be brought to the attention of policy-makers because of a natural disaster or other major public event.

As individuals, we can influence the problems that policy-makers address by sharing what problems are impacting our health and well-being, as well as what is contributing to thriving communities. We can share our problems with our friends, co-workers, and neighbors, as well as with community organizations and through our local newspapers and other media.



STEP 2

## POLICY FORMULATION

This is the process of coming up with a solution to address the problem at hand. Sometimes government agencies and groups who are impacted by the problem might get involved to influence what the solution looks like. This could result in a report with proposed solutions or policies.

As individuals, we can influence this process by organizing with our friends, family and neighbors. We don't have to talk directly to our policy-makers, but can share our stories and experiences with organizers, non-profit agencies and community based organizations who represent residents impacted by the problem. At times, in order for a solution to be proposed, individuals will be asked to vote on a ballot issue, to see what types of solutions they support. So another way we can make our voices heard is by voting on ballot issues.



STEP 3

## CREATION OF A BILL

After a solution is formulated, then a member of Congress formalizes the solution into a document called a bill. Sometimes bills are created by one political party or another, and sometimes bills are created by both political parties. This is the step when the proposed solution becomes official. Members of Congress and the Senate vote on whether they like the proposed solution or not. If enough Senators, members of Congress, and top government officials support the solution, then the bill is passed and becomes law.

As individuals, we can influence this process by organizing with our friends, family and neighbors. We can share our stories and experiences with policy-makers—either directly or through community organizations and the news media—so they know whether we support the proposed policy or not.



STEP 4

## IMPLEMENTATION

After the bill passes and becomes law, it has to be implemented, that is, put into effect. This implementation could be done by community organizations, non-profit organizations, government agencies, or private agencies.

As individuals, we have the power to let policy-makers know if the policy is negatively impacting our lives or creating greater inequities. We can do this by partnering with grassroots organizers, non-profit organizations, or other community based organizations, and by using local news media, to share stories about how a policy is impacting us.



STEP 5

## EVALUATION & AMENDMENT

Once a bill becomes law, it is still possible to change it. If, during the implementation of the bill, we realize that there are some pieces missing or the solution does not work to address the problem, then the bill can be amended, or fixed.

At this point the bill may go through steps 1-4 again, opening up opportunities again for us as individuals to use our voice and power!



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Coloradans**  
When we use this term in this guide we are referring to long-time residents and new neighbors. Every person living in Colorado.

**Community power**  
The lived experience and expert power of residents, who know what they need in order to be healthy.

**Community**  
Groups of people who are impacted by policies and programs. Community, as used in this guide, is not limited by geographic boundary.

**Displacement**  
A process by which low-income families and families of color who have lived in a neighborhood for generations are forced out of their homes because they cannot afford the high costs of new development.

**Gentrification**  
The process of improving a neighborhood through new development such as food stores, bike lanes, and health services, which may lead to the displacement of long-time residents.

**Racial Inequity**  
When systems and policies create fewer opportunities for groups of people based on their race.

**Equity**  
When everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has a fair and just opportunity to live life to their fullest potential. This means removing barriers such as poverty and discrimination so all people can thrive.

**Equality**  
Providing the same set of resources or services to all people, regardless of their starting place.

**Disparity**  
Differences among groups of people. Not the same as inequities.

**Inequity**  
When systems and policies result in less opportunity for groups of people based on factors like gender, race, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation or immigration status.

**Neighborhood segregation**  
When communities are separated into different neighborhoods based on race and income. The impact of neighborhood segregation is that the living environments of these communities become very different over time.

**Intersectionality**  
Individuals have many different social identities—gender, race, class, age, ability, religious status, sexual identity, education level, language, geography, migration status, nationality, etc. All of these various social identities overlap and interact with each other. When an individual has multiple social identities that are more often discriminated against, the effects of inequity are greater.

**Structural racism**  
When all of our institutions—such as housing, education and transportation—have created systems and policies over time that work better for white families than for families of color. Structural racism limits opportunities for some, but contributes to poor health for all.

**Resiliency**  
The ability of communities to rebound, positively adapt to, or thrive amidst changing conditions or challenges and maintain quality of life and healthy growth for present and future generations.<sup>35</sup>

**Self-sufficiency**  
The amount of money a family needs to earn to make ends meet without public or private assistance.

**Thrive**  
When a person has the opportunity to make healthy choices, afford food and housing, have good jobs that can sustain a family, attend quality schools for better education, and fulfill their potential.

**Rural/Urban**  
In this guide, the term *rural* refers to towns and cities with fewer people and that sometimes have more agricultural land, mountain ranges, or are connected to resorts. We use *urban* to refer to large cities along the Front Range that tend to have more people living close together.

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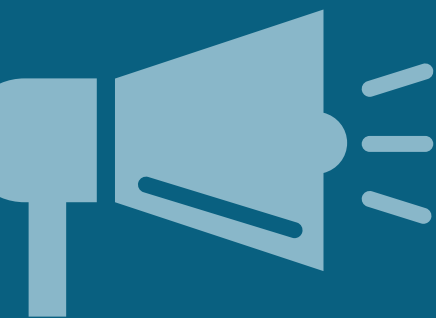
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# Help Us Continue to Tell Colorado's Story

## Share Your Story!

Use **#YourVoiceCO** on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share photos and examples of what makes your community thrive and how you're using this Action Guide!

## What Did You Think?

We'd love to hear your thoughts. Please complete this one minute survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6NXH9PH>.

## Questions?

We love questions. Please email any and all questions to [cdphe\\_healthequity@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe_healthequity@state.co.us)

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