

Equity for Portland

The Facts

- Demographic studies show that Portland is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.
- Today, communities of color comprise 26.3% of the people living in Multnomah County, and this number is growing much more quickly than that for white people. (Coalition of Communities of Color.)
- People of color and people with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and shorter lifespan compared with other Portlanders.

The Facts

- People of color earn incomes half that of white people-- \$16,636 per year compared to \$33,095 for white people. (Coalition of Communities of Color.)
 - Median income for black-headed households is \$30,000 and \$46,800 for white-headed households. (State of Black Oregon.)
- Disparities exist between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities.
 - 80% of people with intellectual or mental disability have been sexually assaulted (National Crime Victimization Survey – US Census);
 - persons with disabilities are twice as likely to be earning \$15,000 or less annually (OR Dept of Human Services); and
 - the unemployment rate is 74% for persons with disabilities who live outside of institutions in Oregon (US Dept of Labor).

The Facts

- Portlanders have been talking about the need to address disparities for many years but little progress has been made. Disparities for some communities have even gotten worse. (State of Black Oregon.)
- What we've been doing hasn't worked.
- We need a new approach.

Why is equity a priority?

- Equity supports a more resilient city.
- The more inequitable a city, the more vulnerable it is to economic downturn.
- As the global economy becomes more diverse, Portland will be well-positioned to attract talent and firms if it reflects global diversity.
- Inequity is a national problem, and this is an opportunity for Portland to be a leader in addressing the problem.
- Equity puts action to Portland's community values – it's the right thing to do.

Portland Plan

- The proposal for an Office of Equity is rooted in the community discussion that occurred as part of the Portland Plan.
- With an eye toward the year 2035, the Portland Plan is a strategic plan for the City of Portland and its partners. The plan includes 25-year goals, and five-year action plans. It establishes priorities to respond to the most significant challenges we face over the next 25 years:
 - Creating well-paying jobs
 - Advancing social equity
 - Improving educational outcomes
 - Supporting healthy connected communities

Equity Initiative

What is equity?

Equity exists when everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their full potential. Equity is both the means to healthy communities and an end that benefits us all.

Why create a City of Portland bureau?

The purpose of the Office of Equity is to develop a focused, strategic approach to foster equity and reduce disparities in City government; to identify best practices that produce measurably improved outcomes; and, to work with City and community partners to promote equity and inclusion throughout the region. This will leverage and align existing work underway. It will build capacity in the City to consistently apply an equity lens to budgets, programs and policies.

Current Efforts

- Bureau of Planning & Sustainability Equity Audit
- Portland Commission on Disabilities
- ONI Diversity & Civic Leadership Program
- Development of Title VI & Title II compliance plans
- Equity Council
- Affirmative Action
- Office of Human Relations
- Human Rights Commission
- Portland Plan
- Contracting – Disparities Study
- Clean Energy Works
- Public Involvement Advisory Council

These efforts are taking place in isolation from each other, many times without adequate support, or an opportunity to share lessons learned.

Lessons Learned

- Historically, we have not been strategic in our approach, trying to treat the symptom as opposed to addressing causes.
- Portland is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. Currently, 52% of people 0-18 years of age are of color, and Portland is one of the top resettlement cities in the U.S. Yet our community has been called “toxic” for people of color, who consistently face significantly poorer outcomes than whites.
- Some studies show as high as a 74% unemployment rate for people with disabilities – these are human resources we cannot afford to forfeit.
- The City cannot do it alone.
 - Need to leverage public – private partnerships
 - Need a strategy to align efforts and guide investment
 - Need to partner with those who are affected to help shape solutions

Now what?

- A 2006 USC report *Edging Towards Equity* reports: “reductions in center city poverty lead to income increases for all a regions people. The conclusion: doing good and doing well go hand in hand.”
- Portland has a reputation for being progressive and innovative. That is not the experience for all Portlanders.
- Today, Portland City Council is in a position to make the promise of opportunity real for all Portlanders