



Mayor Molly Cummings
Hopkins City Council
Kersten Elverum and Jason Lindahl, Planning and Economic Development
January 11, 2019

The Center for Economic Inclusion (the Center) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft Hopkins 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Cultivate Hopkins. As an organization dedicated exclusively to advancing inclusive growth to achieve regional prosperity, the Center has urged all cities in the metropolitan area to advance a racially equitable economy through their comprehensive plans. To maximize impact, the Center is submitting specific comments on the draft plans of the five metro area cities with the highest shares of people of color.

The Center advocates that all municipalities incorporate the following elements into their comprehensive plans:

1. **A goal** to develop a racially equitable economy;
2. **Data analysis**, consistently disaggregated by race, to identify racial disparities in access to affordable housing, transit, living wage jobs and economic development;
3. **Policies and strategies** specifically designed to close the identified racial disparities;
4. A commitment to **evaluating** the impact of these policies and strategies on people of color, and to adapting those policies and strategies based on that evaluation.

We believe that we build inclusive economies by working at the intersection of human capital, economic development, transit and access, through the lens' of race, place and income, not by addressing them as independent focus areas. And, a plan is only as successful as the sustained, intentional investment of human, intellectual, social, and financial capital that is invested in letter and spirit. To that end, the Center stands ready to partner with policy makers to incorporate these elements into draft comprehensive plans and, more generally, into the way public agencies do business.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Goal

The Center applauds the City for incorporating racial equity and economic inclusion into several of the plan's foundational statements, including:

1. “Race and Equity” was identified through the planning process as one of the eight focus areas (priorities for policy and plan implementation): “Proactively identify and address racial disparities in the community and promote equity for everyone.”
2. The Cultivate Hopkins vision statement includes “equity” as one of the three guiding principles (together with sustainability and resilience).
3. The Economic Competitiveness section provides “direction for a healthy, robust and equitable economy,” including a goal to “promote economic equity in Hopkins, to benefit residents regardless of identity or background.”
4. The Sense of Community section provides “direction for community connections, equity and inclusiveness, and culture and identity,” including a goal to “proactively support the development and maintenance of an equitable and inclusive community.”

Equity and accessibility are also addressed in a goal within “Parks and Trails.” Additionally, a theme of openness to change pervades the plan, which can support the achievement of racial equity goals.

Data

The Center supports the data disaggregation by race in many of the plan’s appendices. Examples include: poverty, unemployment, labor force participation, household income, health insurance and homeownership. Similarly, the Race and Equity Survey data are disaggregated by race, illuminating differences in the lived experience among whites and People of Color. The Center encourages this type of data analysis because it enables the City to identify where racial disparities exist, a necessary step towards closing them.

Opportunities exist to disaggregate other data in the plan by race; one example is housing cost burden. Also, by disaggregating the Cultivate Hopkins Survey data and Online Issues Mapping by race, the City could identify any specific needs and opportunities expressed by People of Color. The City might also consider including data on vehicle-free households in the plan and disaggregating it by race.

The plan’s appendices include spatial analyses such as a dot map showing the residences of People of Color, and a map of the City’s Area of Concentrated Poverty. Also included is a map that shows job access (low-wage jobs and low-wage workers in 2010) and a map of regional transit accessibility. The Center supports these spatial analyses by race and income and encourages the City to replicate this approach on a local basis. For example, the City could map People of Color and the ACP in relation to community assets, investments and challenges. This would enable the City to identify opportunities to advance equity and evaluate past efforts.

Policies and Strategies

The plan contains several policies and action steps to promote racial equity and economic inclusion, most notably within the Sense of Community, Economic Competitiveness and Implementation sections. The Center supports these policies and strategies and offers suggestions to strengthen them in the “Additional Comments” section below. In general, the Center encourages more specificity in language, leveraging existing resources for more efficient implementation, and an asset-based approach to economic inclusion.

Evaluation

Several parts of the plan state the City’s intent to evaluate the impact of policies and strategies on People of Color in Hopkins. For example, Goal 2 under Sense of Community contains a policy about using a racial equity toolkit, and the Implementation section includes an action step to “assess equity impact of specific City policies and regulations.” The Center supports these evaluation plans and encourages the City to feature them more prominently in the plan. One way to do this would be to add an additional section in the “Implementation Tools” section under the “Public Program and Tools” with the subtitle “Racial Equity Evaluation.” This section could describe in detail how a racial equity tool will be applied to decisions and investments within the City. By doing so, the City would demonstrate that racial equity evaluation is a high priority and that it will apply across everything the City does, not only in the predictable areas such as workforce diversity.

Racial equity evaluation works best when a diverse set of stakeholders provide input into criteria and goals. These processes can provide learning opportunities for community members, staff members and others. Therefore, the Center encourages the City to commit resources to form strong, collaborative partnerships with the community and regional partners to ensure the most effective evaluation of its investments.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The following sections provide additional examples that illustrate the summary comments above.

Introduction

Page 6 describes the public engagement tools and strategies that informed the comprehensive plan. The Center supports the City for designing a process intended to engage all segments of the community. In particular the “Take It To Them” meetings were focused on reaching people who are usually under-represented in public engagement processes. The Center encourages the City to go beyond the descriptions of the strategies and their intent by reporting --in the plan’s narrative-- how effective these efforts were at engaging all segments of the community. Appendix A2 notes that only 10% of respondents to the Cultivate Hopkins survey were POC, while 27% of respondents to the Race & Equity survey were non-white. In both cases, the participation falls short of the City’s 40% share of People of Color. Also, what is the significance of the demographics of the survey samples and the other engagement activities? How might it have affected the themes identified in the plan?

The Center applauds the plan’s assertion (on page 9) that the City’s diversity “isn’t just a change in composition – it’s driving growth.” This statement is followed by a discussion of demographics, recognizing that population growth in Hopkins is driven by People of Color. The Center urges the City to expand this discussion of growth beyond population to economic growth: including everyone in the economy is the path to prosperity for all.¹

Social Environment

Goal 2 under “Sense of Community” outlines four policies intended to “proactively support the development and maintenance of an equitable and inclusive community.”

The first policy under this goal is “celebrate, respect, and represent the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of the community and its members and seek to address any disparities in outcomes.” Recognizing that this policy contains a multiplicity of related but distinct actions, the Center suggests that

the City break this policy into two: one policy focused on process (celebrate, respect and represent) and the other focused on outcomes (address disparities in outcomes). Also, the Center suggests that the outcomes-focused policy should refer to the racial disparities that the plan has already uncovered and describe how it will address them. For example, a revised outcomes-based policy could read: “close racial disparities in outcomes [link to appendix] through dedicated resources, partnership, on-going evaluation and continuous improvement.”

The second policy under this goal is “explore the development of a race and equity toolkit to evaluate public and private projects.” Rather than developing a new toolkit, the Center encourages the City to move more quickly by leveraging one or more of the many existing high-quality tools, such as GARE’s Racial Equity Toolkitⁱⁱ and the Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard.ⁱⁱⁱ Also, the Center encourages the City to apply the tool to ongoing programs and investments as well as discrete projects. Finally, these tools are most effective when used by a group with diverse perspectives, that includes staff, residents and other partners. A revised policy might read: “systematically and collaboratively apply a racial equity tool to public and private investments at multiple decision points, transparently report the results, and make adjustments accordingly.”

Economic Environment

The Economic Competitiveness section provides “direction for a healthy, robust, and equitable economy.” Racial equity and economic inclusion are weaved throughout the goals and policies. Rightly, the discussion highlights the racial disparities in the economy and strategies to close those gaps. The Center encourages the City to also include language about the economic opportunities of racial equity throughout this section. If racial disparities in workforce, business ownership, income and other areas were closed, the overall economy in Hopkins (and the region) would be noticeably more prosperous. By focusing on the positive economic opportunity of equity, the community can better value its diversity and be optimistic about the future. For resources on the benefits of inclusive growth, see the Center’s website.^{iv}

Goal 2 in this section is: “Support a healthy, diverse mix of businesses in Hopkins.” The Center supports the policies under this goal and suggests the addition of a goal to promote the development of business start-ups by People of Color. Minority owned businesses grew at 3.5 times the rate of all Minnesota companies in 2014; therefore, a targeted approach to support the development of minority-owned businesses is a smart public investment.^v

Goal 3 in this section is: “support the development of a well prepared, diverse workforce.” The Center supports the policies under this goal and suggests the City provide more specificity. For example, one of the six policies is “Educate about what jobs are available at the city.” Educate whom? The Center encourages the City to focus its workforce outreach efforts on communities that are currently under-represented in government staff roles. By creating a more diverse city workforce, Hopkins can advance several goals at the same time.

Goal 4 in this section is: “promote economic equity in Hopkins, to benefit residents regardless of identity or background.” The Center suggests the addition of a policy to “explore the application of Community Wealth Building to build a more equitable economy.” This framework, which includes strategies such as business conversions to worker ownership, is a proven driver of racial equity.^{vi}

Implementation

The Center supports the plan's implementation section, which identifies action steps, timelines and potential indicators for every plan goal. The following are suggestions for strengthening this section in regard to racial equity:

- Page 123 suggests "social and economic disparities" as potential indicators. The Center encourages the City to identify specific racial disparity indicators that might be used from the data included in plan (e.g. poverty, unemployment, labor force participation, household income, health insurance and homeownership).
- Page 123 also states "Pursue next steps on Hopkins Race and Equity Initiative, including implementing GARE recommendations." This is the first time that GARE is mentioned in the plan; the Center suggests including the GARE recommendations in an appendix as a reference.

About the Center for Economic Inclusion

The Center for Economic Inclusion is the nation's first organization dedicated exclusively to advancing inclusive growth to achieve regional prosperity. By elevating data-driven promising practices, advocating for inclusive policies, coordinating cross-sector, community-driven development, and piloting strategies that truly close racial and economic gaps, we partner across communities and sectors to shape a Minneapolis-Saint Paul regional economy that works for everyone. We can unlock our region's potential by connecting people, jobs, and opportunity through housing and transit, entrepreneurship and investment, and fair wages and talent development. To do so, the Center connects communities excluded by Race, Place, and Income with cross-sector leaders to cooperatively design an inclusive and exciting new blueprint for growth that leverages both market forces and our region's diversity.

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



ⁱ <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/benefits-of-inclusive-growth/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://thealliancetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/EquitableDevelopmentScorecard.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/benefits-of-inclusive-growth/>

^v <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/benefits-of-inclusive-growth/>

^{vi} <http://www.nexuscp.org/our-work/community-wealth-building/>