

To	Michael Moore, Director
From	TT 5.1 Initiative Team
Department	Transportation
Date	January 6, 2022
Subject	Strategic Plan TT 5.1, Sidewalk Petition Program Equity Review

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## Overview

The following analysis supports Strategic Plan Transportation and Transit Initiative 5.1 (TT 5.1):

*Evaluate revisions to transportation programs and policies to improve equitable implementation of infrastructure improvements, broaden options, increase eligibility, and reduce barriers to participation.*

An equity review of the Sidewalk Petition Program (SPP) is the first step in our initiative team's work plan. The SPP was created to address sidewalk needs on streets in neighborhoods that were either developed before regulations were in place that required sidewalk construction or annexed into the City after initial development. The SPP currently provides the opportunity for City residents to initiate sidewalk construction on neighborhood streets at no cost to the applicant or neighbors.

Petition projects advance if the requested sidewalk is 1) eligible based on a few key criteria (i.e. not already funded through another City program) and 2) receives sufficient neighborhood support through balloting. Projects are then ranked using criteria related to connectivity, safety, equity, and cost-effectiveness. The Wake County Vulnerability Index (described later in this memorandum) is used to account for equity, and accounts for up to 3 points out of a total of 20+ points. The highest-ranking projects are included in the annual Capital Improvement Program.

The Sidewalk Petition Program was suspended in 2020 due to a construction backlog and insufficient funding to deliver projects in a reasonable timeframe. City leadership is interested in evaluating whether to restart the program, reform the program, or replace the program with an entirely different approach to neighborhood sidewalk delivery.

The following memorandum includes a review of the SPP using an Equity Lens and recommendations for next steps based on the Equity Toolkit.

## Equity Lens Inputs

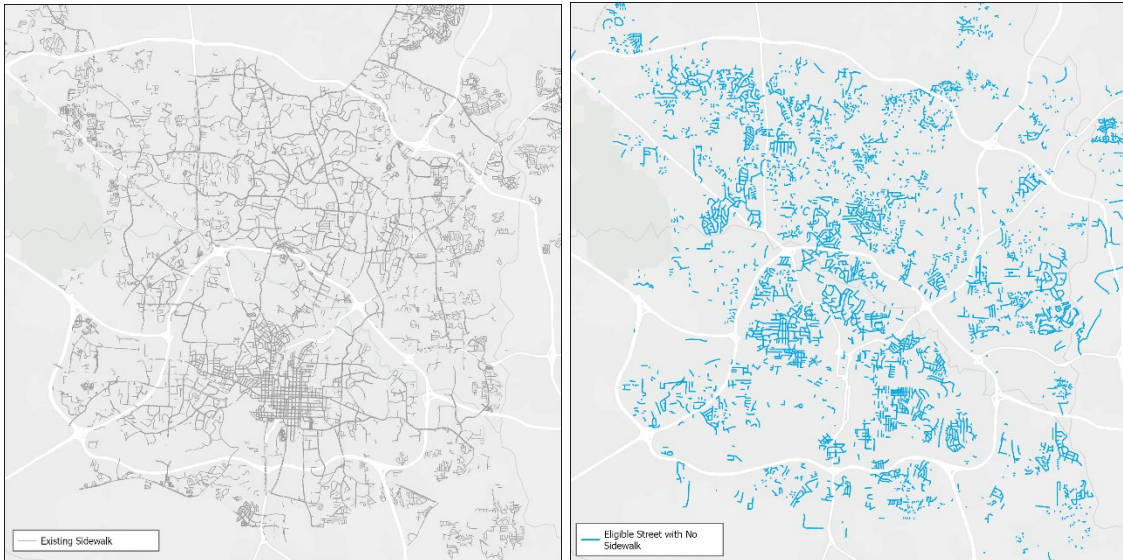
To answer each question of the Equity Lens, the team collected available sidewalk petition data from the last decade (data covers 2011 – 2019), mapped the petitions, and overlaid the results with key demographic indicators and composite equity analyses. The following data sources supported this analysis:

- 2019 Wake County Vulnerability Assessment, which includes the following indicators:
  - *Persons living below the federal poverty rate*
  - *Unemployed civilians age 16 and over in the labor force*
  - *Youth under age 18 + Adults age 65 and over*
  - *Vacant housing units*
  - *Adults ages 25-64 who did not earn a high school diploma or GED*
- 2019 Raleigh Prosperity Index, which includes the following indicators:
  - *Educational Attainment*
  - *Housing Cost*
  - *Broadband Access*
  - *Per Capita Income*
  - *Unemployment Rate*
- 2020 Census Redistricting Data, Tables P1: Race and P2: Hispanic or Latino
  - *Black Population* – Sum of all individuals identifying as Black or African American alone or multiple races that included Black or African American
  - *Non-White Population* – Sum of all individuals except those identifying as White alone
  - *Hispanic/Latino Population* – Sum of all individuals of any race identifying as Hispanic/Latino

In addition to mapping the location of sidewalk petitions, the team also mapped sidewalk needs. Sidewalk needs that could be addressed by the program (neighborhood streets with no sidewalks) represent the ‘universe’ of potential petitions.

## Equity Lens Analysis

If the SPP were distributing city resources equally by sidewalk need, regardless of other indicators, petitions would correlate approximately with missing sidewalks in any given area of the city. The following two maps show existing city sidewalks (gray) and missing sidewalks on streets eligible for the SPP (blue).



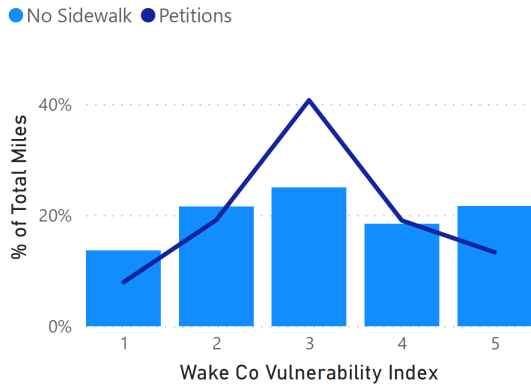
To determine if petitions have correlated to sidewalk needs over the last decade, the team compared the distribution of actual sidewalk petition projects between 2011 and 2019 to the distribution of eligible streets with no sidewalk within sub-geographies around the City.

On all the charts that follow, the blue bars show the distribution of missing sidewalks on eligible streets and the purple line shows the distribution of petitions. Both datasets are aggregated by an equity indicator on each chart, which is shown along the X axis. **The charts provide a comparison between where petitions are happening and where the needs are by each equity indicator.** Wherever the purple line is below the blue bar, petitions are underrepresented. Wherever the purple line is above the blue bar, petitions are overrepresented.

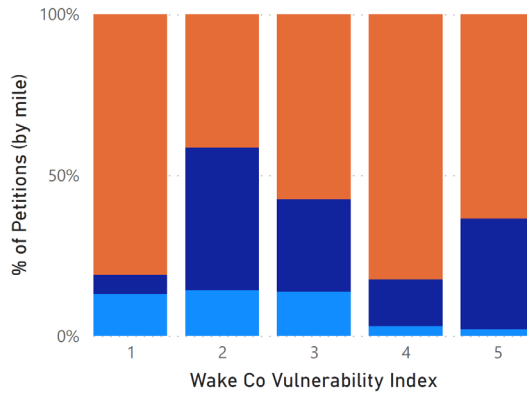
## 1. Who is experiencing burden?

On each chart and map showing the Wake County Vulnerability Index, a higher index indicates a more vulnerable population. The left chart below shows that **petitions are underrepresented in the most vulnerable areas (categories 4 and 5) relative to sidewalk needs**. The right chart shows a range of balloting success by vulnerability. Petitions were most successful in category 2, the second to lowest vulnerability category.

Sidewalk Petitions by Vulnerability Index



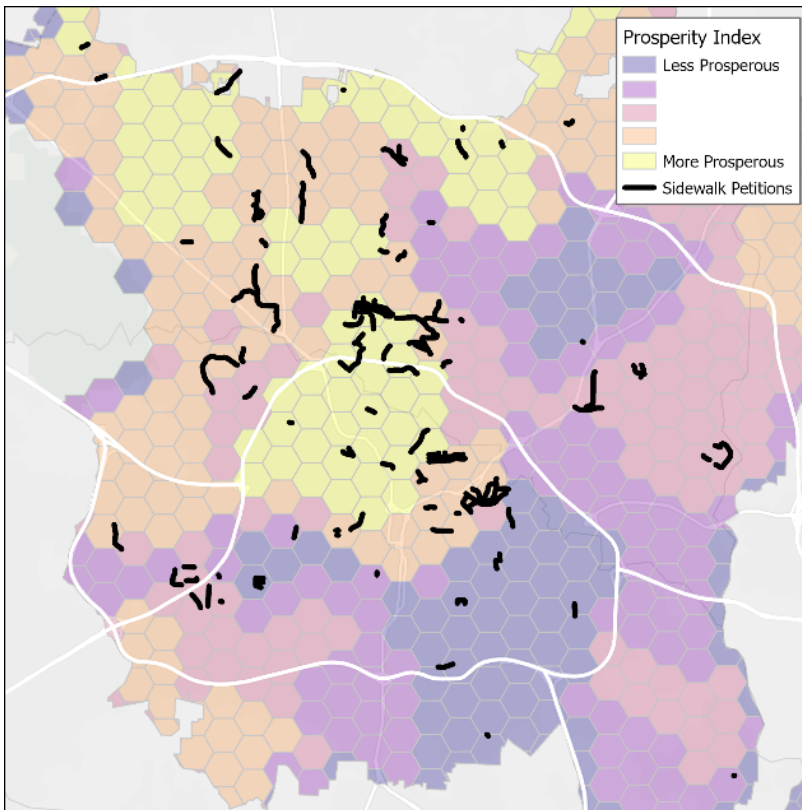
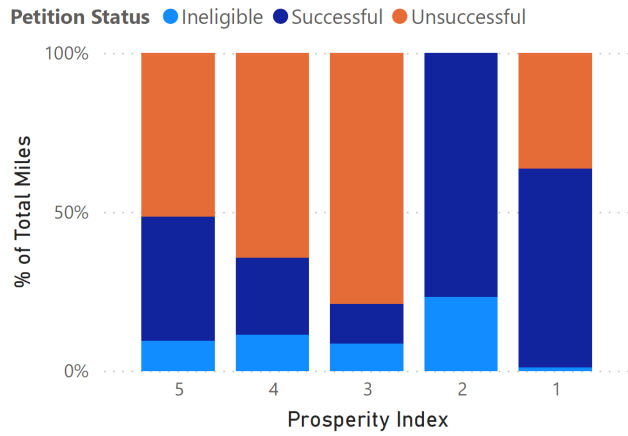
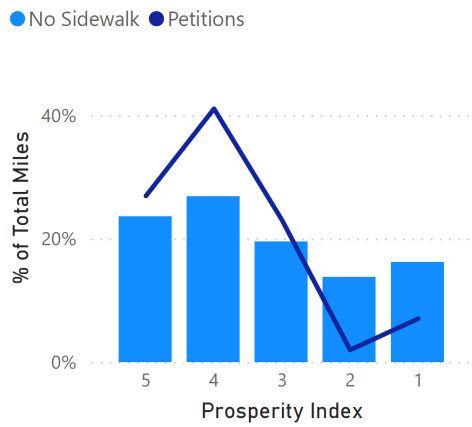
Petition Status



## 2. Who is experiencing benefit?

The distribution of petitions is even more stark in comparison to the Raleigh Prosperity Index. **Petitions are overrepresented in the most prosperous areas (categories 4 and 5).** A review of balloting success rates by prosperity shows that the few petitions that occurred in the least prosperous areas were supported by neighbors, while the moderate amount of petitions in the middle range of the index were not very successful.

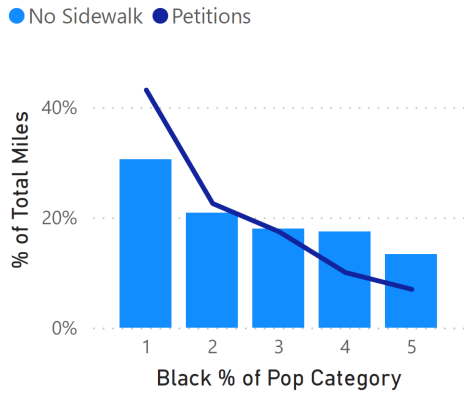
Sidewalk Petitions by Prosperity Index



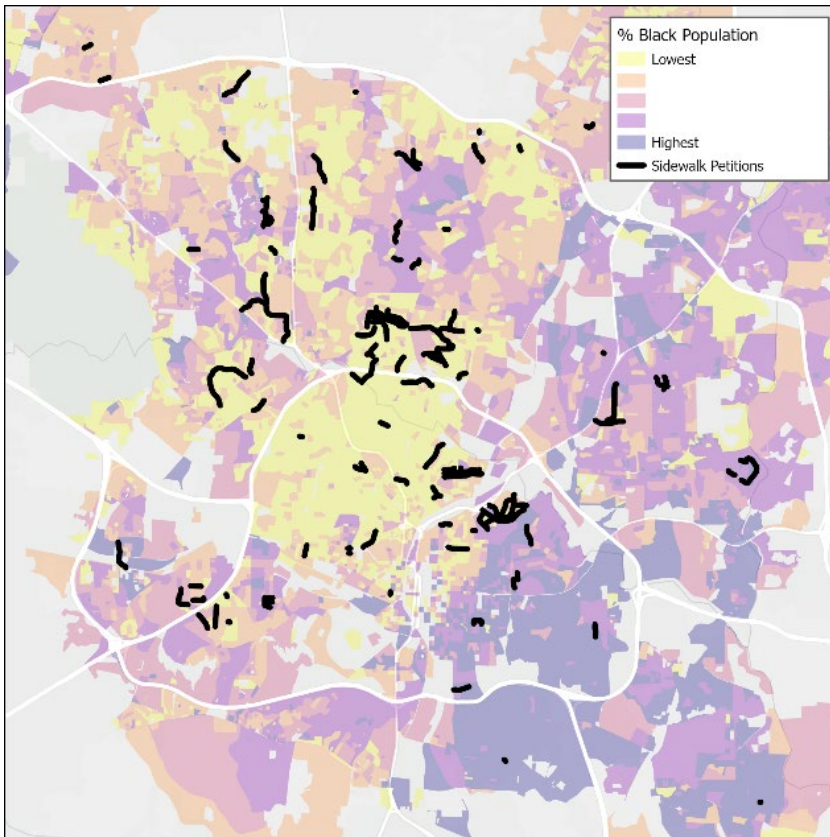
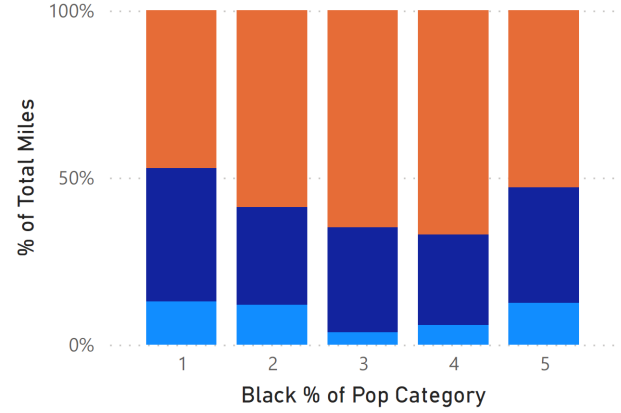
### 3. What are the racial impacts?

The following charts indicate that petitions are underrepresented in areas where a greater proportion of the population identifies as black. A similar trend was found for the full non-white population and Hispanic population. **Petitions have consistently been located in areas with a larger proportion of white, non-Hispanic population.**

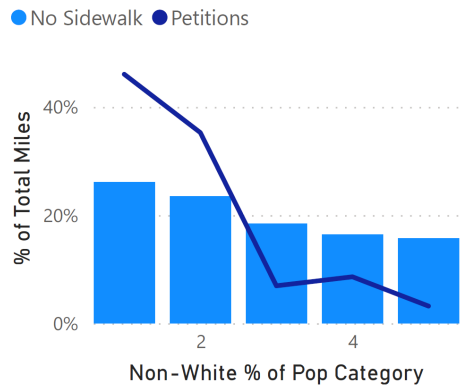
Sidewalk Petitions by Black Population as % of Total Population



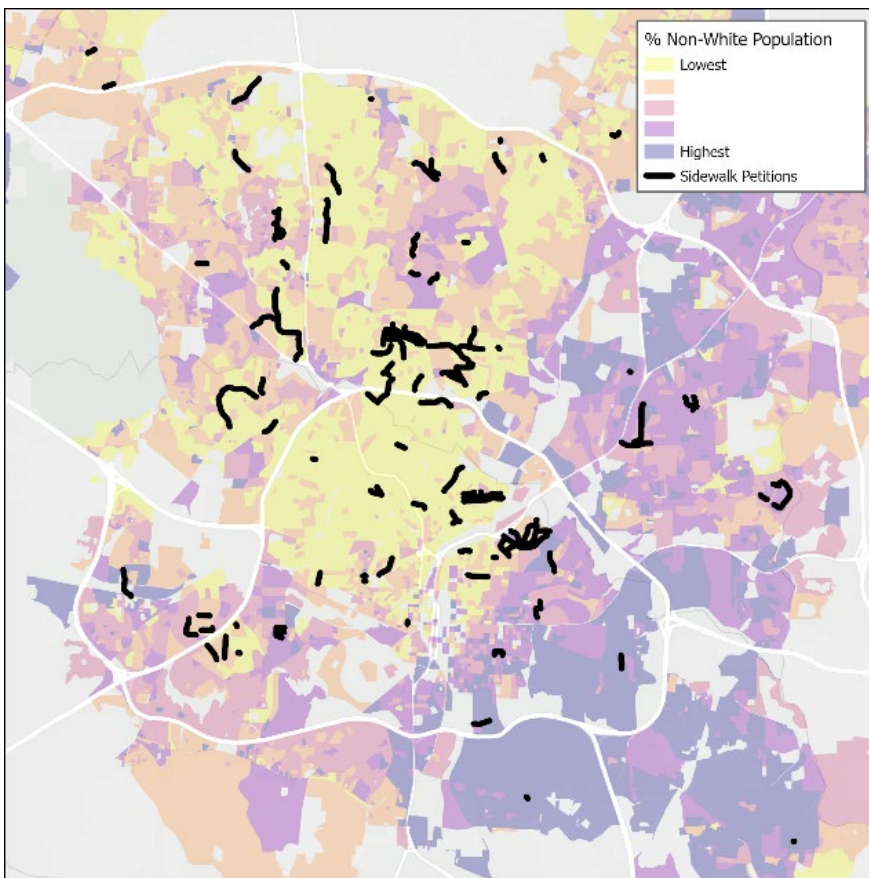
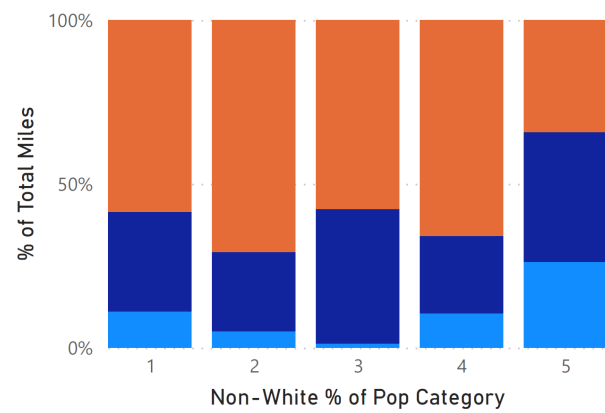
Petition Status



### Sidewalk Petitions by Non-White Population as % of Total Population

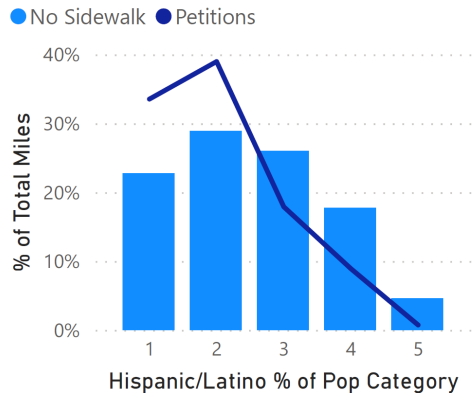


### Petition Status

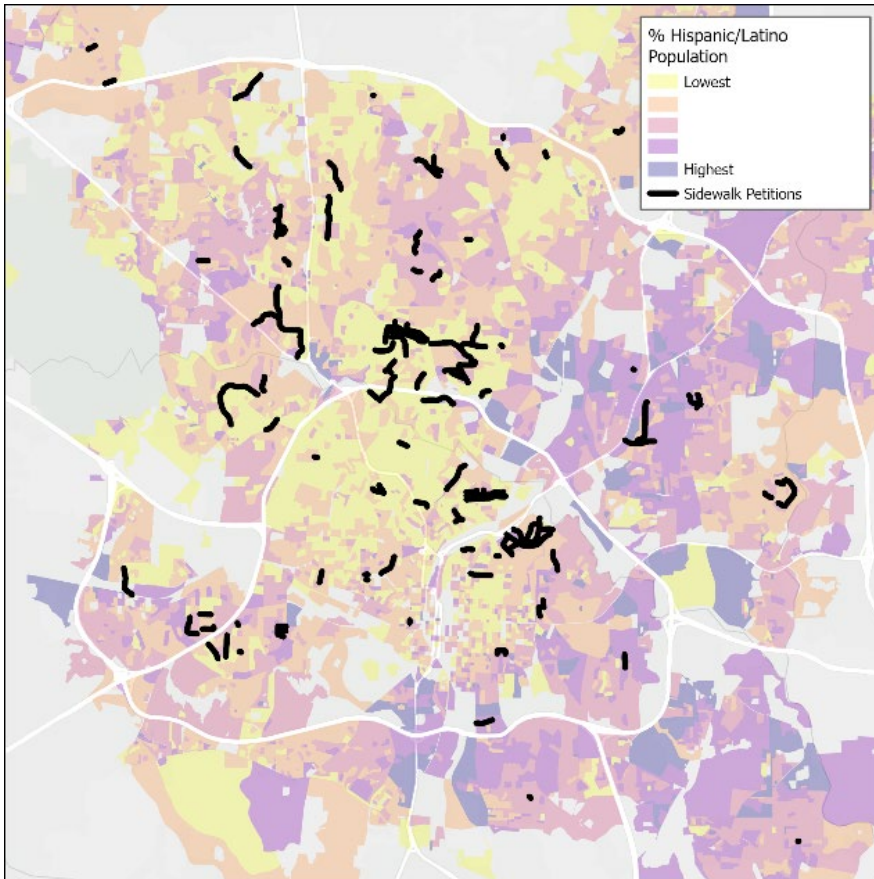
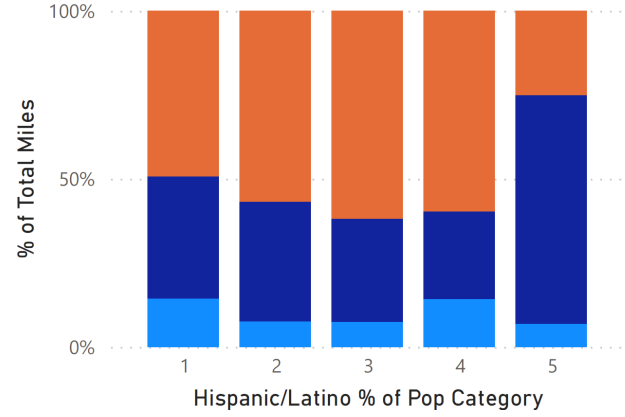




### Sidewalk Petitions by Hispanic/Latino Population as % of Total Population



### Petition Status





#### **4. What are the root causes of disparities?**

The answers to questions 1 through 3 indicate more petitions are happening in whiter and more prosperous areas. The following several factors or a combination thereof could possibly be influencing this finding:

- Areas experiencing poverty could be less likely to have the time to learn about and navigate City programs.
- Places with lower levels of English proficiency may have significant barriers to participation.
- Immigrant populations could be wary of contact with authorities.
- People of color in Raleigh could have growing distrust with City programs because of past disappointments.
- Educated and more affluent Generation X and millennial white people who now see walking as an amenity could be a dominating group in increased petition areas.

The team recommends that a consultant be engaged to conduct community outreach in order to further understand the disparities and root causes. A definitive determination of the causes of disparity is outside the expertise and capacity of City staff.

#### **5. What are the unintended consequences?**

While the SPP provides residents an opportunity to indicate their desire for new sidewalks via balloting, it also favors those with the time, knowledge, and resources to apply and confidence in the system to deliver results. The result over the last decade has been more SPP-initiated sidewalks in less vulnerable, more prosperous, whiter areas. This analysis found the largest disparities when considering race, ethnicity, and the locally developed Prosperity Index rather than the Wake County Vulnerability Index, which is the only current input into project ranking. The inclusion of this indicator in ranking also fails to address the lack of projects initiated in more vulnerable areas.

In summary, the program results contradict the City's stated goal to establish and advance an equitable community for all based on the following findings:

- Petitions are underrepresented in the most vulnerable areas and overrepresented in the most prosperous areas.
- Petitions are underrepresented in areas where a greater proportion of the population identifies as black.
- Petitions are overrepresented in areas with a larger proportion of white, non-hispanic population.

## **Preliminary Equity Toolkit Review**

### **Desired Results and Outcome**

The SPP seeks to address missing sidewalks in existing neighborhoods in an equitable manner. Based on the findings of the Equity Lens review, the current SPP is not leading to the equitable implementation of neighborhood sidewalks.

### **Data and Analysis**

The analysis completed with the Equity Lens review considered race, ethnicity, education, income, housing, age, and employment. As alternatives to neighborhood sidewalk delivery are considered, impacts and outcomes for persons with disabilities should also be considered.

Along with the data analysis outlined above, the team has been researching sidewalk delivery in other communities through the Governmental Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE). The City of Durham recently completed an evaluation of existing sidewalk conditions and included a survey of resident perception on sidewalk conditions, which may be a useful model for Raleigh. In addition, the City of Chattanooga is another city who has endeavored in tracking performance metrics and analysis related to equitably distributed sidewalk conditions with assistance from GARE. Additional outreach to other communities is recommended as alternatives are further developed.

## **Next Steps**

### **Community Engagement**

To date, the initiative team's review of the SPP has not included any community engagement. The team recommends the Transportation Department engage a consultant to conduct engagement to learn about community perception about the need for sidewalks. This outreach should seek to increase understanding of the root causes of the disparities found. The findings should inform the structure of a new neighborhood sidewalk delivery strategy.

### **Analysis and Strategy Development**

Concurrent with and following a community engagement effort, the team will continue to conduct research on alternative neighborhood sidewalk delivery programs from peer cities. A key next step is a concise summary of other existing programs that result in sidewalk delivery within the City of Raleigh. This inventory will allow the team to understand how peer city programs might be applied here through reform, development of a new program, or incorporation into an existing program. The team will also conduct a review of historic sidewalk delivery and pedestrian crash data.