

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 2019 JUST TRANSITION STUDY SESSION MEMORANDUM

The concept of “just transition” emerged from grassroots social movements, including those for labor rights, Indigenous rights, civil rights, environmental health and environmental justice. It refers to building a more sustainable economy with workers, communities and those most impacted by environmental and economic problems at the center of decision-making and solutions. This memo will outline: successes to date and recommendations based on initial findings to discuss.

The Just Transition Collaborative (JTC) at CU Boulder engages in community partnerships to advance social and environmental justice particularly in the transition away from a fossil fuels economy. We support leadership of underrepresented groups to foster more inclusive policies, projects and participation in decision-making, particularly about energy, climate and employment. Launched in July of 2016, the Just Transition Collaborative (JTC) was created in response to concerns expressed by community stakeholders that the City of Boulder’s draft Climate Action Plan better integrate considerations related to equity by faculty and staff at CU Boulder: David Ciplet, Michelle Gabrieloff-Parish, Phaedra C. Pezzullo, and Manuela Sifuentes (<https://www.colorado.edu/jtc/>).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

2016

In December of 2016, the JTC issued a report, “A Just Transition for Boulder’s Climate, Energy and Employment Future,” and collaborated with City of Boulder Planning staff to successfully advise the City Council of Boulder to incorporate social justice objectives into the Climate Commitment Goal Approval Document. The 2016 Climate Action Plan includes a commitment to pursue a socially just climate and energy transition, and specific objectives to:

- (a) strengthen civic leadership of underrepresented constituents;
- (b) generate socially just economic and employment opportunities; and
- (c) promote equity in energy costs and ownership of green technologies.

Since the adoption of these objectives by the City, we have worked closely with community partners, impacted residents and City and County officials to support the implementation of these objectives through culturally-relevant, inclusive, community-engaged and innovative forms of policy guidance. This is in line with Boulder’s Climate Commitment to “integrating social equity considerations in all major energy transition initiatives to improve the economic, social and political opportunities for all segments of the Boulder community.”

2017-2018

In 2017-2018, the JTC supported the City and County to implement these objectives through energy and equity research and the development of the Climate Justice Leaders program and the Climate Justice Assembly.

Energy & Equity Research

Assistant Professor Ciplet worked with six undergraduate and graduate ENVIS students during the summer of 2017 to conduct research on equity issues in transportation and green jobs to identify and assess existing initiatives and resources, as well as potential areas for future planning (see extended report).

Climate Justice Leaders Program

JTC Community Engagement Manager Magnolia Landa-Posas along with Philanthropiece Foundation's Neda Kikhia established the Climate Justice Leaders (CJL) program, which aimed to develop leadership capability from impacted community members to contribute to more inclusive climate policy and projects.

The CJL program was created in order to address the lack of a diverse representation in Boulder city and county sustainability efforts. Our pilot cohort consisted of 10 community leaders that represented communities of color, immigrants, youth, elders and low-income communities in the city and county of Boulder. Leaders were compensated for their time and expertise with stipends. In addition to monetary compensation, we also provided leaders with childcare and meals in order to eliminate possible barriers for participation in our 2 to 5-hour weekend and evening meetings.

One gauge of the success of this pilot has been the increased involvement CJL participations have volunteered to do after the program, including applying for roles in: Foundation for Leaders Organizing for Water and Sustainability (FLOWS), People Engaged in Raising Leaders and the Health Equity Advisory Committee.

Climate Justice Assembly

JTC coordinated the 'Climate Justice Assembly' (CJA). This included four workshops that brought together 35 diverse community leaders, including the Climate Justice Leaders, policy-makers (including the Mayor, City Council members and County Commissioners), NGO and university representatives to envision new forms of collaboration, policy and project action and assessment.



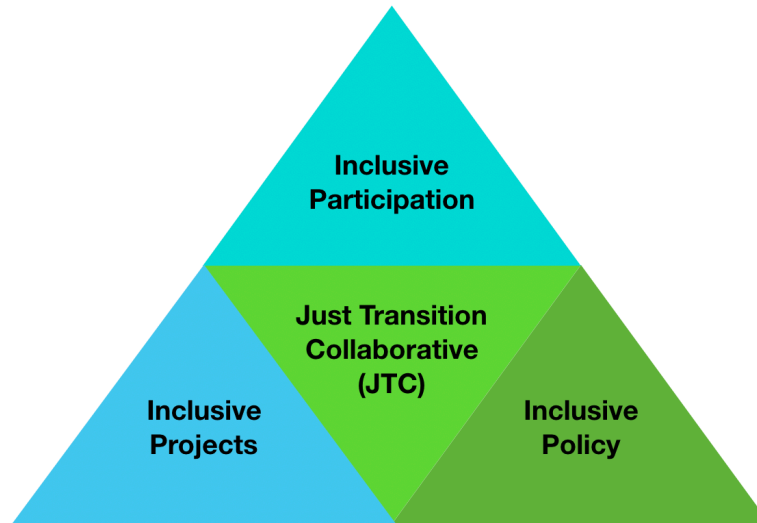
CJL Participant: Angela M. Ortiz

CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADER PROFILE:

One of the Climate Justice Leaders, Angela M. Ortiz states that she enjoyed how the program created a space to grow, learn and collaborate alongside a diverse set of community leaders in Boulder. As an example of the strength and value that our underrepresented communities can bring to our work, Angela is a Colombian native who became passionate about social justice, cultural diversity, and intersectional oppression and transformation shortly after migrating north in 2001. An exemplar of underheard community expertise, she is a skilled language service provider (Spanish/English/American Sign Language), an experienced urban agriculture educator and permaculturalist, and a Program Coordinator for FLOWS.

Angela joined the Climate Justice Leaders program to learn more about the process of Boulder policy making for sustainability and equity. When asked what she found most valuable about CJL, Angela said: **"The process was a reminder of the power and voice that I and my community have to create change."** After the CJL program, Angela participated in the People Engaged in Raising Leaders program and is exploring more opportunities to participate in decisions that matter to the city of Boulder by building bridges between people, cultures, natural resources and the Earth.

The work of the CJA explored three parts 1) inclusive policy practices and goals around sustainability in Boulder city and county that are important and relevant to underrepresented communities 2) identification of equity needs and barriers in policies and programs around the city and county of Boulder broadly and specific to green workforce development and transportation and 3) to engage in conversations about how power, identity and bias influence efforts that the city and county work on in regards to equity and sustainability. An orientation was facilitated for stakeholders to bring them up to speed with the work that the Leaders had engaged with and to get a better understanding of the work we would be doing as an Assembly.



RECOMMENDATIONS: A JUST TRANSITION FOR BOULDER

A just transition should not be viewed as one isolated area of policy-making, but as a core set of principles and practices that are addressed in all aspects of municipal planning. In other words, it should be the core framework from which all other relevant decisions are made. The following are recommendations for City Council based on our initial research and initiatives:

1. INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

- **EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE POLICY TEMPLATE AND PROTOCOLS:** In the JTC's experience, City requests to integrate equity considerations into policy often emerge at a very late stage in the policy implementation process, after a clear agenda and use of resources has already been established. Ideally, community engagement should be rooted in open-ended processes in which priorities, commitments and strategies are yet to be defined and in formalized efforts to elevate the role of individuals that have the least time and resources. Boulder should shift from a "check-box" approach of holding one-off public meetings (and potentially creating meeting fatigue), to strategies that build institutional processes, capacity, resources and recognition of impacted communities necessary for meaningful representation and leadership. In addition to appropriating funds more equitably it is important to note that a number of our recommendations are centered around organizational and procedural changes. We recommend that the city:

- generate a template for minimum standards and best practices by which equity considerations are integrated into planning, policies, and assessment;
 - increase communication between different City of Boulder organizational units in an effort to connect work relate to equity and sustainability; and
 - Increase willingness and practice of slowing down and listening to the needs of underrepresented communities.
- **LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING:** The City should support projects that build the capacity and leadership skills of underrepresented people to participate effectively in shaping the City’s approach to sustainability and equity. This could build upon the successes of the JTC’s Climate Justice Leaders program.
 - **INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT FUND:** Requests to get community input are often accompanied with limited resources and time devoted to building capacity of the underrepresented individuals to participate effectively, or to conduct related research. Moreover, the city does not offer any formal support structures for people of color and low-income constituents to take leadership positions in City boards and commissions. While 20% of Boulder County residents identify as persons of color, only 7% of municipal board and commission members are people of color. It can be intimidating and isolating for underrepresented community members to join governance boards without strong support networks and allies. We recommend establishment of an ‘inclusive engagement fund’. Possible avenues for funding include revenue from the Boulder Sustainability Tax, the Health Equity Fund, and if implemented, a vehicle fuel fee. Such a fund should provide predictable long-term funding to support organizational efforts that:
 - build the capacity of community members directly impacted by environmental, economic and social problems and underrepresented in policy-making processes;
 - support underrepresented constituents to join all City governance boards and committees;
 - partner with the County to support efforts such as the People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL) program;
 - increase partnerships with organizations and communities that center equity;
 - provide relevant expertise on inclusive engagement, offer inclusivity and equity trainings, and review new plans and initiatives in relation to equity concerns;
 - make funding accessible without major time investment in the application process by relevant organizations that often have limited capacity and resources; and
 - reach decisions with representation from directly impacted constituents.
 - **INCLUSIVE EQUITY TRAINING FOR CITY STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES:** Inclusive policy engagement should be led by municipal staff trained with the skills, resources, cultural competence and influence dedicated to engaging communities meaningfully. Existing staff and board members need training to support inclusivity and to shift oppressive and exclusionary culture. The City of Boulder is currently pursuing a Racial Equity Project, in partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

This includes working to ‘normalize’, ‘organize’ and ‘operationalize’ racial equity tools and a data-driven approach to change the internal city culture. It is important that such efforts are supported by:

- predictable long-term funding and a commitment to extending this work to all agencies, boards and commissions;
- trainings that respond to the specific concerns of underrepresented agency members and constituents;
- trainings that ensure that communications efforts appropriately center equity and sustainability from the beginning; and
- highly professional translation and interpretation staff.

2. INCLUSIVE PROJECTS AND POLICIES

A broad national coalition is pushing for a massive federal program of investment in clean energy jobs and infrastructure, with the goal of transforming the economy to be more socially just. Boulder has an opportunity to establish itself as a national leader for how the emerging green economy can be a lever to generate positive social change and opportunity for marginalized groups and the community at large. Specifically, Boulder’s climate and energy commitments have the potential to create local green jobs that are equitable and fair. With careful investments in comprehensive workforce development programs, equitable economic development policy, and local labor protections, these commitments can translate into meaningful and sustainable job opportunities for underrepresented or marginalized communities and can safeguard basic rights for these community members. Any such effort should be driven by the ideas and participation of those constituents most directly impacted. The JTC recommends establishing a blueprint for key initiatives for a Green New Deal in Boulder, which could serve as a guide for directing revenue generated through initiatives such as a fuel levy and sustainability tax. A Green New Deal in Boulder could advance:

- **JOB TRAINING FOR AN INCLUSIVE GREEN WORKFORCE:** The City of Boulder has an opportunity to build upon existing local and state programs to support the training of an inclusive green workforce at all career levels, simultaneously improving employment conditions and meeting sustainability goals.
- **SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT LANDSCAPING:** Model initiatives that advance an inclusive green economy are needed to identify constraints, opportunities and best practices. This JTC project would engage the Climate Justice Leaders and teams of graduate students to support landscaping business owners from underrepresented groups to transition from fossil fuel-powered equipment to environmentally sustainable practices and solar-powered technologies.
- **STRUCTURES FOR INCLUSIVE GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** Greening the economy goes beyond creating and establishing training opportunities for entry level jobs. A gap currently exists in support for underrepresented entrepreneurs to build and transition their businesses to serve the green economy. The City of Boulder could support this by funding a green entrepreneurship training center, perhaps in partnership with the Small Business

Development Center and other relevant organizations such as CU Boulder's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative, the Watson Institute, and Galvanize Boulder.

- **ROBUST WORKER PROTECTIONS AND A LIVING WAGE:** Boulder should work to ensure that the emerging green economy supports worker's rights and economic justice for underrepresented constituents. Boulder could pursue a program similar to the Clean Energy Works Portland program in Portland, Oregon. This program provided low-interest, long term financing to homeowners for comprehensive home energy efficiency retrofitting services, while building equitable workforce opportunities for marginalized communities. It also included a community workforce agreement that prioritized underrepresented and disenfranchised workers.
- **HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE REFORMS:** A green economy that advances social justice should also promote livable conditions as they relate to employment, such as accessible housing, transit, and childcare. Affordable and well-located housing options are a critical component of creating a strong, equitable local economy in which lower and middle-income families can access employment opportunities, spend less time and resources on commuting, and spend less resources on child care. One possibility is to focus on expanding free access for City of Boulder and Boulder County youth, seniors, and differently-abled people to the RTD system. In addition to reducing emissions, this would have the benefit of supporting the next generation of transit riders, including those that are low-income and lack other options, by getting more youth out of cars and into more active transportation.
- **A JUST TRANSITION INDEX:** Focusing on a just transition offers an ideal opportunity to shift from more conventional measurement forms of progress in Boulder, to a more comprehensive and equity-oriented lens of capabilities. Such an approach could be modeled after the country Bhutan's 'Gross National Happiness Index' (GNHI), but adapted to focus on a just transition. There are three notable characteristics of this approach. First, what is being measured, it's relative weight of importance, and the ways in which it is assessed, is the result of intensive deliberation processes, with particular attention to those most deprived of well-being. Second, the focus of the index is to raise the standard of everyone above well-being thresholds. Third, areas of measurement are not viewed in isolation, but rather, as a composite that accounts for a diversity of needs and desires.

THE JTC AND THE CITY MOVING FORWARD

The JTC is eager to continue to work to advance a just transition within Boulder. Our work for 2019 is contingent on funding. The JTC is currently fundraising for three potential projects. With proper funding and commitment to the issues, the City of Boulder could establish itself as a leader towards a just transition in these areas:

- **CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADERS FOR AN INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY:** This project will serve as a model for cultivating an inclusive green economy in Boulder and in cities across the US. We will recruit and assemble a second cohort Climate Justice Leaders made up of underrepresented and disenfranchised small business owners and workers. The leaders will be tasked with identifying possibilities and constraints for minority-owned landscaping businesses to adopt sustainable technologies and practices.

- **SUSTAINABLE AND JUST LANDSCAPING:** The data and stories collected by the Climate Justice Leaders (above) will inform capstone projects of graduate student teams in the University of Colorado Boulder's Masters of the Environment program. This may include assessing sustainability and environmental benefits of sustainable landscaping, developing customized educational training programs, creating access to new revenue sources, markets and technologies, and creating and implementing green entrepreneurship plans. This work will be conducted in partnership with faculty in Leeds School of Business, Environmental Design, ENVS, ATLAS and Engineering, City staff, and business and NGO leaders including the Boulder Small Business Development Center, Boulder Housing Partners and Workforce Boulder County.
- **INCLUSIVITY TEMPLATES AND PROTOCOLS:** We are also looking forward to our continued work with the city of Boulder in regards to efforts that address the intersection of sustainability, equity and resiliency. Requests to integrate equity considerations into policy often emerge at a very late stage in the policy implementation process, after a clear agenda and use of resources has already been established. We would like to help the City to develop, adopt and implement protocols for minimum standards and best practices for inclusive policy engagement and the integration of equity considerations into policies and assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Approved by the JTC Executive Committee, this memo has been informed by four sources of input. First, based on the City's 2016 Climate Action Plan, the Ciplet Lab researched and identified opportunities for enhancing equity in Boulder in relation to transportation and green jobs programs and policies. The output was informed by 35 interviews with City and County staff and a review of related programs and scholarship. Six CU Boulder students participated in the data collection and write-up of results: Emily Schaldach, Ivonne Morales, Emily Hite, Rebecca Page, Lauren Gifford and Harsha Maragh.

Second, JTC Community Engagement Manager, Magnolia Landa-Posas, consultant and CU Boulder Ph.D. Candidate, Deanne Grant, and JTC Co-Director Manuela Sifuentes, took notes and compiled a document summarizing the outcomes, insights gathered, and survey results from the four CJA workshops and the CJL Program.

Third, Landa-Posas conducted individual meetings with CJ Leaders and CJA participants to gather input in response to draft recommendations developed. These include recommendations on how the City can best pursue equitable community engagement, policy and project development related to the implementation of the Climate Action Plan on transportation and green jobs.

Fourth, JTC Executive Committee member Michelle Gabrieloff-Parish was integral to advising the process and co-leading key workshops.

This memorandum was written by: Prof. David Ciplet (ENVS), Magnolia Landa-Posas (staff), Prof. Phaedra C. Pezzullo (COMM), Michelle Gabrieloff-Parish (CU Environmental Center) and Rebecca Page (ENVS, graduate student). As always, the JTC is grateful for the ongoing dialogue and openness offered by Brett KenCairn, Sarah Huntley, and Kendra Tupper.