City of
Fort Collins
Equity
& Inclusion

2023
EQUITY
PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Equity and Inclusion work is only possible when collaboration and trusting relationships are activated. The City of Fort Collins staff has many Equity Champions supporting this work wholeheartedly. Their dedication to equity work, guidance, leadership, and friendship are the cornerstone of our collective progress.

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LETTER FROM THE EQUITY & INCLUSION OFFICER

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work is all about people. This work is dedicated to seeing humanity and dignity in each other. It is dedicated to seeing and appreciating the cultural contributions of each group that comprises our Fort Collins community. It is dedicated to recognizing that not everyone enjoys the same outcomes and that we have the ability to correct our course of action and increase access to equitable and joyful outcomes. This work is beautiful and inspiring because it is about our collective power to do better for each other.

The Fort Collins Equity & Inclusion Office shares responsibility with all departments to develop and apply an equity lens to our municipal work. Everyone has a role to play, so it is vital that we all understand why equity is important and how our everyday decision-making can provide equitable, supportive experiences for all in the community.

Municipalities are the level of government closest to its people. The decisions we make have profound impacts on daily community life as well as policy, process, service delivery and civic engagement. We have the responsibility to provide services that create a sense of inclusion and belonging for community members of diverse backgrounds and those who have often been excluded from decisions, leadership, processes and resources. The Fort Collins Equity & Inclusion Office is invested in relational work that fosters trust in the community and creating an inclusive community through commitment, data accountability and inclusive engagement. Cultivating joyful, safe, inclusive and accessible work and community environments for all is our highest priority.

The Equity & Inclusion Office dedicates time and resources concurrently on internal staff development and relationships as well as community trust-building. These spheres are intrinsically overlapping and connected. We must focus internally first and ensure we create an inclusive workplace that fosters a culture of belonging for all employees. Our commitment to the belonging, safety and well-being of all employees also directs and reflects on our work with community groups. Our efforts are inclusive of all identities across the organization and Fort Collins community.

I am pleased to share with you our Equity & Inclusion Plan for 2023-2026. This plan will help us define our work as we move collectively to implement our shared vision toward building a more equitable Fort Collins. I consider this to be a living document that will remain flexible and adapt to emerging community needs.

An Equity Plan can put a theory of change into action to achieve a collective vision of racial and social equity. Plans can drive institutional and structural change. However, the goal we seek is not a plan. The goal is institutional and structural change, which requires resources to implement—time, money, skills and effort. It requires our local governments' will and expertise to change our policies, the way we do business, our habits and culture. This is not accomplished without discomfort and difficult conversations. However, trust and a belief that equitable outcomes are possible when we work together, speak our truths, and accept each other's differences will drive us to create the change we want to see.

Sincerely,

CLAUDIA MARÍA MENÉNDEZ
Equity & Inclusion Officer

OUR COMMITMENT
TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

We are committed to breaking down systemic barriers by prioritizing social justice when creating policies and programs and when making strategic and budgeting decisions in our daily work and interactions.

We lead with racial equity and recognize inequities around gender, gender identity and expression, class, sexual orientation, mental and physical abilities, citizenship status, national origin, age, religious affiliation and spirituality, and the additional ways people are oppressed.

We acknowledge that we are on Indigenous land and that our community has benefitted and continues to benefit from the labor of Black and Brown people.

We speak honestly about these and other historical truths that have led to unequal outcomes for communities of color and we hold ourselves and each other accountable to address these inequities and to challenge prejudice.

We honor the experiences and knowledge of the people and communities most impacted by social inequity by developing policies that will result in greater equity and inclusion for all community members.

Mission
Exceptional Service for an Exceptional Community

Vision
We foster a thriving and engaged community through our operational excellence and culture of innovation.

Values

PARTNERSHIP
We believe in shared decision-making and invest authentically in relationships. We are welcoming, solution-oriented and supportive of each other and our community.

SAFETY & WELLBEING
We are committed to physical and psychological safety in the workplace and throughout the community.

INTEGRITY
We earn the trust of our community by exemplifying the highest standard of ethical behavior. We demonstrate respect, honesty, inclusivity and transparency.

SERVICE
We work to understand the diverse needs of our customers and evolve with the community to implement innovative, people-centered solutions to provide outstanding service.

SUSTAINABILITY
We are entrusted and accountable to protect and enhance the social, economic and environmental resiliency of our community and organization for present and future generations.

BELONGING
We strive to build equitable, inclusive and supportive work environments that cultivate a sense of belonging for employees and community members of all identities to feel safe and valued.

The City has adopted a mission, vision and set of values that help guide our work ethic and support inclusive employee and community relations. We strive to represent community voices and weave input and feedback into program, project and policy development. We invest adequate time to hear from all community voices. We recognize that open and honest conversations are possible when there is trust between community members and local government representatives. We must prioritize trust-building so true equitable and inclusive community development can take place.

The 2022 refresh of the City's Mission, Vision, Values includes the addition of the value of Belonging. Belonging occurs when diversity, equity and inclusion coexist. Belonging is what we must strive toward in employee and community relations, and what every individual needs to thrive professionally and personally. These values guide how we demonstrate our commitment to each other and the community and how we put equity into action.

WHAT IS EQUITY & INCLUSION?

Equality is about treating everyone the same. Equity means considering individuals' and communities' specific experiences, histories, lived and living experiences, and intersectional needs in the decision-making process toward equitable outcomes. It means prioritizing and serving those most marginalized first and with deeper care.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO THINK ABOUT EQUITY:

Equity is fairness and justice achieved through systematically assessing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and participation and redressing those disparities through targeted actions.

Equity is the intentional distribution of resources to the most marginalized populations to help them achieve their needs, interests and goals.

Equity is about understanding that not everyone has the same level of decision-making power, choices and ease of access to services and programs.

Equity means each person has the resources and services to thrive, such that racial or identity-based and socioeconomic disparities are eliminated, and outcomes improve for all.

Equity means considering the various circumstances experienced by community groups and understanding individual and institutional positional power that either impedes access or creates ease of access.

Equity is the actions to remove systemic barriers so that persons of all identities, including race, ethnicity, religion, gender and gender identity, age, class, sexual orientation, and physical and mental ability can fully participate in City services and experience equitable community outcomes.

More simply put, equity means understanding community needs and providing for the most marginalized, excluded and underserved communities what they say the need.

The graphic to the right illustrates the difference between equity and equality. Using an equality approach, everyone gets the same bicycle, regardless of their size, ability, or other needs. Using an equity approach, each person gets a bicycle custom to their unique situation. Depending on the situation, we may need to consider income, education, language abilities, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or age, among other circumstances.

Designing and providing services for the most marginalized creates equal opportunity for all and is a win-win situation for the entire community.
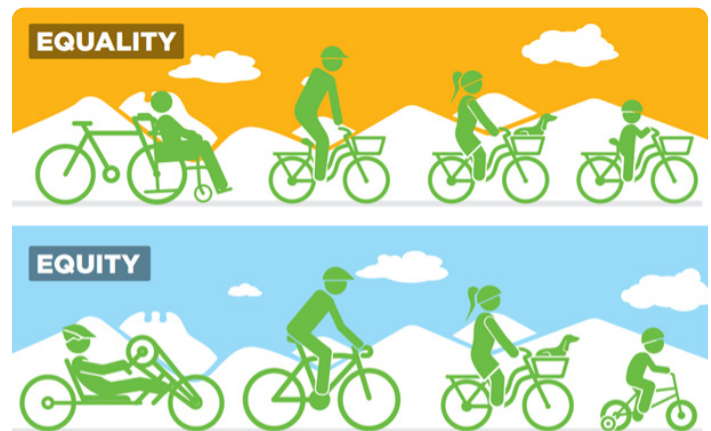
COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

The impacts and disparities caused by racism are deep and pervasive. By addressing the disparities at the systemic and institutional level and centering those who have been most marginalized and harmed by these systems, we elevate equitable outcomes for all community members. Disparities create barriers to access to some of life's basic needs. Some examples of disparities include access to quality education or training programs; minimum wage vs. a living wage; access to nutritious food; access to safe, stable and affordable housing; reliable transportation; access to culturally sensitive mental health and health services; and lack of a general sense of acceptance and belonging. By involving and talking with community members from diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived and living experiences we can create the most equitable outcomes for all.

The Strategic Plan is a tool that clearly articulates City priorities two years at a time. It sets the direction of tax dollars through budget spending. The alignment between strategic planning, budget allocation and service delivery must be specific and intentional for resources to support the needs, goals and interests of the most disproportionately disadvantaged groups in our community. This is the first step to showing the City's commitment to equity and addressing the disparities people are experiencing in Fort Collins.

The Equity & Inclusion Office and several major non-profit partners, institutions and community-based organizations are working together to address existing policies that perpetuate systemic and institutional racism and other forms of oppression. These are ongoing conversations that require time and trust and the ability to critically analyze current practices and identify where positional power and institutional practices can be changed and new practices put in place. We must move toward creating more equitable outcomes for communities who live in the most disadvantaged circumstances. This work starts by first listening to community stories and experiences.

CITY OF FORT COLLINS STRATEGIC PLAN

To achieve the City's mission, vision and values, the Strategic Plan and City budget are aligned and focused on continuous improvement in seven Key Outcome Areas:

- Neighborhood Livability & Social Health
- Culture & Recreation
- Economic Health
- Environmental Health
- Safe Community
- Transportation & Mobility
- High Performing Government

In the City budget, revenue is allocated to support policies and initiatives that drive improvement in each outcome. Each Outcome Area includes specific objectives that define different focus areas.

In 2019 the City of Fort Collins adopted a strategic objective stating its commitment to advancing racial equity for all. In 2022, with the Equity & Inclusion Office in place, the City expanded on this strategic objective to include diverse and intersecting identities as a way for all community members to resonate with the objective and feel seen by the City.

2022 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Advance equity for all with an emphasis on racial justice to remove systemic barriers so that persons of all identities, including race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, and mental and physical abilities can fully participate in City services and experience equitable community outcomes.

Diversity, equity and inclusion is a wide umbrella with many possible identity-based outcomes. Specifically naming historically excluded groups in the objective permits the Equity & Inclusion Office to build relationships with diverse identity groups and open up two-way communication channels so we can further understand their true needs and start to work toward inclusive, accessible and supportive outcomes.

It is vital that our strategic plan reflects the needs, hopes and goals of communities most disproportionately disadvantaged. If community needs are not clearly identified in our plan, the City will continuously be misaligned with community priorities.

Access the 2022 City of Fort Collins Strategic Plan here: www.fcgov.com/strategicplan

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

BUDGETING FOR OUTCOMES AND EQUITY IN BUDGETING

A budget reflects our municipal priorities. Ultimately, the City's budget should represent our values and advance our vision and strategic plan. However, we acknowledge our organization is on a journey to continuously improve our efforts toward equity for all and the City acknowledges that community input of excluded voices is needed more now than ever.

Advancing equity and inclusion for all is a business strategy, rather than a philosophical statement. It aims at closing race-based disparity gaps and inequities experienced by marginalized social groups. This allows the City to make intentional connections among the strategic plan, budget, and program implementation and service delivery.

To advance equity for all we must consider diverse social identities. This includes thinking about how race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, and abilities can impact an individual's level of access to City programs and services. As a municipality, we have the positional power to improve experiences for historically excluded groups, and budgeting for outcomes and with an equity lens provides this opportunity. This process allows department teams to assess and be responsive for any unintended racial, ethnic, identity-based, or socioeconomic consequences, as well as benefits and burdens to community groups or neighborhoods.

Based on continued community and staff feedback, and while also acknowledging advances that have been made in the diversity, equity and inclusion space this year, it remains clear the City must continue focusing, refining and applying an equity lens to service delivery and throughout our community via culturally sensitive community engagement, strategic planning and budgeting processes to demonstrate how the City is dedicated to improving the lives of all community members.

Patrons of the Gardens on Spring Creek admire a pumpkin sculpture during the 2022 Pumpkins on Parade event.

IDENTIFIED **GOALS**

The Equity & Inclusion Office has identified three goals to advance the City's equity and inclusion work. These goals have been created based on City staff and community member input. This plan offers guidance for how equity should be integrated throughout every aspect of our work and not seen as additional.

GOAL 1:	GOAL 2:	GOAL 3:
Commitment & Common Language in the Workplace	Inclusive & Equitable Engagement	Data Accountability

The goals and desired outcomes are planned out in short-, mid-, and long-term timeframes. The proposed timeline and outcomes will remain flexible to accommodate organic interests and ability to meet needs that are prioritized.

GOAL 1:
Commitment & Common Language in the Workplace

Our goal is to normalize and operationalize a Citywide understanding of equity and inclusion principles and provide development opportunities for staff across all levels.

Demonstrating our commitment to equity and using common language is vital to setting the stage to truly advance equity for the most marginalized identities in our community. The way we address the community and how we describe identities and needs will determine the level of trust we earn in our role as local government.

Why Language Matters

Speech is a form of action. Whether we like it or not, our words have consequences and impact. They can include or exclude. We know from research that inclusive cultures are high performance cultures – they deliver greater performance and productivity.1 How we speak to and about each other influences how we treat each other. The language we use daily also builds and permeates our workplace culture.

STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES 2023	MID-TERM OUTCOMES 2024	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 2025 - 2026
Co-create resources to guide inclusive and equitable work	• City staff reference and use inclusive language guides, ERG resources to foment respectful employee relations.	• City staff gain and apply understanding of DEI terms in internal and external communications.	• City staff of all identities feel respected, workplace culture is inclusive, and employee wellbeing in workplaces increases.
Citywide Equity Assessment and Planning	• Equity & Inclusion Office works with service areas to assess current status of equity efforts, readiness to implement new initiatives, and plan strategies to advance equity. • Assessment includes discussions with staff at all levels to create buy-in for equity work.	• Annual meetings with service areas to ensure alignment between Equity & Inclusion Office and departments and ensure that each area has actionable strategies to move the City forward on equity.	• Yearly follow-up meetings and leadership accountability in addressing equity objectives

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STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES 2023	MID-TERM OUTCOMES 2024	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 2025 - 2026
Training and Organizational Capacity Building	• Equity & Inclusion Office creates basic DEI concepts video and materials available to all employees. • Develop an equity/TBL scan to be used for project planning and improvement. • Develop opportunities for Native American engagement. • Develop learning opportunities for working with ADA community. • Title XI Compliance Managerial Training • Employee Relations Training	• City leadership and employees at all levels increase awareness of unconscious bias, racial equity foundation, key terminology. • City leaders DEI Roundtable held biannually. • Department learning opportunity on Employee Relations and impacts on retention of diverse workforce. • Citywide ADA training tools for all employees is an integral part of the City's learning platform. • New hire ADA training resources and guidelines are available as part of onboarding.	• City leadership and employees at all levels apply and practice commitment to equity and inclusion. • Ongoing opportunities provided using internal expertise and best practices, and community partnerships. • Those with disabilities benefit from more services and built environments designed with ADA universal design. • Community services, programs, and activities will benefit from Citywide ongoing ADA and Accessibility efforts, training and learning opportunities.
Create equity-focused committee structures across the City organization	• Launch Equity Collaborative, including Core Collaborators group, grassroots group, and additional ad hoc equity committees. • Inventory existing equity-focused committees across the City.	• Equity work at the City happens in a more collaborative, connected and interdisciplinary way • Communication about equity work at the City increases, with common language and understanding about the foundations of equity. • Structures such as the grassroots equity group provide a mechanism for retaining employees	• Increased understanding of equity at all employee levels. • Increased level of commitment to equity at all levels of the City.
Collaborate with Employee Resource Groups	• Collaborate with ERGs to support BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and women employees and those who are caregivers. • Support ERG-sponsored events, including those connected to heritage months. • Create proclamations and resolutions connected to ERG-supported issues and initiatives. • Establish Trans/Nonbinary Support Working group to evaluate bathroom accessibility the City's name change process and advocate for changes as needed	• Request position to support City ERGs through budgeting process. • Conduct focus groups with ERGs to supplement organizational surveys.	• Increased sense of belonging for BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and other employees that have been harmed by systemic inequities.

Inclusive & Equitable Community Engagement is foundational for local government operations, but especially for building trust with the diversity of people and groups that make up our community. How we communicate and interact with the community speaks to how we understand the needs, goals and interests of the community. We seek to inform and consult, involve, collaborate, and partner with the community. These phases of engagement aim at opening the process to communities impacted by the decisions made. At its core, this process centers equity principles to avoid causing harm to historically marginalized populations.

GOAL 2:	
Inclusive & Equitable Engagement	We will build organizational capacity to engage and partner with community groups to co-create how we advance equity for all, emphasizing participation of demographic and geographic groups most impacted by identified disparities and inequities.

STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES 2023	MID-TERM OUTCOMES 2024	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 2025 - 2026
Inclusive and targeted engagement	• City staff analyzes existing equity indicators to determine who to engage and the best methods to reach target audiences. • Specialized engagement with historically excluded community groups to inform City processes.	• City staff develop communication strategies to reach specific identities and engage in decision-making processes. • City processes reflect the needs of the community. • City services address needs identified and prioritized by historically excluded community groups.	• City develops advisory circles that inform Citywide projects. • City departments see data results change from targeted engagement.
Boards and Commissions and Employee Resource Groups	• Support Disability Advisory Board (DAB) and Human Relations Commission (HRC) as staff liaisons. • Events that promote inclusivity coordinated with DAB and HRC. • Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) receive executive support to develop inclusive employee events.	• Recommendations to City Council based on root cause analysis work accomplished by DAB and HRC. • DAB and HRC events build sense of belonging and inclusion for marginalized community groups. • Equity & Inclusion Office partners with ERGs to offer welcoming and educational identity-based spaces.	• Recommendations enacted and target audience receives more equitable, supportive services. • Boards and commissions diversify outreach and membership. • ERGs support a diverse staff and contribute to employee retention.

GOAL 2 - INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES 2023	MID-TERM OUTCOMES 2024	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 2025 - 2026
Accessibility	• Analyze and compile accessibility needs Citywide.	• Educate and advocate for standards of access and accommodations across City projects.	• People with disabilities benefit from more services and built environments designed with ADA universal design.
Native American Community	• Convene Native American community quarterly meetings for feedback on pre-identified priority items. • Establish a Native American Community Advisory Panel to guide direct Tribal Nation consultations and lead the Land Acknowledgement development process. • Facilitate the establishment of a 501(c)(3) and nomination of initial BOD for the purpose of establishing a Native American Community Center. • Provide guidance to City staff for active civic engagement through trust-building within the Native American Community. • Develop a webpage dedicated to Native American community events, meetings, announcements and reports.	• Native American Advisory Panel makes recommendations based on community engagement feedback. • Educate and advocate for dedicated space for ceremony and cultural events. • Collaborate with local/regional Native American nonprofits to realize collective vision for honoring Original Peoples of Fort Collins. • City staff and Native American Community members build respect and trust through transparent engagement. • Co-develop Tribal consultation policy. • Develop Native American 101 short course for City employees.	• Native American community members have a permanent physical location (a Center) in which to express their unique cultural heritage • Established relationships within the Native American community are actively engaged in guiding natural areas and cultural resources. • Direct government-to-government Tribal consultation is conducted as needed. • City establishes protocols for working with both the local Native American community as well as Tribal governments with historical/cultural ties to Fort Collins.

Community Engagement is vital to the advancement of equity in our city. Respectful, thoughtful engagement requires deep empathic listening so we can connect to future possibilities, heal the past, and move forward with new ways of working together.

The Equity & Inclusion Office is investing time in building relational trust with underserved communities. Since opening the Equity & Inclusion Office in August 2021, time has been spent celebrating, supporting, talking and listening to diverse voices in Fort Collins including Native Americans, Latinx/Latine/Hispanic, Black and African American, Asian, LGBTQ+, older adults, youth and young adults, veterans, and religious groups. This work builds the foundation for honest conversations to take place and for historically excluded community members to feel seen, heard and appreciated.

NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Thanks to ARPA funding, the Equity & Inclusion Office hired a Native American Relations Specialist for the first time. The City of Fort Collins is embarking on establishing tribal consultation protocols to assist all City departments when working with the Native American community.

Fort Collins Urban Native American Community

Approximately 70% of Native Americans in the US live in urban areas. This trend will continue to increase as Native Americans move from reservations to urban areas to access opportunities. Native American Tribes including the Ute, Cheyenne and Arapaho and many other Tribes were systematically removed from the lands now occupied within the city limits of Fort Collins. Native people within the US are culturally tied to and have oral histories associated with land and natural resources, yet have not had the opportunities to actively engage in local or City decision-making processes impacting their ancestral lands.

Native Americans are a political group, having a direct government-to-government relationship with the US via treaties since before the founding of this country. In recognition of Native American sovereignty, including traditional knowledges and values of the natural world from the Native American community brings an important perspective in addressing the pressing issues of the impacts of climate change and management of the City's natural resources. The Equity & Inclusion Office is actively supporting civic engagement with the Native American community to provide a critical collective voice in the decision-making processes for sovereign citizens from multiple Tribal nations who had occupied these lands prior to colonization since time immemorial.

Building Community Trust with the Native American Community

In 2022, the Equity & Inclusion Office invested time in building strong relationships and trust within the Native American Community. The community came together to discuss and determine priorities, and these meetings established a solid foundation for equitable and inclusive engagement. Consistent quarterly meetings with the Native community will foster transparency and allow these collective voices and identified priorities to be included within the City's departments, planning and budgeting processes, and institutional partnerships.

Community engagement opportunities will allow identification of Native American/Indigenous community members who may be marginalized due to inequitable access to transportation or affordable housing, or who experience food insecurity. The Equity & Inclusion Office will facilitate connections to partners and resources to address community needs.

The Equity & Inclusion Office plans to convene a Native American Community Advisory Panel that will provide internal direct Tribal Government-to-Government consultation for the management of cultural resources, work to build a partnership with the Natural Areas department and others, and allow for protocols that will serve as a framework and bridge local Native American community engagement. The panel is made up of community members who have demonstrated positive relationships with Native American community members.

The Native American Community Advisory Panel will guide the process of developing a Land Acknowledgement for adoption by City Council in Q4 of 2023. It is crucial to establish a strong relationship of trust and reciprocity before beginning the process of creating a Land Acknowledgment. There was some hesitancy in the Native American community about creating a land acknowledgment without understanding the City's commitment to the Native community, to ensure that the land acknowledgment was not merely a performative action. Over the last year, we have established trust and we now have a solid basis to create a written land acknowledgement in 2023. In addition, we will provide thoughtful facilitation, alliance building, and logistical support for the community-driven process focused on establishing a 501(c)(3) with the aim of creating a Native American community center to serve the Northern Colorado Native American community.

Internally, we will create learning opportunities for City employees to learn about Native American historical to contemporaneous federal and state land tenure policies, as well as the unique relationship of Native People as members of sovereign nations with historical and cultural ties to natural resources locally, regionally and nationally.

OUR COMMITMENT
TO THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) & ACCESSIBILITY

Our mission is to advance equity and equal opportunity for people with disabilities by providing accessibility under the guiding principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

We educate and advocate for the protection of people with disabilities by following standards of access for places of public accommodation, ensuring equal access in our programs, services, and activities.

We make ourselves available to reflect on the progress the City makes in the work of ADA's full promise of advancing disability, equity, dignity, access, and inclusion for the City to make the community and workplace more inclusive.

We are partners and leaders in our communities with a commitment to protecting the quality of life of every resident of Fort Collins in a fiscally responsible manner.

The Equity Office is working across City departments to develop a Citywide approach to accessibility that examines current practices and aims at increasing and refining aspects such as language in contracts, building standards, parks and recreation amenities, and hiring practices and job opportunities for people with disabilities. In addition, City staff is developing and implementing accessibility standards for information technology systems that provide access to information stored electronically and designed to present information for interactive communications, in formats intended for visual and non-visual use.

IDENTIFIED GOALS CONTINUED:

GOAL 2 - INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Equity & Inclusion Office acts as staff liaison for two boards and commissions. We value the partnership with these volunteer groups and work in tandem to create inclusive community conversations and spaces, and to apply an equity lens when analyzing policies, practices and procedures to assess disparities as well as the needs and assets of underserved populations.

Disability Advisory Board

The Disability Advisory Board (DAB) serves as an advisor to the Fort Collins City Council on issues relating to community members with disabilities. The Equity & Inclusion Office is the staff liaison to the DAB. Through this partnership we advocate and advance the priorities of the group. Topics such as access to transportation and equal access to meaningful work opportunities are a priority and the DAB will make recommendations that will be shared with Council. In its role as an advocate for community members with disabilities, the board develops educational programs to acquaint them with issues affecting individuals with disabilities, forms special committees to review and address particular issues, and works together with other boards, commissions and City Council to provide recommendations to ensure compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the 1990 Americans with Disability Act (ADA), the Fair Housing Act and other legislation relating to persons with disabilities.

Human Relation Commissions

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) was established by City Council to enhance acceptance and respect for diversity through educational programs and activities, and to embrace inclusion of individuals reflective of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, physical abilities/qualities, sex, sexual/affectional orientation, age, culture, different ideas and perspectives, familial status, immigration status, geographic background, marital status, national origin, religious and spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, and veteran status. The HRC partners with the Equity & Inclusion Office and coordinates these efforts with other City boards and commissions, community groups and organizations. The HRC presents the annual Human Relations Award to recognize those community members who have advanced the cause of human rights through their volunteer efforts.

AN EQUITY LENS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Applying an equity lens is a way of analyzing policies, practices and procedures by assessing disparities as well as the needs and assets of underserved populations.

When we apply equity lens to our interactions with the public, we ensure that all voices are heard and informed. Equity and inclusion work is especially focused on elevating the voices of communities who have been disproportionally disadvantaged and historically excluded. To increase public participation and quality civic engagement, City staff will benefit from understanding the demographics, circumstances and characteristics of the local community and the positional power of municipal government to influence who participates or benefits directly. It is helpful to stay curious and examine policies, projects, and services through an equity lens. The equity lens prompts listed below begin to illuminate the considerations needed to better understand the diversity of needs in the community and how we might co-create community solutions.

Equity Lens Prompts:

Demographic Considerations

1. Where is this project or initiative to take place? What are the characteristics of the neighborhood?
2. What data have you used to help you prioritize this project in place and time?
3. What data can you provide to describe the target population?
4. What specific results/outcomes are intended for the community?

5. What is the racial and social makeup of this neighborhood? What has caused the numbers to look like they do today?

6. What data is missing?

7. How have you involved community members in developing this project or initiative?

8. What does available data or research say about these possible disparities in a neighborhood?

9. Does the service, program, activity or policy appear to be neutral but result in a disproportionate impact on a protected group?

10. What concerns has the community raised? How have you addressed the concerns raised by community members?

11. Going forward, how do you plan to include voices of those most impacted/burdened? Considerations:

    • Are they already involved in drafting the process?
    • What is the first step in involving them?
    • Or, why are you not including them in the process?

12. Have we considered all possible target audiences? Who might be at risk of exclusion?

Group playing instruments while crowd looks on. Indigenous Peoples Day Proclamation 2022 City Hall, Fort Collins, CO.

Communication Considerations

1. What is the best way to communicate with this group? How do you know?

2. What specific communication strategies/plans are needed to reach target audiences (e.g., working with community leaders, social media, videos, newspapers, print media or mailings, focus groups, translation/interpretation)?

3. How do communication materials get out to the community organizations and networks that serve the diverse populations we need to reach? Do we check periodically to ensure materials are stocked and being used?

4. How do the messages we are communicating foster inclusion, respect and equity?

5. Are there concepts or terms that may be culturally specific and need to be changed to make them more accessible?

6. Is the format easily accessible and understood by the full diversity of our target audience (e.g., plain language, accessible formats, graphics, multiple languages, both online and print)?

7. Have we considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods (e.g., online or social media communications)? What other approaches might we use?

8. Have we considered the timing and resources for translation/interpretation services?

9. Do images used represent the full diversity of employees or residents?

    • Do they capture the diversity within specific communities of people?
    • Will the people portrayed in the images relate to and feel included in the way they are represented?
    • Is everyone portrayed in positive images that promote equity and break stereotypes?

10. Is meaningful language access being provided to persons with limited English proficiency?

GOAL 3: Data Accountability	We will systematically gather, analyze and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, disaggregated by racial identities, when possible. Data will be used to inform changes and updates to policies, programs and services to decrease inequities and barriers to access.

STRATEGIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES 2023 - 2024	MID-TERM OUTCOMES 2025 - 2026	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 2027 - 2028
Data Routine and Cataloging	• City staff collect relevant data, coordinate data systems and use GIS maps to share data internally.	• City staff interpret data to understand and track needs, prioritization of investments, and impacts. • City staff operationalize a systems approach to analyze and learn from cross-departmental data.	• City departments increasingly use data analysis tools to identify racial and identity-based equity disparities more deeply.
Data and Budgeting	• Equity & Inclusion Office works with department teams to analyze types of data collected. • GIS maps are built to further understand census block data and relate to equity indicators racial data.	• GIS maps and census blocks and equity indicators racial data are used to inform Budgeting for Outcomes process and prioritize funding to serve most disadvantaged groups.	• Funded projects have clear connections to equity indicators data and equitable outcomes measured.

Disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data are essential to furthering equity because they highlight the unique circumstances and experiences of various populations, particularly communities of color and other historically marginalized people. Disaggregated data can reveal not just the needs and issues of populations, but also their strengths, assets and priorities. Ultimately, disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data can help departments understand the root causes of disparities, key to equitably reshaping policies and procedures

Data categories may include:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Household income
- Gender identity

- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Disability status
- Immigrant or refugee status

- Primary language
- Zip code
- Council district

Not surprisingly, the racial makeup of Fort Collins has changed since 2010. The Hispanic population has increased as a share of total population (offset by a slight decline in the share of non-Hispanic white residents). The Hispanic population in Fort Collins has grown from 10,400 residents (9%) in 2010 to 19,100 residents (11%) in 2018. From 2010 to 2018, the Hispanic population accounted for 18 percent of total population growth in Fort Collins.

Fort Collins Race & Ethnicity Census Data 2021

Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	⚠ 168,538
Age and Sex	
ⓘ Persons under 5 years, percent	⚠ 4.1%
ⓘ Persons under 18 years, percent	⚠ 17.5%
ⓘ Persons 65 years and over, percent	⚠ 11.1%
ⓘ Female persons, percent	⚠ 49.4%
Race and Hispanic Origin	
ⓘ White alone, percent	⚠ 84.5%
ⓘ Black or African American alone, percent (a)	⚠ 1.5%
ⓘ American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	⚠ 0.9%
ⓘ Asian alone, percent (a)	⚠ 3.2%
ⓘ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	⚠ 0.1%
ⓘ Two or More Races, percent	⚠ 7.8%
ⓘ Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	⚠ 12.6%
ⓘ White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	⚠ 78.1%
Population Characteristics	
ⓘ Veterans, 2017-2021	7,674
ⓘ Foreign born persons, percent, 2017-2021	7.3%

Fort Collins 2021 Census: Data https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fortcollinscitycolorado

Race /Ethnicity	2010 [2]	2018 [3]	2021
TOTAL	140,082	162,511	168,538
Non-Hispanic white	83% (119,836)	80% (134,197)	84.5 % (141,571)
Hispanic or Latino	9% (13,665)	11% (19,077)	12.6 % (20,224)
Asian	3% (4,621)	4% (6,521)	3.2 % (5,056)
Black or African American	2% (2,306)	1% (1,845)	1.5% (2,528)
American Indian and Alaska Native			0.9% (1,516)
Two or more races	2 % (3,256)	3% (4,918)	7.8% (13,145)
Some other race, non-Hispanic	1% (769)	1 % (1265)	*This category is no longer used*

Participants waiting for the Dia de los Muertos Bike-In Movie Night showing.

BIAS

Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared with another, usually in an unfair or negative way. Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, is defined as "attitudes and stereotypes that influence judgment, decision-making, and behavior in ways that are outside of conscious awareness and/or control." Bias is a mental filter that we can use for self-reflection. Our brain is malleable and capable of positive change[4].

DISABILITY

A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is how we identify along lines of culture, ethnic origin, race, age, gender identity and expression, mental and physical abilities, neurodiversity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, political viewpoints, language abilities, socioeconomic status, and more. Diversity is the presence of differences within a given setting.

ETHNICITY

A social group sharing a culture, religion or language. Often used interchangeably with race, ethnicity differs from race due to a reference to a person's cultural ties to a unique group, and not to their physical appearance.

EQUITY

Equity is both a process and an outcome. It is a process in that policies, programs and tools are developed to ensure the elimination of existing disparities and includes inclusive engagement that leverages diversity. Equity means making it easier for the most marginalized communities to get the services and support they say they need.

EQUITY LENS

A way of analyzing policies, practices and procedures by assessing disparities as well as the needs and assets of underserved populations.

HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS/IDENTITIES

Historically excluded groups or identities are underrepresented in both the level of influence and decision-making they hold in relationship to systems of power and in overall resource distribution (e.g., access to participating in City planning processes). Examples include communities of ethnic backgrounds such as African, Latino, Asian, or Native American, or groups who identify as LGBTQIA+, English language learners, children, youth and older adults, women, people with disabilities, and oppressive systems such as living under the federal poverty level.

COMMON LANGUAGE & TERMS

INCLUSION

An intention or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized based on ethnicity, familial status, gender identity and expression, age, marital status, national origin, geographic background, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, veteran status, or other historically underrepresented groups.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Policies, practices and programs that, most often unintentionally and unconsciously, work to the benefit of white dominant culture and the detriment of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

INTERSECTIONALITY

An approach developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and others can interact and intersect in individuals' lives and create interlocking systems of oppression. Those with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., gender, race, class) will be most disadvantaged because they are least likely to have access to structural resources and systemic support[5].

LGBTQ+

An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of this community. To learn additional terms related to LGBTQ+ community visit: hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms.

MARGINALIZED

A reference to a person or group who has been systemically isolated from resources necessary to thrive, often by means of segregation, separation and lack of access.

RACE

A social construct, with no biologic basis, that categorizes individuals based on their physical characteristics, particularly skin color and hair texture. Race can be a consistent predictor of a person's quality and length of life.

OUTCOMES

Outcomes in this context relate to how well different communities are faring compared to the overall average across multiple indicators related to social and economic inclusion, health, education, housing and more.

SYSTEMIC RACISM

The various policies, practices, and programs of differing institutions within a community that can lead to adverse outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities compared to white/Caucasian communities.

UNDERSERVED

A reference to people or places who have historically or contemporarily not received equitable resources in health, education, housing, justice or socioeconomic systems

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[1] *Diversity Council Australia: Building Inclusion: An Evidence-Based Model of Inclusive Leadership research report for a research review https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_inclusive_leadership_synopsis_2022.pdf*

[2] *https://www.opendatanetwork.com/entity/1600000US0827425/Fort_Collins_CO/demographics.population.count?year=2018*

[3] *See https://www.fcgov.com/socialsustainability/files/final-report-social-sustainability-gaps-analysis-6-8-2020.pdf*

[4] *Gino, F. and Coffman, K., 2021. Unconscious bias training that works. Harvard Business Review, 99(5), pp.114-123. https://hbr.org/2021/09/unconscious-bias-training-that-works?ab=at_art_art_1x4_s02*

[5] *Dr. Cori Wong- Foundations of Equity and Inclusion Series for City of Fort Collins Learning Series, 2022.*

City of Fort Collins