

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	October 19, 2020
Action Required:	No action required
Presenter:	Caetano de Campos Lopes, Director of Climate Policy, Community Climate Collaborative Susan Kruse, Executive Director, Community Climate Collaborative
Staff Contacts:	Susan Kruse, Executive Director, Community Climate Collaborative Susan Elliott, Climate Protection Program Manager
Title:	Energy Equity: Tackling Climate Change by Increasing Home Affordability

Background:

In the last few years, tackling both the climate and the housing crises became a priority for the City of Charlottesville. City staff have oriented the City Council to establish ambitious climate goals and the inclusion of affordable housing as a priority for Charlottesville’s Comprehensive Plan. Still, although solutions for these two important crises could be achieved together, much still needs to be done so that intersectional solutions are co-created across different departments, committees, authorities, agencies, and organizations.

The Community Climate Collaborative (C3) used US Census data, US Department of Energy Low-Income Energy Data Access Tool (LEAD Tool) data, and local housing stock information to look beyond City-wide averages for energy burden at the census tract level. C3 mapped hot spots for energy burden and sought to understand common drivers among those households (e.g. income level, home ownership status, building age, race, education level).

Discussion:

C3’s report, *Uncovering Energy Inequity: An Analysis of how Energy Burden is Distributed in Charlottesville, Virginia* (hyperlink to the report is included under the Attachments section of this memo), found that 1 in 4 Charlottesville City households experience an unsustainable energy burden — spending more than 6% of annual income on energy costs, and 1 in 5 households pay more than 10% of their incomes on energy. C3’s report also revealed a high direct correlation between energy-burdened neighborhoods and populations of color in Charlottesville. Other findings include:

- While Charlottesville’s average energy burden is 2.3%, extremely-Low Income households face the highest average energy burden, of approximately 16% of their income.
- 4,852 households in Charlottesville face high to extremely high energy burden levels. Census tracts 2.02, 4.01, 5.01, 6, and 7 are, each of them, home to 500+ highly energy burden households.
- Given a same built year, homes occupied by renters seem to bear energy burden levels up to twice as much as the homeowners’ average.
- When controlled by income levels, the average energy burden faced by households appear to be uncorrelated with their homeownership status.

While working through the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread economic recession, well-designed equitable clean energy solutions that help increase energy affordability will certainly help place Charlottesville in the right direction.

Alignment with City Council’s Vision and Strategic Plan:

Energy equity supports the City Council’s “Quality Housing Opportunities for All”, “Economic Sustainability”, “A Green City” and “America’s Healthiest City” visions. It also contributes to Goal 1 “Inclusive, Self-sufficient Community”, objectives 1.3 “Increase affordable housing options”, 1.4 "Enhance Financial Health of Residents", and 1.5 "Intentionally Address Issues of Race and Equity"; Goal 3 “ Beautiful and Sustainable Natural and Built Environment”, objectives 3.1 "Engage in Robust and Context Sensitive Urban Planning and Implementation", and 3.4 Be responsible stewards of natural resources. This also aligns with recently established ambitious climate goals and the inclusion of affordable housing as a priority for Charlottesville’s Comprehensive Plan.

Community Engagement:

The Community Climate Collaborative (C3) has provided multiple opportunities for the public to learn from C3’s Uncovering Energy Inequity report and provide feedback to our findings, including two webinar sessions with more than 100 attendees that included a general overview of the report and the participation of representatives of local social justice leaders from Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition (CLIHC) and Sin Barreras. Additionally, a C3’s social media and official website provided multiple avenues of communication for community input and comments. Since then, C3 has been meeting with affordable housing organizations and community leaders to receive further feedback on our report and co-create and sponsor an advocacy campaign around the topic of energy equity.

Budgetary Impact:

No budgetary impact is anticipated at this point.

Recommendation:

The City of Charlottesville should ensure that the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plans, and Climate Action Plan are developed with an important focus on energy equity. Possible pathways for this to be achieved include:

- Adopting a resolution emphasizing the importance of energy equity
- Requesting that steering committees and staff leading these planning efforts incorporate energy equity considerations into their processes
- Including energy equity as part of the review criteria when considering adoption of these plans

Alternatives:

Council may elect to not follow the above recommendation. C3 submits that omitting energy equity in these plans would hinder the City's ability to invest in intersectional equitable housing policies that could

- (i) considerably alleviate household energy burden by reducing energy expenditures and, thereby, increasing housing affordability; and
- (ii) make homes more climate-friendly, with less energy waste, and help improve health levels for members of the household.

Attachments:

C3's Uncovering Energy Inequity report, executive summary, and public webinar can be found on a dedicated webpage [on the Community Climate Collaborative's website](#).