



2021 CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

To: City Council Members and Mayor
From: Michelle Leise, Community Engagement Facilitator
Meeting Date: November 22, 2021
Agenda Item Number: 10.C.

Title – Consider Motion to Approve Draft of the City’s Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan

Purpose – The purpose of the Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan is to break down barriers, eliminate unfair policies and practices, build a sense of community and understanding, and increase government accountability. One of the Council’s priorities has been to update the City’s racial equity plan to identify overarching strategies and specific actions for 2022 and beyond. Council is asked to review this most recent draft and consider a motion to approve the plan.

Recommended Action – Approve Draft of the City’s Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan

Attachments –

-- Most recent draft of the City’s Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan

Alignment with the City’s 2019 Strategic Plan –

Strategy #59: Be more purposeful in monitoring, evaluating, reassessing, and improving our policies and systems so they are fair and equitable for all.

Strategy #60. Build stronger relationships with communities where trust has been broken or still needs strengthening, to form long lasting, respectful, shared commitment.

Background –

As stated above, the goals of the Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan are to break down barriers, eliminate unfair policies and practices, build a sense of community and understanding, and increase government accountability. Below is some background.

- In 2016 and 2017, Red Wing joined the Minnesota partnership project between the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and the League of Minnesota Cities. Through that two-year project, the first Racial Equity Plan was created. Staff met with the Council in the fall of 2016 and winter of 2017. They also met with the HRC in August 2016, and January, February, and April of 2017. On May 8, 2017, City Council approved the first plan. Many of those action steps were focused on creating a 2040 Plan that had broader engagement and

a wider community reach than previous plans. Many of those action items, especially those related to creating the 2040 Plan, were accomplished.

- The Racial Equity Plan was then updated in March 2019 based on progress that had been made, but a full overhaul was not done.
- On June 8th, 18th, and 29th of 2020, the City Council discussed the City's Racial Equity Plan and the need for a major update to guide the City's work in the months and years ahead and for more community input into that plan.
- In July and August of 2020, after multiple discussions on possible priorities and steps to take, the Council voted to first approve the formation of an Advisory Team on Government Policies and Practices and prioritized implementing that group and its work.
- In spring of 2021, staff put together a first draft of a revamped Racial Equity Plan, taking into account months of discussions from the Advisory Team, Human Rights Commission, and being aware of the 2040 Plan strategies. In April, the Advisory Team and HRC reviewed the first draft and made comments and suggestions.
- During the late spring, summer, and early fall of 2021, staff met with additional people and groups, reviewed local data and surveys, and incorporated those suggestions into the plan. Some of those groups are as follows:
 - Red Wing's Advisory Team on Government Policies and Practices. This diverse team of 12 individuals represents multiple ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, and life experiences. The team had 15 2-hour meetings over the course of putting this plan together.
 - Red Wing's Human Rights Commission. This group meets monthly and also represents a wide range of individuals of varying ages, background, ethnicities, and life experiences.
 - Tribal Council and staff of the Prairie Island Indian Community
 - Hispanic Outreach staff
 - 20 Latinx residents who participated in a Community Listening Session focused on Hispanic residents in August 2021 (Full summary of that session hosted by Hispanic Outreach will be available for the public in December.)
 - 68 survey participants who answered the Advisory Team's survey in April 2021. (Respondents identified themselves this way: 28 Black, 27 White, 7 Hispanic, 3 Asian 2 Native American, 1 Other) To see the survey results, click here: <https://mn-redwing.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/5099/Summary-of-Survey-Results---Advisory-Team-PDF>
 - Public input taken at City Council meetings over the last 18 months
 - Public input taken from HRC meetings over the last 18 months

- Responses from 40 participants in interviews conducted by consultant Thomas Harris through a grass-roots organization called Growing Red Wing's Voices.
- Red Wing City staff and leadership

Additional information was also used in forming the actions, including

- Recommendations accepted by City Council from the Advisory Team in 2021
 - Steps outlined in the draft Memorandum of Understanding between Prairie Island Indian Community and the City of Red Wing
 - Research into other communities and evidence-based practices
 - Conversations with nonprofits, organizations, and educational institutions
 - Conversations with residents about individual experiences, concerns, and ideas
 - Data gathered in the City's recent study of homelessness and housing insecurity
 - Priorities in the City's Strategic Plan
 - Strategies from the Red Wing 2040 Community Plan
- Based on input from all of the above, actions were added or edited, then grouped into a separate addendum at the end of the plan. (Over time, this addendum was incorporated directly into the plan to make it easier to read all at one time.)
 - On August 9, 2021, City Council unanimously approved a Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Emergency in Red Wing. This resolution language, as drafted by the HRC and residents, was incorporated into the beginning portion of the racial equity plan. That resolution is located on the City's website here: <https://mn-redwing.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/5488/Resolution-7675-Declaring-Racism-a-Public-Health-Emergency---Aug-9-2021-PDF>
 - In late September, City department heads discussed the plan to gain further understanding and share how their departments can help meet equity goals.
 - In October of 2021, the Human Rights Commission and the Advisory Team each reviewed an updated draft of the plan again at their meetings and provided further comments and suggestions. Most of those edits were incorporated into the latest draft. After those meetings, action steps listed in the 2022 addendum were incorporated directly into the plan so they were easier to see, and people would not have to flip to the end of the plan to read them.
 - In October and November 2021, staff created separate documents to show where the various items and ideas in the plan came from, when edits were made, and generally how the plan was formed over time. The public can find these documents on the website page here: www.red-wing.org/racial-equity.

- Earlier drafts of the Racial Equity Plan were included in the City Council’s Status Reports dated April 12 and October 25, 2021, asking for the public’s feedback.
- The latest draft plan was included in the October 26 and November 9 editions of City Beat with links for the public to provide input.
- Late October and November 2021 – A draft of the Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan was put out to the public on all of the City’s media outlets (City Beat, Channel 6, social media, website).
- A draft of the plan was presented to City Council at its November 8 meeting for discussion and for Council to provide guidance to staff for any changes. Council expressed support for the plan as written. President Norton also suggested adding a definitions section as outlined in the staff report, so that section has since been added.

Discussion –

The Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan is the primary way that we as the City of Red Wing answer the question, “How do we affect change on our community’s public health emergency?”

Public emergencies demand attention and urgency. They also demand action. The City makes a pledge with this plan to move from planning to action for the health of our residents. The emergency is clear: Black, Indigenous, Bi-racial, Hispanic, Asian, and other peoples of color are dying at higher rates and fare lower on quality-of-life measurements compared to their white counterparts. Living in the face of the daily injustices of racism wears day after day on one’s mental and physical health.

The plan focuses on these seven strategies (with action items under each one):

- ❖ Acknowledge Harm and Create a System of Accountability
- ❖ Build a More Inclusive Decision-Making Process
- ❖ Expand the Use of Data
- ❖ Engage More People Who Are Not Often Heard
- ❖ Create a Culture within the City Organization that Prioritizes Equity
- ❖ Increase Equity in Services and Programming Related to City-Owned Properties and Institutions
- ❖ Increase Equity in Economic Development and Housing

This plan acknowledges that the entire City staff – every department and staff member – along with every board, commission, and Council member, has a role to play in equity work. It also makes these entities accountable to City Council to plan how they will implement more equitable policies and systems within their control.

The plan as it stands now is not perfect, nor does it tackle everything that is necessary. It will always be a living document that changes over time and will continue to be improved.

As noted above, a draft of this plan was presented to Council at its November 8 meeting for discussion and for Council to provide guidance to staff for any changes. Council expressed support for the plan as written. President Norton also suggested adding a definitions section as outlined in the staff report, so that section has since been added toward the beginning of the plan. The source is the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture in its Talking About Race section.

One action item has been added to the plan since Council reviewed the plan on November 8. Based on additional communication with Prairie Island Indian Community, the following has been included on page 12:

1.B.4. Produce brochure in collaboration with Prairie Island Indian Community to share information with residents about Native American burial mound locations and the importance of land stewardship. *Community Engagement and Administrative Services*

Small edits to the language have also been made based on additional public input, but other than the action item noted above, the strategies and action items have remained the same.

Next steps

If the plan is adopted, staff will outline more details on how and when the strategies will be enacted, and progress will be reported to Council regularly throughout the year. Some strategies that require more Council feedback in the implementation phases will come back to Council at workshops and meetings in early 2022.

Financial plan and impact – The plan has financial implications. The proposed 2022 budget will include a designated fund specific to racial equity work to help accomplish some of the plan's goals. Council will make its final decisions on this amount by the end of the year.

Alternatives –

- Approve draft of the plan as written
- Approve draft of the plan with modifications as directed by the Council
- Table the item until the next meeting and request more information or additional changes
- Deny the draft entirely and direct staff how to proceed

Recommended Action – Approve Draft of the City's Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan