



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Keith Stahley, City Manager

FROM: Courtney Knox Busch, Strategic Initiatives Manager

SUBJECT:
Update on City diversity, equity, and inclusion actions

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Result Areas - Good Governance; Natural Environment Stewardship; Safe Community; Safe, Reliable and Efficient Infrastructure; Strong and Diverse Economy; Welcoming and Livable Community.

SUMMARY:

In January 2021, Salem's City Council took two decisive actions to further the City's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Council adopted two resolutions: one condemning racism and white supremacy, and the other recognizing racism as a public health crisis. Further investments in the FY 22 Budget included a new Diversity Equity and Inclusion Coordinator position, with the express intent to increase diversity of hiring as one outcome of the work.

On February 14, 2022, the Salem City Council received an update on the work the organization has put into action through access improvements to our programs and services, in business supports and livable wage job creation, and in how we plan for the future through Our Salem and action need to mitigate effects of climate change.

ISSUE:

Update on diversity, equity and inclusion actions throughout the City organization.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The City of Salem addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion through direction from City Council along with the City's operations using internal workgroups or leadership directives. This report provides an overview of the work underway and a summary of next steps.

City Council Statements. In January 2021, Salem's City Council took two decisive actions to further the City's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Council adopted two resolutions: one condemning racism and white supremacy, and the other recognizing racism as a public health crisis. City Council continues its learning and dialogue on these issues, inviting conversation with experts in the field and sharing lived experience.

2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Over-arching policy guidance for the organization comes from City Council, through the City's Strategic Plan. Our Strategic Plan is grounded in the City's vision (the ideal state of our community in the future), mission (how we, as a City government, plan to achieve our vision), and values (the principles of our organization by which we strive to work).

- *Our vision is...* A safe, livable, and sustainable capital city, with a thriving economy and a vibrant community that is welcoming to all.
- *Our mission is to...* Provide fiscally sustainable and quality services to enrich the lives of present and future residents, protect and enhance the quality of our environment and neighborhoods, and support the vitality of our economy.

Our guiding principles...

- *Community-focused* We strive to provide high-quality, responsive, and equitable services that meet the needs of our community.
- *Inclusive* We are committed to ensuring equity and accessibility across city services. We are an anti-racist organization that actively fights against racism and all other forms of discrimination. Diversity is a core strength of our community and we are dedicated to creating a city where everyone-regardless of culture, race, or ability-can thrive.
- *Proactive* We are innovative, action-oriented, and focused on delivering measurable results to our community. We actively seek and use data to make well-informed decisions.
- *Accountable* We act with integrity and honesty. We take responsibility for our actions and communicate with residents to ensure transparency.
- *Respectful* We strive to create a healthy work environment based on teamwork and mutual respect.

Major Policy Initiatives. The City has undertaken several foundational initiatives, with significant community engagement, in the past several years: Our Salem Comprehensive Plan Update, the Climate Action Plan, and an Economic Development Strategy focused on Salem's business sector and job creation. Equity appears in major policy work in 2022, shaping the future of our community.

What do we mean by equity? Equity means all residents can participate and thrive in an inclusive society. This requires rectifying unequal access to resources and opportunities caused by historic and current systems of oppression and exclusion related to race, income, ability, gender, sexual identity, and other factors. An equitable community overcomes disparities by providing increased levels of

support to community members based on their needs. In Salem, it is a priority to advance equity in decision-making processes and the outcomes of those processes, including policies, investments, practices, and procedures.

Equity in Climate Action. The effects of climate change will not be borne equally by Salem residents. People who live in floodplains, who live with medical conditions, who are unsheltered or live in poverty, and/or who have limited financial and social resources to recover from extreme weather events will have the most difficulty adapting to climate impacts. Many Climate Action strategies, which address systems and practices that have historically disadvantaged groups of Salem residents, apply to other facets of City governance and community equity. Salem City Council will be receiving an update on the Climate Action Plan at the September 15, 2022 meeting. The update will cover the activities of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) Committee, convened to review early implementation efforts under this new plan. The subcommittee of City Council includes the Mayor and Councilors Gonzalez, Hoy, and Phillips and meets monthly.

The City of Salem Climate Action Plan includes 183 strategies to increase the community's resilience to climate change and to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in Salem. Many of the strategies generally focus on those that will have high potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and provide community equity co-benefits with relatively low cost to the City. Other potential early strategies demonstrate leadership by the City, establish governance for the Climate Action Plan, are in-process or ongoing actions, required by new and pending state rules, or are already planned to start within two years.

Equity in Our Salem. Throughout the three-year community engagement effort to craft a community-wide vision for growth and development and update the Salem Area Comprehensive Plan, the City proactively engaged all members of our community with a wide variety of opportunities to participate and provide input. The Comprehensive Plan Update, Our Salem, which was approved by City Council on July 11, 2022, includes goals and policies that consider equity in:

- Housing;
- Economic development and employment;
- Land use and urbanization;
- Parks and recreation;
- Natural resources and the environment;
- Climate change and natural hazards;
- Transportation;
- Public facilities and infrastructure;
- Community services and historic resources; and
- Community engagement and equity

Throughout Our Salem, the intent has been to strengthen partnerships with the growing, diverse community and provide ongoing opportunities for meaningful involvement in planning, investment, and policy decisions. The City is committed to expanding opportunities for people of color, low-income residents, and other under-served and under-represented groups to participate in planning and investment decisions. To improve equity outcomes, the City aims to ensure the benefits of growth and change will be equitably shared by all community members, and no neighborhood or

group in the community will be disproportionately burdened by Salem's growth.

Equity in Business Support and Job Creation. The City commits to supporting all entrepreneurs and businesses and staff continues to outreach to businesses and provide needed technical assistance. Each year about 200 business connections are made with a variety of entities including aspiring entrepreneurs, growing small businesses, and thriving large companies. In addition, the City maintains an email list with about 450 businesses and provides information on grant programs, trainings, and events.

Staff also continue to focus on recovery from the pandemic and actions to ensure equitable outcomes for Salem's residents. To connect with under-represented and under-served businesses the City is strengthening its partnerships with organizations like the Latino Business Alliance, Merit, Latino Microenterprise Development Program and Small Business Development Center - Small Business Management Program. Moving forward, actions will be taken to tell the story of Salem businesses and continue to engage under-served groups.

Equity in Purchasing and Contracting. To increase access to the City's procurement process, the City is developing a new procurement strategy to provide more opportunities to Salem's small business community, be more supportive of the regional economy, to engage more businesses which reflect the diversity of our business community, and achieve racial and gender equity in Salem's contracting. The new policy will encourage use of firms certified by the State of Oregon Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity. In each of Salem's recent bond-funded projects, the City along with the general contractors have participated in the Capitol Connections meetings to help foster relationships with our local contractor base. Local contractors were awarded 86% of projects from the 2008 Streets and Bridges Bond.

Human Rights Commission Initiatives. When developing City policy, City Council considers recommendations from its advisory boards and commissions. With an eye toward equity, the Human Rights Commission serves as an advisory group to Council on human rights issues. The Human Rights Commission role is codified in Salem Revised Code Chapter 8. Changes to the Salem Revised Code in Chapter 97, over time, have better captured human rights of all peoples - including recommending adding "housing status" as a protected identity in January 2022.

The Commission assists residents by hearing and resolving discrimination complaints of prejudice or discrimination and promoting harmony. Anyone who has experienced discrimination in Salem, can contact the Human Rights Commission at 503-540-2371, 503-588-6439 (TTY/TDD), or humanrights@cityofsalem.net <<mailto:humanrights@cityofsalem.net>>

The Commission takes its role in supporting victims and survivors of bias or hate seriously. The City's "Hate & Bias Activity" tri-fold brochure (Attachment 1) describes what a victim or survivor of hate or bias should expect from the City. Attachment 2 features the process staff and Human Rights Commission follow when a report is received. During the 2021 calendar year, the Commission assisted five persons with reports of discrimination.

Other Commission-led activities underway include:

- **Community Surveys:** In 2022, in partnership with students at Western Oregon University, the City conducted a fourth survey regarding experience of discrimination in Salem. The survey was conducted in May 2022, available electronically and on paper, delivered in Spanish and English, included responses from 824 people who live or work in the Salem area, and represents self-reported experiences of discrimination. There were 208 of the 824 responses (24%) completed by individuals currently experiencing homelessness. Most who responded found the survey on the City of Salem outreach tools like Facebook, Instagram, website, or via email. The Commission recognizes the limitations of the survey data. For example, the demographics of those responding to the survey do not mirror the demographics of the community (40% were between 40-59 years of age; 62% were women). The survey provides insight into the experience of those who have experienced discrimination and speaks to individual stories. From the survey, we understand:
 - Of the respondents who did not identify as homeless, 60% reported experiencing discrimination in Salem. Most frequently, these experiences of discrimination were due to gender (22%) and race or color (21%).
 - Of those respondents who identify as currently homeless, 94% report experiencing discrimination on a regular basis, primarily due to housing status.
 - Two-thirds of respondents who are currently homeless reported living with a disability. Of those who did not identify as homeless, 27% live with a disability.
- Transgender Day of Remembrance <<https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/salem-remembers-victims-of-anti-transgender-violence.aspx>>: this event marked the sober annual recognition of all those around the world who have lost their lives due to anti-transgender violence. The Commission's LGBTQIA+ Intersectional Rights Task Force hosted their fifth annual community observance. On Sunday, November 20, 2022, the Commission is planning to host the next observance.

Equity and Access: Programs, Services, and City Business Practices. The Strategic Plan values are guiding all our business practice. Within the context of the global Pandemic, more and more City services are now available online, making more services accessible on customer schedules and programs and information are available in more languages.

Language Accessibility. Salem City Council meetings are simultaneously broadcast in American Sign Language and Spanish.

Funded in the FY 22 Budget, the City launched the new website in mid-June to improve search and navigation and accessibility of information for different language preferences. With more information and services available in the web environment, translation of materials is made easier and more accessible to screen readers. The site also features seamless integration of off-site web-based information sources. The design of menus and site map are based on a "heat map" showing most visited areas and pages based on user navigation of the old website in the fall of 2021.

Across the organization, staff contribute to sharing this information in Spanish through the Ciudad de Salem Facebook page, launched in 2019. As we collectively plan our future, community surveys for planning efforts follow Climate Action and Our Salem community engagement with availability in multiple formats and languages.

Equity in Planning Capital Projects. As we consider investments in parks, transportation, and safer crossing projects in the City's five-year Capital Improvement Program, projects are assessed on whether they meet criteria of furthering social, economic, and geographic equity in Salem. For Salem's Safer Pedestrian Crossing Program, an equity score is calculated for each project as it is considered. A project's equity score is based on poverty level in area, diversity in race and age (65 years and older, and youth), limited English households, and those living with visual or ambulatory disabilities.

Other Advancements:

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator.** The FY 2022 Budget included a new Diversity Equity and Inclusion Coordinator position, with the express intent to increase diversity of hiring as one outcome of the work. The Coordinator, with assistance from consulting firm McLean and Company, completed a four-day intensive workshop to generate an organizational DEI Strategic Plan. This workshop included city staff representation from various backgrounds and roles in various departments. The Strategic plan includes development of a sustainable DEI program with metrics, tools for managers, an internal DEI training program, as well as oversight of the internal DEI Committee.
- **Organizational Equity Work.** As an organization, the City is putting equity in action through access improvements to our programs and services, in business supports and livable wage job creation, and in how we plan for the future of Our Salem and action need to mitigate effects of climate change.

In March 2021, the City's Executive Leadership Team approved the Comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and membership for an internal enterprise-wide DEI Committee focused on programs, practices, and services. Building the organizational culture takes time and the group has begun work in three key areas:

1. **Build an organizational culture that promotes DEI.** The team will be developing common language for DEI and create performance evaluation criteria that includes cultural sensitivity, inclusion and equity for all employees. Building a robust DEI data collection effort - to include gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability information - will support this work. To achieve an inclusive organization where all employees and volunteers feel valued. the staff team is reviewing and proposing amendments to the Salem Revised Code, Administrative Policies and Procedures, Administrative Rules, and other City policy documents to remove gender-specific language and incorporate inclusive language related to gender identity, family definition, abilities and other DEI elements. This work is underway with the DEI Coordinator.
2. **Attract and hire staff that are representative of the diverse, multi-cultural community we serve.** The City will continue partnering with community groups to promote the City as an employer of choice, connect employees as recruitment advocates within their communities, review classifications for unconscious bias, and implement DEI

training for hiring managers. The talent acquisition team is focused on process improvements, engagement opportunities, and onboarding improvements.

3. **Develop an on-going training program for staff that reinforces the City's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion for the organization and the community we serve.** The training program will include bias training, may incorporate a series of short training videos, and will include a safe harbor space where employees and managers can obtain answers to DEI-related questions and raise issues without embarrassment or fear of retribution.

BACKGROUND:

As an ongoing initiative, the City has been working formally and informally to build diversity, equity, and inclusion into its policies, programs, and practices.

Courtney Knox Busch
Strategic Initiatives Manager

Attachments:

1. Tri-fold Brochure: What to expect if reporting hate or bias
2. Discrimination complaint process