



August 7, 2018

To the County, City and Township Leaders Responsible for Comprehensive Plans:

We recognize you are deeply engaged in shaping the Comprehensive Plans that will guide your policies and investments in infrastructure and development for the next decade. While each of your plans reflects your community's unique assets and challenges, together these plans will shape the future of our region – a future that we hope includes a more equitable distribution of economic success across races and places.

As the nation's first organization dedicated exclusively to advancing inclusive growth to achieve regional prosperity, the Center for Economic Inclusion stands ready to partner with you in developing and implementing plans that identify and rectify racial disparities in access to housing, transit, and jobs. Our region's economic success hinges on our ability to engage everyone fully in the economy.

After launching the Center in May of this year we began analyzing multiple individual Comprehensive Plans. While we know you are well into the plan writing work, we identified strategies that could maximize the collective impact of the plans and position our region for growth by leveraging both market forces and our region's diversity. As you finalize your plan we would like you to consider including the following components in your plan and to focus on them during the implementation phase.

Our Recommendations

The Center for Economic Inclusion would like to partner with you on the following:

1. **Development of a more racially equitable and inclusive economy as a comprehensive plan goal.**
We urge each jurisdiction to identify racial equity as a goal and develop policies that identify and measurably close gaps between white residents and residents of color in access to affordable housing, transit, living wage jobs, and economic development.
2. **Embed a racial equity tool** within your plans for the design, implementation, and evaluation of all policy and investment decisions. This tool will enable jurisdictions to make decisions based on the impact had on closing gaps between white and non-white populations.
3. **Collect, disaggregate, and publicly report data by race** to track the impacts of policies throughout the life of the plans. Making data driven decisions fully informed by the disparities among races will empower jurisdictions to make progress towards a more inclusive economy.

Our Rationale

Our region faces increasingly tight economic competition and a growing talent gap, yet we continue to exclude people from our economy based on race, place, and income. As our region continues to grow more racially diverse – a competitive advantage in today's global economy – we've sustained some of the worst racial inequities in the nation. It impacts us all.

Workers, housing, and jobs are often sited too far apart to catalyze investment, drive growth and prosperity, or expand and stabilize the workforce. Business creation programs aren't tailored or scaled to maximize the innovation within our communities. Families unable to get a foothold onto today's growing career paths,

can't put down roots, build wealth, and invest. Commercial corridors are designed without residents in mind – as consumers, business owners, and workforce talent.

Good intentions and growing awareness of Minnesota's nation-leading and unsustainable racial inequities haven't been sufficient: today's racial income and employment gaps are as wide as they were 10 years ago. Communities who embed inclusive policies and practices in their Comprehensive Plans position themselves to thrive and compete. By adopting our recommended region-wide strategies to eradicate these gaps, each community can share ownership and a blueprint for regional prosperity that drives local economic growth.

Why Inclusive Growth?

Communities benefit when all residents participate in markets as entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers; advance in careers, build wealth, and invest in the future; and drive economic growth through innovation and business creation. For example:

- Minnesota businesses owned by people of color generate \$5.2 billion annually and collectively represent the state's 9th largest employer.
- Minnesota businesses owned by people of color grew at 3.5 times the rate of all Minnesota businesses.
- Increasing businesses owned by people of color in Minnesota could create an estimated 87,000 new jobs.
- According to the Metropolitan Council, achieving income parity adds \$32.1 billion to our region's economy by 2040 and creates thriving cities, diverse leadership, and innovation, where everyone enjoys prosperity.

About the Center

The Center for Economic Inclusion ("the Center") launched just a few months ago, recognizing that while our region doesn't lack the will or leadership to create an inclusive economy, we've lacked the infrastructure and cohesive strategy to do so. To that end, we elevate data-driven promising practices; advocate for inclusive policies; coordinate cross-sector, community driven development; pilot strategies; and measure progress to close racial and economic gaps.

We understand the role you play in shaping local and regional prosperity and an excellent quality of life. We're eager to partner with you to unlock our region's full potential and create a region that thrives because of our diversity not in spite of it. Together, we *can* create an economy that works for everyone.

Thank you for your leadership and your consideration,



Tawanna A. Black
Founder & CEO, Center for Economic Inclusion