

INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

The District 1 Community Council shares political and community knowledge and power among the 22,000+ residents of our southeast Saint Paul neighborhoods as it builds civic leadership and a shared identity. It uses that knowledge, power and leadership to influence decisions about the social and physical infrastructure supporting community in all its complexity.

WHO LIVES IN OUR COMMUNITY

In 1990, only 1 in 10 people living here was a person of color. By 2010, 1 in 4 people was African American or an African immigrant, 1 in 5 people was of Asian descent, and just over 1 in 10 people was Hispanic. Now 6 of every 10 people are people of color, and 1 in 4 people speaks a language other than English at home. This racial and cultural diversity is continuing to increase. In addition, 36% of us are low-income and this population is disproportionately people of color, 46% are renters and 40% have a high school education or less. Because of these facts, it is incumbent on us to assure that our organization, the work it does, and the impact it has on creating community reflects, represents and includes these persons and perspectives. Our community will be stronger, and individuals will feel more connected if they are able to influence what their shared future looks like.

OUR POLICY STATEMENT

WHY WE FOCUS ON EQUITY

Our goal is to address past disparities in who makes decisions, to build assets in human and political capital, and position the community for its shared future. Because historical circumstances and structural systems have invested greater access to decision-making and political power among certain groups of people, bestowing on them privileges that have not been acknowledged or shared, the Council focuses its energies on increasing access where disparities in this access are the greatest. By focusing in this way, we aspire to have the greatest impact on the community as a whole.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR

In 2014-15, the Council invested efforts towards understanding the historic impacts of these privileged systems through a series of intercultural dialogues. In 2016, the Council began assessing its own structures and impacts on the community in order to align staffing, programming, and resources with new, explicitly stated organizational values that focus on racial equity and social justice.

WHAT WE WILL DO TO ADDRESS DISPARITIES

In 2017, we have committed to an examination of all our communication and outreach efforts to assure that those residents experiencing the greatest disparities in access to political power will be the focus of on-going work, especially around shared knowledge and leadership development.

In the first year, we will modify our communication strategies, by which we mean we will define how we develop and maintain relationships among focus populations, identifying the frameworks and tools to support meaningful relationships within and among our neighborhoods' diverse populations. We will establish a system for evaluating our effectiveness in developing these relationships. In the future, we will use this information to guide changes to our staffing, programming and resource procurement so that we may continually build on successes and learn from mistakes. We will embed this deliberate framework into every decision that we make regarding the purpose and practice of this organization.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

We are building the leaders of Saint Paul's future through deliberate and practiced civic education and decision-making around the physical and social infrastructure of our neighborhoods. Such an approach will position our organization for growth and continuing relevance for the people living in, and defining, the District 1 community. It will also position all our residents so they may take their rightful place in deciding their own future.

INCORPORATING EQUITY THROUGHOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

We have 3 standing committees/work groups and an Executive Committee. Each of these is responsible for overseeing a portion of our work. The following statements demonstrate how we propose to integrate an Equity Lens into each group.

Executive Committee Equity Statement

Background:

- This organization works to rebalance differences in access to power that various populations in our community have experienced historically, especially as related to our unique position with the City;
- For our purposes, equity is defined in relation to imbalances in power among racial and ethnic groups, and involves recognizing the diversity among us, practicing inclusion, and deliberately working with and for shared leadership and decision-making;
- The Executive Committee of the District 1 Board is made up of the Officers and the chairs of the standing committees;
- The Executive Committee oversees how the organization and the board do their work, in collaboration with the Executive Director; and
- The Executive Committee sets board agendas, establishes the organization's budget and workplan, supports staff, supervises the Executive Director, and serves as the personnel committee of the organization.

With equity front and center, as a committee we will

- Educate board and community members about our organization and its priorities;
- Hold staff, committees and board members accountable for making sure our work focuses on our purpose, our mission and our values;

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- Evaluate how we organize ourselves, the actions we take, and the results we achieve:
 - We will question, critique, develop and support equity efforts;
 - We will use both qualitative and quantitative criteria in this evaluation;
 - We will take risks, experiment and learn from our efforts in order to find appropriate and effective ways to advance our equity goals; and
- Work to assure our organization grows sustainably so that
 - Staff and board reflect, represent and are responsive to and trusted by the community; and
 - Our organization's goals are supported by appropriate resources.

Land Use Committee Equity Statement

Background:

- Land use and zoning decisions have traditionally been dominated by white, wealthier, more educated property owners.
- Land use and zoning decisions traditionally have been made
 - Without considering equity or disproportionate impacts;
 - With a focus on extremely local effects and responses;
 - Our land use committee, unlike many others across the city, has the power to speak for the council and decisions do not need to be ratified by the full board.

With equity front and center, as a committee we will

- Guide the process based on our legal purpose, mission and values, and recognizing resource constraints while working out of our strategic plan and the land use plans we have developed;
- Prioritize our efforts where we can increase equity the most;
- Make decisions based on principles of racial and economic equity, the common good, and with an eye towards both long term impact and impact on the district as a whole;
- Reduce racial and social injustice by being intentional about input representing the entire community, including residents and businesses;
- Evaluate outcomes based on the above by answering the following questions
 - Does the process reflect our legal purpose, mission, and values?
 - Are the impacts equitable and serving the long-term good?

COSCo (Communications, Outreach and Safety) Equity Statement

Background...

- This organization works to rebalance differences in access to power that various populations in our community have experienced historically, especially as related to our unique position with the City;
- For our purposes, equity is defined in relation to imbalances in power among racial and ethnic groups, and involves recognizing the diversity among us, practicing inclusion, and deliberately working with and for shared leadership and decision-making;
- Our purpose is to educate, unite and to create a common sense of community for our area;

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- Our mission is to share knowledge and power, to organize and to advocate for the people who live and work in our neighborhoods. We build leadership to seize opportunities and work for social and racial justice; our values will guide us in meeting this mission.

With equity front and center, we recognize that:

- Communication is vital to achieving our purpose and mission;
- Our communication responsibilities include communication that is
 - Among residents;
 - Between residents and the organization;
 - Between residents and local government;
 - Between the organization and local government.
- The framework, ways and means we use to fulfill our communication role will
 - Be framed by our values;
 - Be focused on portions of the community who have experienced historical gaps in participation in decision-making;
 - Seek to reduce racial and social injustice.
- Our communication efforts will be evaluated for effectiveness based on whether they meet the above by answering these questions:
 - Do they serve our purpose and mission while adhering to our values?
 - Do they reach target audiences in previously unengaged communities?
 - Are they aligned with our goals?
 - What results do we see from these communication efforts? Have they brought forth new leaders from underrepresented communities who step forward to address issues they identify and/or who participate in city or county decision-making?

Youth Task Force Equity Statement

Background:

- The East Side overall has more youth as a percentage of the population than the City as a whole. In District 1, 28% of the residents are below the age of 18 and 75% of that population are youth of color;
- Decisions made by the City and District 1 affect youth, but there has not been a youth voice present in the decision-making process;
- The Youth program – consisting of the Youth Council and Youth Taskforce was developed in 2016, with the Young Mentors Group joining the program in 2017.

The Youth Program will

- Provide leadership, civic engagement and social development opportunities for youth in the district;
- Elevate youth voices in neighborhood decisions that affect them, especially those voices from low income communities and communities of color;

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- Connect youth organizations and their efforts within District 1 to increase and magnify opportunities for youth; and
- Evaluate outcomes based on the number of youth positively engaged, and on the impact of their input on issues.

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OUR EQUITY PLAN

Introduction

Our intention is to embed equity and equitable approaches to our work throughout the organization. We have begun with our values, used our vision to state our long term goals, drawn our strategic objectives from our 2016 Strategic Plan, and have identified the key constituencies that we want to reach using an equity lens. We have developed 2 equity goals that we will reach over the next three years, identified activities by which we will reach them, and specified the milestones by which we will measure our progress.

Organizational VALUES

- **Trust/Respect**
- **Equity/Power/Justice**
- **Solidarity**
- **Sustainability**

Our Organization's LONG TERM GOALS

- Building Community
- Youth Development
- Leadership Development
- Robust and Shared Decision-Making

Our Organization's Strategic Objectives

- Build Community and Connect Community Members to the Organization
- Strengthen Programming and Partnerships
- Improve Communication across Constituencies and Platforms

Our Key Constituencies

Our key constituents are residents of the district, but also include businesses and organizations, our elected officials, and city staff.

- Residents (homeowners, renters, homeless – our focus for the next three years is renters)
- Businesses and organizations (these are potential partners but not the focus of work in the next 3 years)
- African American (long-term and new residents – these constituents have been the focus of our work for the past several years – they will continue as a focus for the next 3 years)
- African Immigrants (our focus for the next 3 years will be East African immigrants, particularly Somali immigrants)

- Youth (our focus for on-going youth programming in the next 3 years is ages 10-18 years of all ethnicities; if additional funding is available children ages 0-12 years among East African renters will be a focus for at least one year)
- Renters (renters throughout the district have been a focus for 4 years; for the next 3 years, this will continue)
- Asians (both long term residents and new immigrants – our focus for the next 3 years will be on the Hmong population, although South Asian and Karen populations will be included in our work)
- Latinos (both long-term and new residents)

Equity Goal #1 – Increase the ACTIVE participation by communities of color in D1’s internal and community work so that it reflects the changing demographics.

1. Assumptions

- a. Demographics will continue to change but our focus will be on those populations of our community that are underrepresented in portions of our work and activities – at the current time these are African immigrants, Asians, and Latinos
- b. If the work of the organization interests and serves the needs of the community, they will participate
- c. Barriers to participation exist but are not all under our control – we are responsible for removing barriers that we control.
- d. Participation is a continuum that includes – AWARENESS, ATTENDANCE, INTERACTION, ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP. This goal focuses on increasing AWARENESS, ATTENDANCE AND INTERACTION.

2. What success looks like

- a. The attendance and participation at all levels is representative of the community.
- b. The attendance and participation varies with the changing demographics
- c. Communication about who we are, what we do and the opportunities for participation are known throughout the community
- d. Our committees will share an assessment tool to help apply an equity lens to their work as they decide where they will focus their efforts.

3. Activities to reach success

- a. Use of an equity impact assessment tool to determine where and how efforts are focused – responsible parties are committee and board members
- b. Communicating opportunities to participate using a variety of platforms – responsible parties are committee members, staff
- c. Use of our events as opportunities to engage constituents around a variety of topics and activities, including:
 - i. Annual Meeting (responsible parties – Exec Cmte, COSCo, staff)
 - ii. City-wide Drop Off Day (responsible parties – ED, local leaders, volunteers)
 - iii. InterNational Night Out and National Night Out (responsible parties – Partners, volunteers, Board members, COSCo)

- iv. Neighborhood Celebrations (responsible parties – local leaders, staff, volunteers)
 - v. Open Mic (responsible parties – youth leaders, staff)
 - vi. Speakers of Color Series (responsible parties – youth leaders, staff)
 - vii. YMG activities (responsible parties – Adult leaders, youth leaders, Youth Task Force, staff)
 - viii. Community Garden Activities (responsible parties – local leaders, staff)
 - ix. Board/Committee Meetings (responsible parties – committee and board members)
 - x. Community Meetings (responsible parties – board, committee and staff)
 - xi. Special Projects (responsible parties – determined by project)
4. Milestones to Measure Success
- a. Creation of a robust and sustainable Communication Plan by December 2017
 - i. Survey conducted of how residents receive their neighborhood news (COSCo)
 - b. Creation of an assessment tool for committee by December 2017
 - i. Modify or adapt the Equitable Development Scorecard to each committee (Exec Cmte)
 - ii. Provide training in applying the tool (Exec Cmte and staff)
 - c. Attendance by persons of color at our Annual Meeting is doubled in 2018 and continues to increase in 2019 and 2020
 - d. By December 2017, all activities have a way to track attendance; Board members have committed to participating in at least 2 of the council activities in 2018
 - e. By December 2018, there is a plan to increase attendance of people of color from different communities of color at Board and Community meetings by 10-20%; Board members have participated in activities beyond board and committee meetings
 - f. By December 2019, we have identified which of our activities should remain the focus of efforts as we work to increase ACTIVE participation by target constituencies.

The result of these efforts is that attendance and active participation at all levels is representative of the community. We recognize that, currently, different events are drawing different segments of the overall community. People throughout the community will know who we are, what we do, and about opportunities for participation. There will be more people of color running for board positions, attending all our activities, and our board members will be involved in all our activities as both volunteers and community members.

Equity Goal #2 – Increase Leadership Opportunities for Communities of Color to (at least) reflect the proportion of those communities in the district

- 1. Assumptions –
 - a. Leadership takes many forms and can be applied throughout the organization and its work.

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- b. Demographics will continue to change – they are a “moving target” that requires monitoring, but segments of our population are currently underrepresented, and these will be our focus.
 - c. Leadership of the organization and its activities should reflect the community
 - d. Participation is a continuum that includes – AWARENESS, ATTENDANCE, INTERACTION, ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP. This goal focuses on increasing ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP.
2. What success looks like
- a. By 2020, staff reflects the demographics of the district to the fullest extent possible
 - b. By 2020, board leadership reflects the demographics of the district
 - c. By 2020, board membership reflects the demographics of the district
 - d. By 2020, district representatives on city commissions and committees includes members of our varied ethnic and racial communities
 - e. By 2020, activities within the district exist and are supported that are opportunities for local leadership from members of our varied ethnic and racial communities
3. Activities to reach success
- a. Identify potential leaders in various communities with help from staff, board members, partners, volunteers
 - b. Provide training or connections to training for potential leaders
 - i. Partner with CURA, Wilder, and other orgs for general training (responsible parties – ED, partners)
 - ii. Create and implement annual district-council specific training (responsible parties – ED, Exec Cmte, partners)
 - c. Provide leadership support
 - i. Create “board buddies” to mentor new board members
 - ii. Provide staff support as needed for new board members
 - iii. Provide staff support for leaders of local neighborhood projects
 - d. Identify new criteria for selecting executive director
 - i. Develop job description and job package that will attract new ED (Exec Cmte)
 - ii. Plan for smooth transition of leadership (ED and Exec Cmte)
4. Milestones to measure progress
- a. By December 2017, identify existing leadership opportunities and create a general plan for identifying potential leaders, assign duties to board members and staff
 - b. By December 2017, identify 2-5 potential new leaders for training in 2018
 - c. By December 2018, develop and implement district council-specific training with 1 training and 2 opportunities for leadership practice; continue to identify potential leaders for future training and support
 - d. By December 2019, expand the training opportunities and practices and increase the number of potential leaders identified to 8-10
 - e. By December 2020, have a sustainable and embedded system of leadership identification, training and support, with a new cohort each year.

The result of these efforts will be that more people of color will feel connected to the organization and will be serving the community. There will be an increase in the number of “messengers” to the community about who we are, what we do and how people can be involved. The organization and its leadership will be increasingly reflective of the community.

Discussion of Potential Barriers (that we control...)

1. People do not know who we are and what we do
2. Our structure is uninviting or threatening or not supportive of participation
 - a. Hospitality isn't funded
 - b. Childcare is not provided
 - c. Where we meet is limited (transportation may be limited)
 - d. Times we meet may not be accessible
3. Our activities do not appeal or are not relevant
4. Assessment of our effectiveness or impact requires a significant investment of staff and board time (this is a barrier to OUR identifying and removing barriers...)
5. We assume that by removing potential barriers we will increase the likelihood of equitable participation.