

# COMMUNITY INPUT FOR EJ TOOLKIT REFRESH

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## Equival's Recommendations and Toolkit Refresh Process

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# Outline

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- Description of Equival's process of using Equity Emphasis Areas and interviews
- Common themes from the interviews
- Equival's recommendations
- COG's synthesis and next steps for the EJ Toolkit Refresh

# Equival's Community Engagement Process

- Used COG's Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) to identify disfavored census blocks within the metropolitan Washington region
- 12 out of 24 COG jurisdictions have EEAs to varying degrees.
- Equival targeted their interviews by relative proportion of EEAs.
  - A higher number of EEAs in Prince George's County and the District of Columbia meant these areas were more highly targeted for Equival's interviews.
- Equival aimed for reaching 50 community-based organizations (CBOs) and completed interviews with leaders from 14 CBOs.

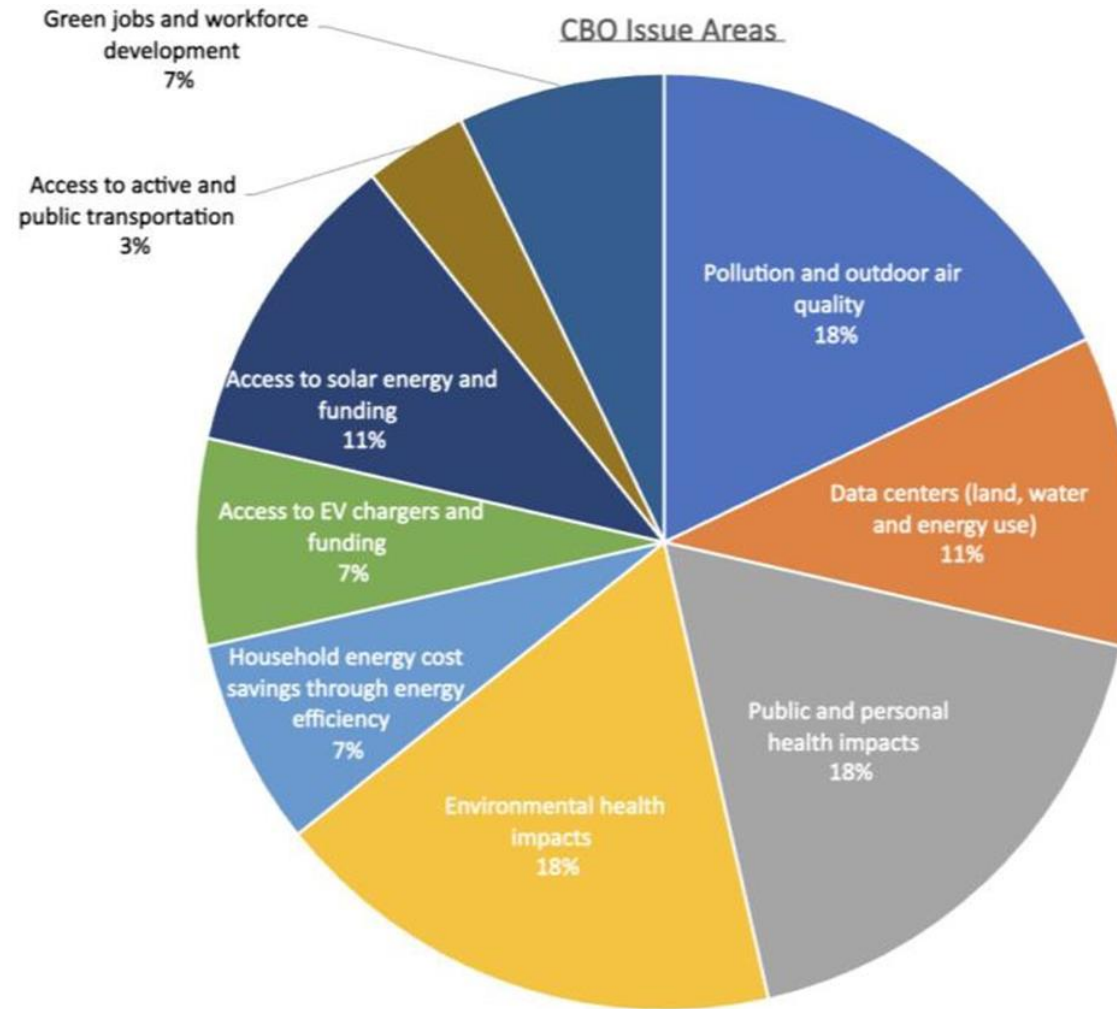
Row Labels	Count of EEA Total Index
Prince George's County (MD)	104
District of Columbia (DC)	93
Montgomery County (MD)	53
Fairfax County (VA)	44
Prince William County (VA)	22
City of Alexandria (VA)	12
Frederick County (MD)	11
Arlington County (VA)	8
Charles County (MD)	7
Loudoun County (VA)	6
City of Manassas (VA)	3
City of Manassas Park (VA)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>

# Equival's Community Engagement Process

- Also met with ACPAC members via “office hours” and the March and May ACPAC meetings.
- Met with other communities at 7 community outreach events

Event Name
Anacostia Parks and Community Collaborative Meeting
Ward 7 Environmental Justice Town Hall
South County Environmental Justice Coalition
Fairfax County Earth Day Celebration
DC Lead and Asthma Campaign Youth Planning Meeting
Loudoun County Environment and Energy Commission Forum
Youth Collaboration Planning Discussion

# Core Issues of Concern

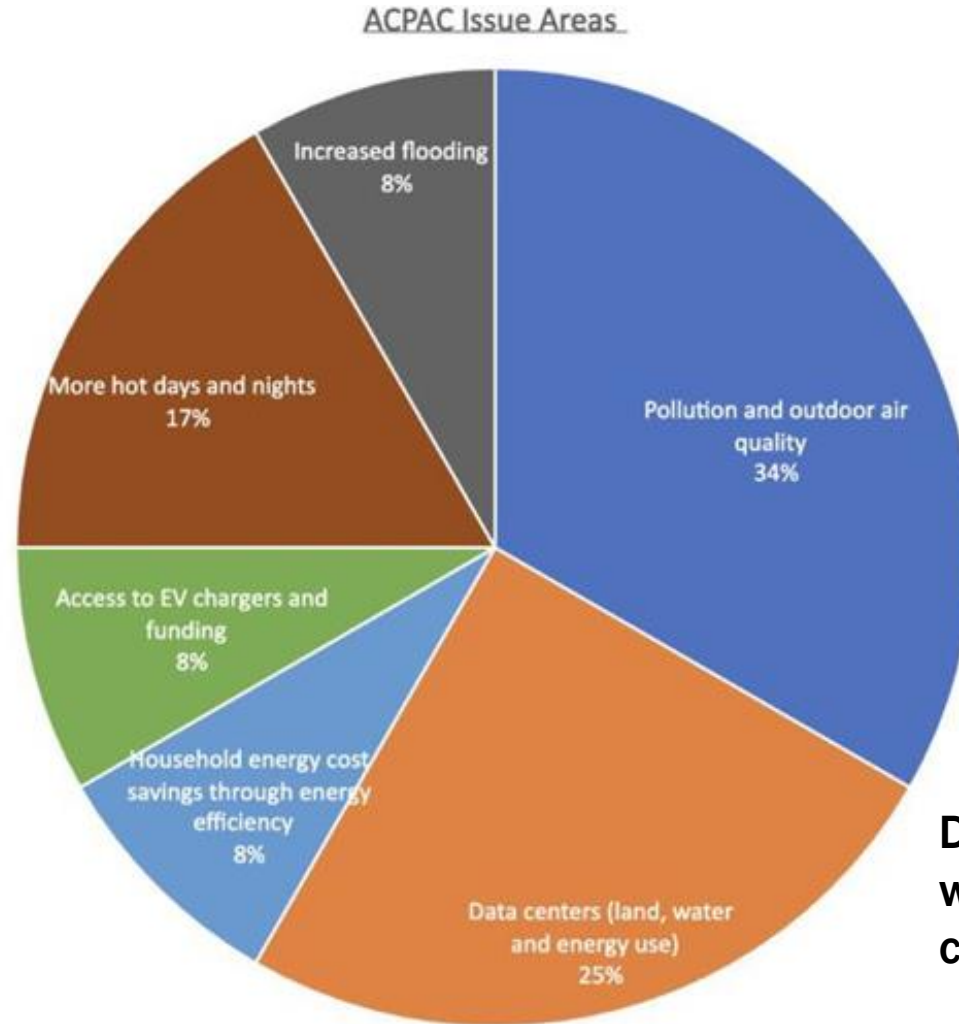


## Three common issues:

- **Impacts on air quality** (vehicular, industrial, data centers, and cumulative).
- **Energy costs and reliability,**
- **Climate impacts** (prolonged heat waves and flooding).



# Core Issues of Concern



**Data centers were a widely expressed concern in Virginia.**



# Common Themes

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Equival's research produced some common themes, meaning views were expressed by roughly at least 2/3 of people interviewed.

- Desire direct engagement between local government officials and community leaders and residents, with an emphasis on face-to-face interactions.
  - CBOs suggested going beyond a formal structure and setting up various mechanisms (roundtable discussions with community groups, neighborhood and community canvassing, online input tools, etc.) to speak more directly with residents and gauge their concerns.
- Noted a lack of trust that leaders will genuinely listen to community concerns. In their view, many residents feel disempowered, believing that their voices have little impact on decision-making processes.
- Would like more transparency on how community input will be used and why decisions are made, on sources of data, and how decisions are made.

# Equival's Recommendations

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## Community Engagement Best Practices

- Leverage Existing Community Networks
- Prioritize In-Person Communication
- Engage Early and Often
- Support Community-Led Decision-Making & Two-Way Data Gathering
- Build on Existing Advisory Groups
- Bridge Community Engagement with Public Comment



# Equival's Recommendations, continued

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## COG-specific recommendations

- Use convening power for Equity and Inclusion
- Drive regional consensus on community priorities
- Engage regional organizations for deeper Insight
- Provide data and information to communities and governments alike
- Leverage relationships to support capacity building

# COG's Next Steps for the EJ Toolkit

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- Synthesize Equival's research with other EJ learnings and processes including:
  - Listening sessions with local government staff (February, March 2025)
  - Research for Comprehensive Climate Action Plans (CCAP) —both COG's and local governments' Climate Action Plans
  - MWAQC's *Resource Guide for Air Quality Action* (May 2025)
  - September 4<sup>th</sup> CCAP Climate Leaders' Engagement webinar.
- Staff will present a draft EJ Toolkit Refresh at the November ACPAC meeting.

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