

## VILLAGE OF PARK FOREST

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** John A. Ostenburg, Mayor  
Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Thomas K. Mick,  
Village Manager

**DATE:** February 26, 2019

**RE:** **A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE VILLAGE OF PARK FOREST'S  
COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A RACE EQUITY AND  
LEADERSHIP PLAN**

#### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:**

In 2016, the National League of Cities (NLC) began to develop a program titled Race Equity And Leadership (REAL). The REAL program grew out of any number of incidents that had occurred across America revolving around issues of racial discrimination and associated civic unrest. Of particular note, an incident occurred in Ferguson, Missouri that caught the attention of Mayor John Ostenburg. Ferguson as a community had some very stark similarities to Park Forest in size, total population, similar proximity to a very large city, and in racial and socioeconomic demographics. While Park Forest has a proud history of embracing diversity, the Mayor came back from an NLC conference convinced that the Village of Park Forest needed to get involved in the REAL movement and undergo a comprehensive analysis to review issues of structural or institutional racism that might exist in Park Forest.

The Village has been engaged in REAL proceedings since then. The efforts have been steady and have included the following:

- A Village leadership and stakeholder session was coordinated in August 2016 that was designed to introduce the principles of Race Equity And Leadership. Approximately 40 attendees were on hand.
- A nine-person REAL Steering Committee was appointed with a November 2016 Village Board Meeting. Appointees included the Mayor, 2 Trustees, the Village Manager, 3 Department Heads and two members of the Village's volunteer Boards/Commissions.
- Three subcommittees were established to focus on the following areas:
  - Policies – focus on a review of Village ordinances to assure that the content does not include language and/or actions that are inequitable toward any specific racial group.
  - Procedures – focus on the implementation strategies in place for enforcement of ordinances and other policy-related matters to assure that those strategies do not include actions and/or behaviors that are inequitable toward any specific racial group.

- Practices – focus on behaviors (by elected officials and staff) that are, or could be, interpreted as inequitable toward any specific racial group.
- The Commission on Human Relations was tasked to undertake pro-active steps to promote racial interaction and harmony in the community. One such initiative was to develop a Freedom Hall lecture series that addresses issues of race, including presentations by respected authorities on the subject to be discussed, accompanied by interactive group discussion.

Village efforts toward all of the above have unfolded through 2017, 2018 and now into 2019 wherein the Steering Committee and Subcommittees have met on an almost monthly basis. The Commission on Human Relations has convened several community lecture sessions. Also, Park Forest has been a catalyst for REAL programming awareness across the south suburbs through the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and the entire Chicagoland area through the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. On a national level, Mayor Ostenburg was appointed as Co-Chair of the Race Equity And Leadership Council for the National League of Cities. Additionally, the NLC has published a series of City Profiles for communities across America that have become deeply involved in the REAL program. Park Forest has had a City Profile developed as attached and in similar fashion to other cities such as:

Austin, Texas	Boston Massachusetts
Louisville, Kentucky	Madison, Wisconsin
New Orleans, Louisiana	<b>Park Forest, Illinois</b>
San Antonio, Texas	Tacoma, Washington
Takoma Park, Maryland	

The National League of Cities has developed a Municipal Action Guide which offers steps that local governments might consider in developing efforts in accord with Race Equity And Leadership. The Municipal Action Guide is attached. These steps are as follows:

1. Set an Example and Strike the Right Tone
2. Observe and Listen
3. Make a Public Declaration
4. Dedicate Infrastructure to Action
5. Commit to Policy and System Change
6. Create a Racial Equity Plan

The work done to date in Park Forest related to Race Equity And Leadership can be categorized under several of the steps noted above. However, besides the appointment of the Steering Committee, the Village has not made an official public declaration. To this end, attached is a resolution that has been drafted for consideration by the Mayor and Board of Trustees.

**SCHEDULE FOR DISCUSSION:**

This item will be on the agenda of the March 4, 2019 for Board discussion.

**A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE VILLAGE OF PARK FOREST’S COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A RACE EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP PLAN**

- WHEREAS,** the Village of Park Forest values and embraces the diverse citizenry that makes up the Park Forest community; and
- WHEREAS,** these values have long been in place as evidenced by the Park Forest Commission on Human Relations being created in September 1953 with a recognition of the “value and dignity of each person” in Park Forest and that the Commission shall “foster and stimulate the improvement of human relations among and between citizens of all races, colors, creeds, national origins and economic and educational levels so as to provide all individuals with an equal opportunity to grow, participate and share to the best of their ability in the economic, educational, political, social and judicial systems”; and
- WHEREAS,** the Village of Park Forest commitment to the principles laid out in 1953 have been followed through upon in the decades since with celebrations of residents from all sectors of society; and
- WHEREAS,** while Park Forest has much to be proud of in its commitment to diversity and promoting harmony in racial relations, this work is never complete; and
- WHEREAS,** numerous incidents of racial discord and civic unrest on a national landscape prompted the National League of Cities to establish a Race Equity And Leadership program; and
- WHEREAS,** Park Forest Mayor John Ostenburg was integrally involved in the REAL initiative on a national level almost from the inception of the program; and
- WHEREAS,** under Mayor Ostenburg’s close direction, Park Forest Officials embarked upon taking a closer look at issues of race and social equity at the local level; and
- WHEREAS,** this direction was pronounced and efforts began in earnest as the Mayor charged the organization to “move forward more aggressively in our efforts to explore the obstacles to racial equity that may be present in our Village, and to develop the necessary action steps for eliminating those obstacles and putting in place measures that make retribution for the wrongful results that such obstacles may have caused”; and
- WHEREAS,** since that charge was issued, a Village Leadership & Stakeholder workshop took place in August 2016, a Steering Committee was soon thereafter established along with three subcommittees tasked with examining Park Forest’s Policies, Procedures and Practices; and
- WHEREAS,** the Park Forest Commission on Human Relations has taken proactive steps to promote racial interaction and harmony in the community by coordinating a Freedom Hall lecture series to address issues of race and equity with an emphasis on interactive group discussion; and
- WHEREAS,** the corporate authorities hereby commits going forward to further build upon the work already put forth toward Race Equity And Leadership in Park Forest.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Board of Trustees of the Village of Park Forest, Cook and Will Counties, that the Village of Park Forest reaffirms its commitment to the tenets of equality for all people regardless of race, national origin, gender, religion or sexual orientation. **BE IT**

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that community leaders will work diligently to close any racial gaps that might exist in Park Forest and that the Village's Leadership will continually strive to review and address any and all structural or institutional barriers that might create a system which negatively impacts communities of color. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Park Forest will strengthen its efforts at community outreach and public engagement using best practices to the fullest extent possible.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of March 2019.

**APPROVED:**

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mayor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Village Clerk**



# Building on A Unique History As an Integrated Village

The Village of Park Forest was established in 1948 to house military veterans as the nation's first planned community after World War II. Park Forest was initially designed as one of the few communities without restrictive covenants by religion. Building on that ten-year tradition, Park Forest was racially desegregated in 1959 when the first African-American family was invited to live in the village through efforts by some members of the local Unitarian Church. Perhaps as a result of the planned integration of Park Forest, the town faced a smaller degree of white flight in the 1980s than did many other suburbs. Much like other cities, Park Forest faces a lack of diversity in the village's staff, which is currently predominantly white even though the current village population is approximately 65 percent black.

Park Forest began its explicit work to advance racial equity in 2016 when Park Forest Mayor John Ostenburg gathered a group that included elected officials, all senior administrators, and chairs and vice-chairs of volunteer commissions and presented a brief training to them, based on what he had learned from a National League of Cities' Race, Equity And Leadership (REAL) council session he had attended earlier in the year. Struck by what he perceived as many similarities between Ferguson, Missouri and Park Forest, and concerned that the good intentions of Park Forest staff and residents might not be enough to avoid furthering systemic racism, Mayor Ostenburg designed the training to convey to staff and community leaders the ways in which they might be unintentionally perpetuating systemic racism without knowing it, and what they could start doing to address it. As an example, he pointed out that as an intentionally integrated city, early municipal staff kept track of each new African-American family that moved into the city in order to make sure that realtors weren't trying to concentrate black residents in one area or



Photos courtesy of the Village of Park Forest.

another, a common practice in many parts of the country at that time. Although this record keeping was discontinued in the 1980s, the importance of moving to race-neutral practices made the mayor question whether there were other policies or procedures that might be obscuring existing racial inequities.

## Developing Infrastructure to Change Village Systems

Following the REAL training, the mayor developed a REAL Steering Committee to begin examining racial inequities that may be perpetuated by the village's governance. The Steering Committee, which meets monthly, consists of three elected officials (two Trustees and the Mayor),

four members of the village's professional staff (village manager, police chief, director of planning and economic development and director of recreation and parks), and two citizen representatives (chair of the commission on human relations and vice chair of the cable communications commission), along with two young adult residents of Park Forest. During 2017 and 2018, the Steering Committee has been reviewing the history of the Village and seeking to identify those things which may have unintentionally hidden elements of structural racism and white supremacy lingering within the governance structure of Park Forest.

Drawing on the village's history, issues in the community and

potential problem areas, the Steering Committee has been developing steps for increasing citizen participation and identifying ways to provide more racial equity training for elected officials and staff in the city.

## Reviewing the Village's Policies, Procedures and Practices

Three sub-committees made up of elected officials, staff and community members were created in tandem with the Steering Committee; each of the Steering Committee members serves on one of the three subcommittees, each of which has a different charge. The first subcommittee is responsible for policies and is reviewing the direct language of the village's ordinances to unearth any explicitly discriminatory language.

The ordinance subcommittee is using the backgrounds and expertise of each committee member to better understand language that may unintentionally be discriminatory. For instance, there was subjective language in some of the licensing ordinances like the word "immoral" which could be influenced by a dominant white culture. In another case, the subcommittee identified gendered language throughout their ordinances, prompting a change in language.

The second subcommittee, focusing on procedures, is reviewing strategies currently in place for implementing policies to see if the protocols for implementation may be contributing to any racial inequities. And the third subcommittee, reviewing city practices, is looking at staff behaviors in implementing these policies to identify any unintentional disparities.

## City: Park Forest, Illinois

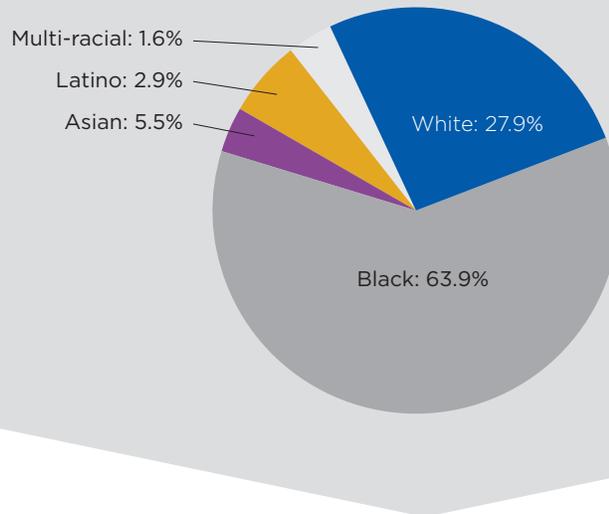
**Year Starting Racial Equity Work:** 2016

**Mayor:** John Ostenburg

**Form of Municipal Government:** Council-Manager

**Population:** 21,682

**Demographics:**



Staff members on each of the subcommittees are charged with conducting outreach to colleagues within their professional fields to identify best practices and learn from other communities.

Through this process the village identified policies that could be discriminatory in impact, such as the use of the word "unwholesome" to refer to prohibited businesses. In a similar process designed to support sustainability in building codes and practices, the village conducted a complete ordinance review and passed a Unified Development Ordinance in 2017, which was able to alter some codes that were restrictive.

For the two subcommittees looking at procedures and practices, the details around implementation and resident perception are critical. The 1997 Illinois state law dictating that local ordinances are subject only to local

adjudication gives the village some latitude in determining cases where infractions disproportionately impacting residents of color could be addressed without levying penalties. In one case, some Latino residents were facing building code violations. When the city understood that some of the Latino residents may not have received the requisite permits due to a language barrier, the village decided that the government may not have been communicating effectively to all of its constituents. In some cases, the village waived fines as a result. They also utilized a bilingual staff person in conducting adjudications to address the communications breakdown.

One of the challenges for a small city like Park Forest is finding enough accurate data to understand disparate impacts of policies and procedures by race. While some of the village's police data has race/ethnicity fields attached to it, and the local

health department had some records of race and ethnicity data, though until recently it was shut down for cost reasons, there is little additional capacity in other departments for data collection.

While this does not completely address the data gap, the practices subcommittee has been creating a series of public questionnaires to get qualitative data from residents on how they may have experienced inequities when dealing with local government.

## Transforming Community Attitudes

One member of the subcommittee reviewing ordinance language is Park Forest Police Chief Christopher Mannino, who was appointed to his current post in 2017. With a long-term focus on procedural justice, the chief sees his work both in leading the police department and in reviewing potentially discriminatory ordinances as critical, given the fact that people experience the justice system differently and because local government often has played a role in perpetuating unfair differences.

“We in law enforcement have historically been part of the problem. It is incumbent upon us to fix the issue. Allowing those conversations to take place and showing we’re concerned about it – that we’re aware and concerned about the issue – is important,” said Chief Mannino.

In addition to signing onto the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police pillars of law enforcement and ensuring de-escalation and crisis intervention training for all

police officers, Chief Mannino has also begun taking steps to involve the public in the city’s conversations about racial equity.

In the spring of 2018, a woman called the police to report “two black men, one in a hoodie,” sitting on the steps of the train station. With a concern that the report may have been less a public safety consideration and more about personal discomfort, the Chief used the opportunity to frame a public discussion by posting on Facebook about the incident (in which there were no police interactions, nor arrests as all parties were gone by the time police arrived on the scene). The chief felt that the nearly 100 comments generated on his post were an opportunity to build empathy in a situation where it was important to both assure a resident of her safety but also to avoid racial profiling of the youth. In this way, he used the social media discussion of the incident to create a conversation about how “we can treat everyone with dignity and feel like they are a valued member of the community.” The chief said, “I used that call to be able to start a public discussion...to get people to think about [their bias]. It’s easy to think about the woman who’s scared – in the movie scene, she’s the one who’d be portrayed. But what’s it like to be the kid who just sat down to use his phone and then the police came? And what it’s like to be the police officer?”

After the white nationalist violence in Charlottesville, Mayor Ostenburg worked with the Commission on Human Relations (CHR) to create public forums for racial equity issues to be openly discussed. The

## Highlights

- 1** In a small village with limited resources, Mayor Ostenburg has helped staff and community leaders in Park Forest prioritize racial equity and make systemic changes.
- 2** Despite a unique history of intentional racial integration, Park Forest staff realized that unintentional perpetuation of systemic racism is something they need to address head on.
- 3** Police Chief Mannino has taken a proactive attempt to lead on racial equity by engaging the public in discussions about the kinds of perspective-taking skills needed to help address racial profiling.

volunteer-run Park Forest CHR has held three forums, for which they decided on the topics and panelists. The forums have given the public opportunities to hear from a panel of experts, but also to ask questions and offer opinions.

Finally, as a response to the what occurred in Charlottesville, the Steering Committee identified some streets in a section of the village connected to Abraham Lincoln – an Illinois favorite son – that were named for Civil War Confederate generals. A town meeting was held in early 2018 to get citizen input on what steps should be taken to correct this situation. The Steering Committee has sought input on whether the streets should be renamed, rededicated to persons with the same surname but not associated with the Confederate States, or left as they are.



REAL RACE, EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP

NLC's Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative serves to strengthen local elected officials' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities. Learn more at [www.nlc.org/REAL](http://www.nlc.org/REAL)

This City Profile is part of a larger series made possible through the generous contributions of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

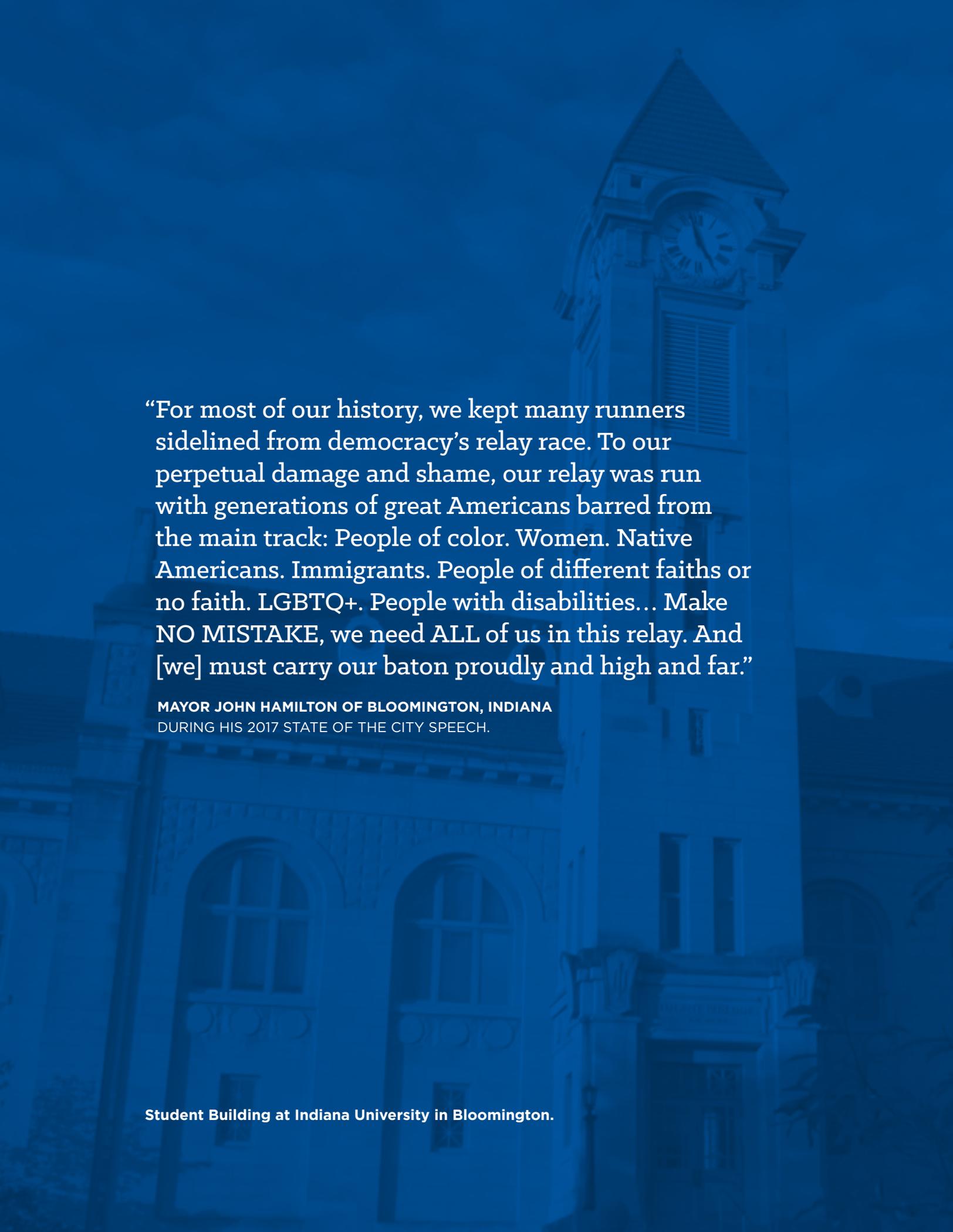
MUNICIPAL ACTION GUIDE

# Advancing Racial Equity in Your City



**NLC** NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

REAL RACE, EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP



“For most of our history, we kept many runners sidelined from democracy’s relay race. To our perpetual damage and shame, our relay was run with generations of great Americans barred from the main track: People of color. Women. Native Americans. Immigrants. People of different faiths or no faith. LGBTQ+. People with disabilities... Make **NO MISTAKE**, we need **ALL** of us in this relay. And [we] must carry our baton proudly and high and far.”

**MAYOR JOHN HAMILTON OF BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA**  
DURING HIS 2017 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH.

**Student Building at Indiana University in Bloomington.**

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# Introduction

NLC’s Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative is dedicated to helping local leaders understand and gain the tools necessary to combat racial disparities in their communities. We’ve compiled these six steps you can follow to begin improving equity throughout your city and creating better outcomes for everyone in your community.

## Definitions to Understand Racial Equity

**Racial Equity** — “Closing the gaps” so that race does not predict one’s success, while also improving outcomes for all.

**Institutional Racism** — Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

**Structural Racism** — A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

## REAL’s Mission

The REAL initiative serves to strengthen local leaders’ knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. Through training and online resources, REAL helps NLC members build safe places where people from all racial, ethical and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

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2. OBSERVE AND LISTEN.....	PAGE 7
3. MAKE A PUBLIC DECLARATION.....	PAGE 9
4. DEDICATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ACTION.....	PAGE 11
5. COMMIT TO POLICY AND SYSTEM CHANGE .....	PAGE 13
6. CREATE A RACIAL EQUITY PLAN.....	PAGE 14

Boston, Massachusetts, has trained facilitators and engaged thousands of residents in a broad series of monthly community race dialogues. Pictured, Boston's Mayor Walsh attends a community dialogue.



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# 1. Set an Example and Strike the Right Tone

As city leaders, you play a unique role in setting the tone of local governments and institutions. Mayors and councilmembers can set an example and commit themselves to prioritizing racial equity, by participating in equity leadership trainings or starting a community conversation to engage voices throughout the city.

**REAL offers numerous trainings opportunities:**

- At NLC Conferences
- Through NLC University
- Regional Trainings & State Municipal Leagues
- Individual City Trainings by REAL Staff
- Online webinars at [www.nlc.org/REAL](http://www.nlc.org/REAL)

**Quick tips for starting a conversation on race in your city**

1. Encourage city staff to examine the racial biases embedded in city department services.
2. Convene community stakeholders to understand their perspectives on different racial impacts of city policies.
3. Engage both residents of color and white residents to understand the way policies historically and currently impact each racial and ethnic group.
4. Integrate an understanding of structural and institutional racism.

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**“I think the single most important thing I can do as the mayor would be a convener, a convener for these really hard conversations that we need to be having about how our police interact with our minority communities, how our minority communities are impacted by education and housing and transportation and poverty.”**

RESPONSE FROM THE **2016 MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS**

The City of Madison, Wisconsin, has used its existing Neighborhood Response Team infrastructure to orient to the needs, issues and priorities of residents who may historically have been left out of government processes. By focusing on agendas driven by the community, teams of city employees have engaged other agencies to address how services are delivered. In one case, this resulted in an opportunity for the city to begin lighting basketball courts, like those pictured, as residents in a neighborhood identified the desire for evening access.



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## 2. Observe and Listen

Without a doubt, there are already many voices promoting racial equity within your community. One of the easiest and first things you can do is to simply observe and listen:

### **To Voices in Your Community**

Across America, communities of color tend to have less access to government resources and less communal experience with government as a force for good. These differences result from our historical legacy of structures and policies that perpetuate differential outcomes based on race. Local elected officials and city staff must commit time and space to listen to the lived experiences of communities of color and intentionally consider these experiences in city decision-making processes.

### **To Those Already Focusing on Racial Equity in Your City**

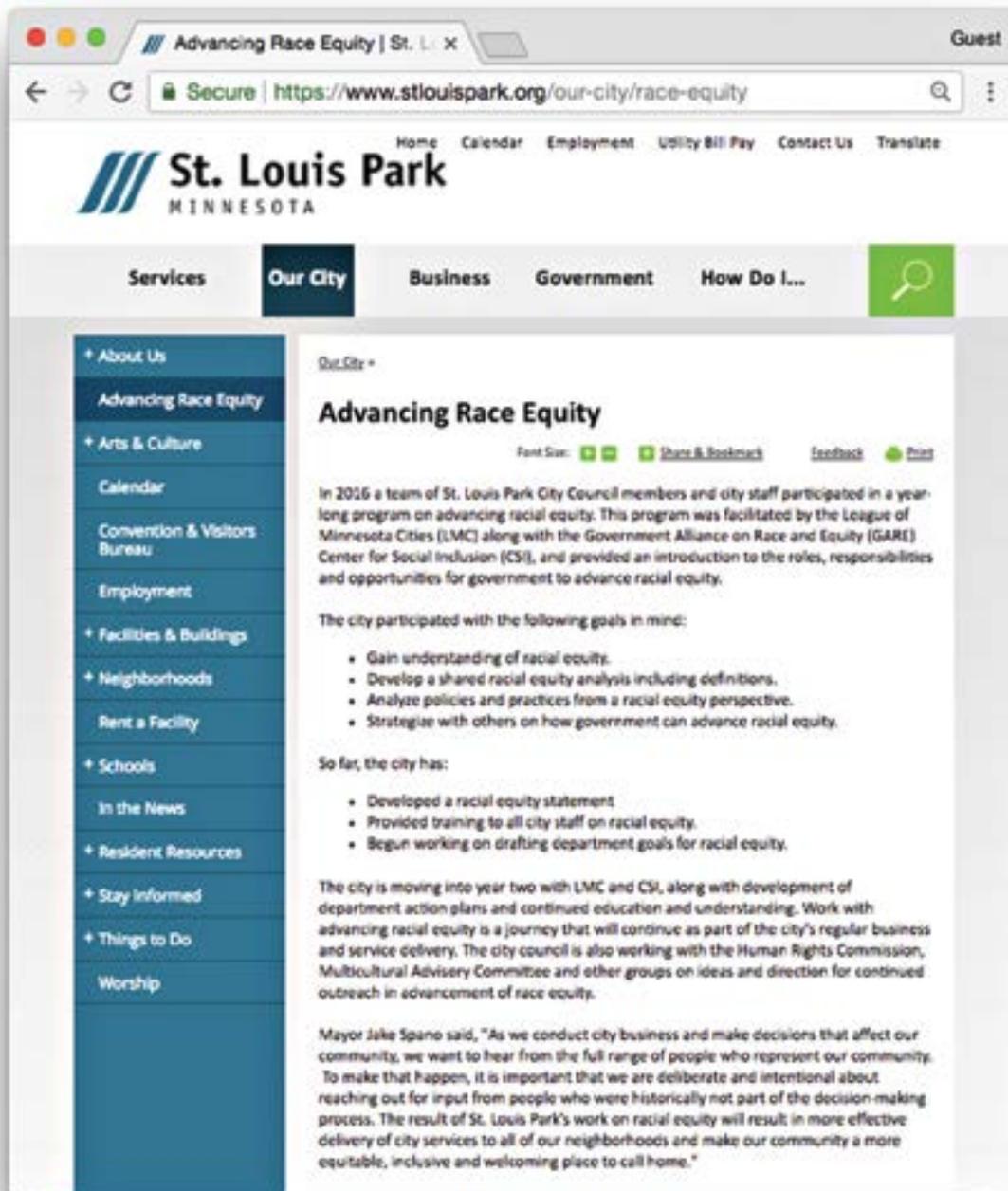
Seek out which organizations and community efforts in your city are already doing work with equity or bringing people together to talk about race and offer to engage with them. Create opportunities to engage city staff that have institutional knowledge and other important perspectives that provide meaningful opportunities for them to inform your understanding of local racial disparities.

### **To the Data**

You know the importance of metrics and data when evaluating city performance in services. When analyzed through the lens of racial equity, data on city services and resources can reveal racial disparities that may not be obvious without this analysis. Disaggregate data from all city programs, services, policies and practices by race and ethnicity of impacted residents to gain a deeper understanding of how these disparities can hide in plain sight.

Examples of data to examine by race:

- Permitting fees
- Tickets and citations
- Arrests
- Health outcomes
- Code violations and inspections.



The City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, released a statement on its website informing residents of plans to advance racial equity. The webpage outlined more than a year of work, including completed staff trainings, progress made in city council and data analyses supporting the need for equity efforts. The webpage, pictured above, also includes video links where residents can hear the city's priorities directly from the Mayor.

## 3. Make a Public Declaration

Your residents need to know your city's commitment to racial equity. As with instituting any citywide initiative, leaders can leverage the bully pulpit and media attention to make constituents aware of the city's priorities and efforts. A public declaration is a bold stance that builds connection between communities of color and governing bodies.

Leaders can use these announcements to gain broader support for and highlight existing work to advance racial equity or healing in their communities. These announcements open the door for meaningful communication between leaders and impacted residents.

### 4 Ways to Make a Public Declaration:

- **Resolution** — Allows your city to officially announce and publicize the local government's position on race-related issues. Resolutions declare a commitment to racial equity, and city leaders can bring other councilmembers on board via a public vote.
- **Racial equity guiding statement** — This short statement works to briefly amplify an official's (or an office's) role and mission in advancing racial equity, in a message that can be easily shared.
- **Racial equity presence on a website** — Webpages dedicated to racial equity can serve the purpose of proclaiming the city's commitment, while also informing residents of official plans and progress made on those plans. Webpages are easily available to many city residents and can help them visualize important statements from their leaders through photos and videos.
- **Publicly sharing disparity data or personnel demographics data** — Data visualization is a strategic method to provide context to a city's new initiative. Many times, data help confirm the sentiments of city residents and emphasize the need for the city to pay attention to the feedback and concerns of its constituents.

The City of Tacoma, Washington, passed a policy that made equity a consistent principle across the city with the goal of changing “how business is done.” By funding several staff in the Office of Equity & Human Rights, pictured, Tacoma has been able to invest in significant staff training on racial equity and unconscious bias, adopt the use of tools to facilitate equitable budgeting and workforce practices, and assess inequities in the distribution of city resources across neighborhoods.



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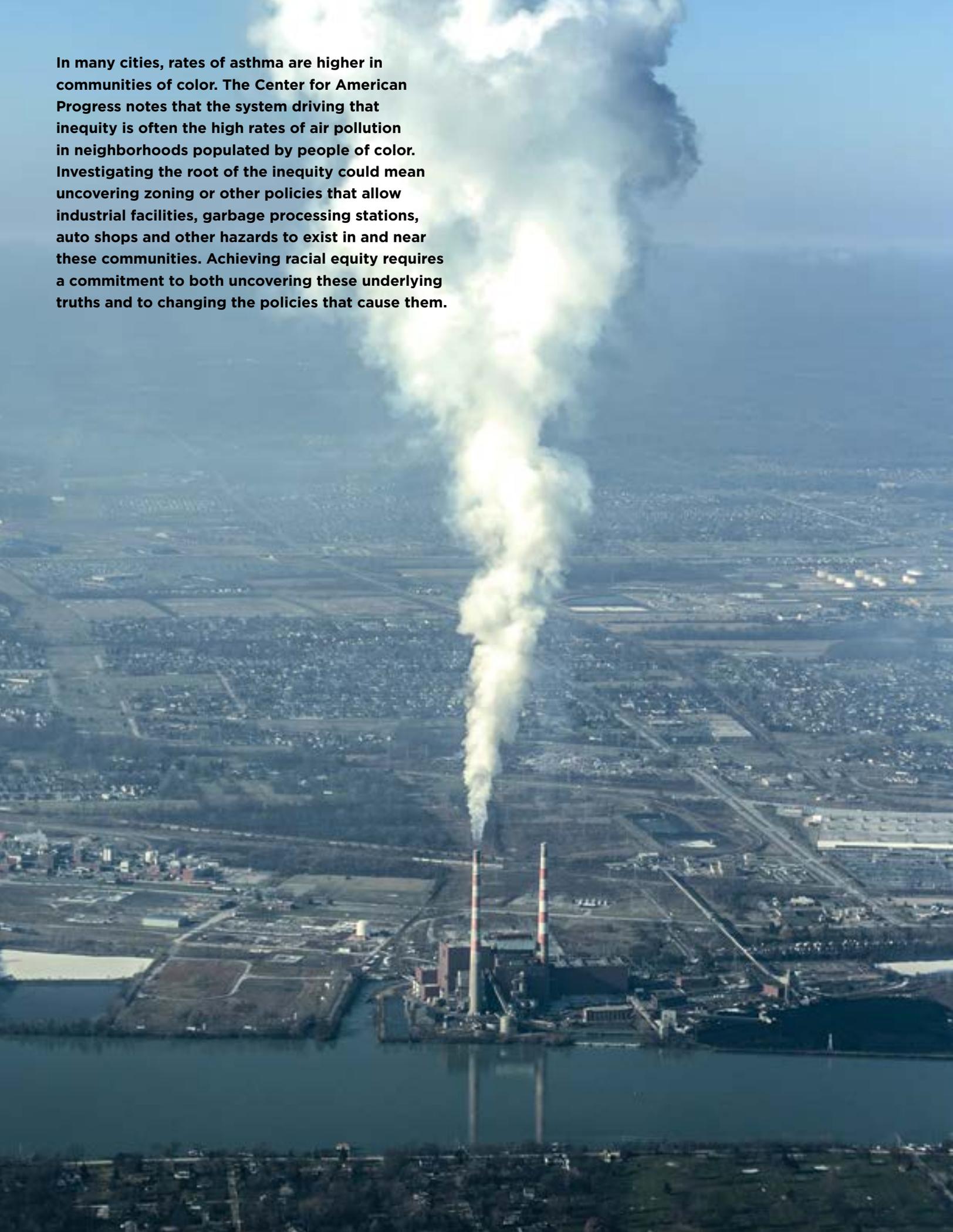
## 4. Dedicate Infrastructure to Action

After declaring its commitment, your city needs to dedicate new or align existing resources to create a system capable of bringing about changes. Building a team and developing staff skills to address the impacts of racism throughout local government are necessary steps toward achieving real progress. Local elected officials need to provide the leadership to generate a citywide coordinated effort and infrastructure to carry out these functions.

### Suggested Steps for Building Your Team

- Designate senior leadership to play an oversight role.
- Engage the private sector to raise external resources to facilitate this work.
- Identify which city agencies can collect and analyze the data that will support your city's efforts.
- Offer additional support and resources to city agencies already working on racial equity.
- Dedicate new or existing resources to support racial equity work across all departments.
- Identify opportunities to support individuals motivated by this work in your office.

**In many cities, rates of asthma are higher in communities of color. The Center for American Progress notes that the system driving that inequity is often the high rates of air pollution in neighborhoods populated by people of color. Investigating the root of the inequity could mean uncovering zoning or other policies that allow industrial facilities, garbage processing stations, auto shops and other hazards to exist in and near these communities. Achieving racial equity requires a commitment to both uncovering these underlying truths and to changing the policies that cause them.**



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## 5. Commit to Policy and System Change

Institutions and structures have historically created and continue to perpetuate racial inequities throughout cities — often unintentionally. These inequities will continue to exist unless there is intentional intervention to counter and reverse those effects. Local leaders have the responsibility as chief policymakers to address the ways in which institutional and structural racism have shaped their city.

By making long-lasting changes to both policies and systems that benefit their residents of color, city leaders can commit to policy and system changes that bring their practices in line with their priorities. More racially equitable outcomes start by addressing the root of a city's disparities and making meaningful policy and system changes.

### Things to Keep in Mind

1. Even if policies do not contain explicit racial biases, they can still inadvertently contribute to racial inequity in your city.
2. Learn about policies that have historically shaped inequity across the nation and determine if they exist in your community.
3. Conduct an in-depth analysis of racial disparities that you've discovered through previous steps.
4. Begin with racial disparities in outcomes (ex. educational achievement gaps) and track backwards to uncover the root causes of these differences.

### Going Forward — Analyze Policy through a Racial Equity Lens

Before making local policy decisions, ask the following questions:

- Who will be better/worse off through this policy?
- Who is deciding the goals, parameters or features of this policy?
- What historical structures or social norms drive the policy?
- Which systems will implement the policy?
- Who has access, both physically and socially to that system?
- What do data analyses say about where inequities have manifested due to previous policy changes?

## 6. Create a Racial Equity Plan

Racial equity plans provide a blueprint of the city's intentions to improve outcomes for people of color by outlining citywide goals and agency-specific strategies for accomplishing those goals. They give community members, stakeholders and colleagues a means for holding their government accountable and a benchmark from which to build trust.

Local governments can begin this process after going through the previous steps to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs and hopes of residents of color. Each city department or bureau can create action plans targeted by issue area. By combining those action-plans, cities create an institutional road map that continues beyond leadership transitions.



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Many cities have developed a city government performance management system across agencies to track progress on achieving city goals. Aligning a racial equity goal within this

process is an opportunity to hold all city agencies and staff accountable in ways that impact their day to day work, without creating separate siloed processes.

### Steps to Making a Racial Equity Plan:

1. Create a racial equity guiding statement for your city or each department.
2. Select a Citywide Equity Goal and create five-year objectives.
3. Create actions to achieve each objective.
4. Create annual performance measures for each action and commit to a completion date.
5. Create or identify the mechanism by which each action will be tracked, measured or evaluated.
6. Identify lead staff for each action—the person or body that holds the staff accountable for completion.



**The City of New Orleans, Louisiana, outlined its plans to “dismantle barriers to opportunity” in the racial equity plan titled “Equity New Orleans; The Road to Equitable Government.” The plan - published in print and online - includes a statement from the Mayor explaining the city’s priorities and setting the tone for staff and residents to follow. In only 16 pages, the guide covers the city’s mission and vision, issue-specific data, projected path to completion, and department specific objectives and accomplishments.**

**NLC** NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES