

# ST. LOUIS PARK

# LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

## ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in racial equity and inclusion. As one of the city's strategic priorities, the City seeks to ensure all practices, programs, policies, and services of the city are fair, inclusive, and equitable. This priority is a product of **Vision 3.0**, the City's community-wide engagement process that resulted in the development of the City's **five Strategic Priorities** that guided the goals and policies in its **2040 Comprehensive Plan**.

Over the past several years, the City has taken steps to advance racial equity—working from the inside-out. This framework represents the City's belief that in order to affect change in the broader community, it must first take action internally. From the beginning, the City began conducting professional development for its staff on principles of racial equity and inclusion. In coordination with its internal initiatives, the City has worked in the community to build relationships and develop trust. As a result, it has taken significant strides toward greater intercultural competency and has set a strong foundation for breaking down barriers and dismantling racial inequities within the City's systems.

## WHAT MAY HELP OTHER COMMUNITIES?

### Community Engagement: Seeking Out the Underrepresented

The objective of Vision 3.0 was to implement an inclusive engagement strategy and produce a vision for the future of the City representative of all community members. Approximately 70 residents were trained to facilitate neighbor meetings at their homes and places around the community. Throughout this process, the City distributed voluntary demographics cards to collect information on the age, gender, and race of respondents. This allowed the City to identify the people it was not reaching and adjust its engagement strategies accordingly. By the end of the visioning process, the City had received input from nearly 1,500 people and collected over 4,600 comments.

### Start Internally: Education and Professional Development

In 2016, the first cohort of City staff and council members participated in a one-year program facilitated by the **League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)** and the **Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Center for Social Inclusion (CSI)**. This training introduces the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for government to advance racial equity. Attendees learned about equity and inclusion, then considered the impact of policies and practices on racial equity.

## COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

**COUNTY:** Hennepin  
**POPULATION:** 48,910

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### AWARDS AND RECOGNITION:

St. Louis Park, along with twelve other local government jurisdictions, was presented with the **League of Minnesota Cities President's Award** honoring the **2016 Advancing Racial Equity Cohort (2017)**.



The City is committed to being a leader in racial equity and inclusion. It strives to equitably serve all people who live, work, and play in the City.



During Vision 3.0, the City employed a variety of engagement methods to increase participation, specifically from historically underrepresented populations.



The City helps coordinate community activities like fishing and basketball to bring residents together and foster relationship building.

The City has developed year-round equity and inclusion professional development opportunities. This programming supports an understanding for staff that discomfort is common and usually an essential part of creating change within an organization and within a community.

### Staff Resources

The City also created a team to lead its [racial equity work](#). In 2018, the City hired a full-time Racial Equity Manager, a Community Organizer, and two Outreach staff. This team has been the driving force behind the City's racial equity initiatives. They created a racial equity framework for the City, developed organizational definitions of racial equity and inclusion, and implemented a five-year assessment plan to evaluate their work. The City believes that hiring staff to lead this work is essential to having a real impact on the community.

### Build Relationships in the Community

The City's approach to advancing racial equity prioritizes long-term relationship building with the goal of reconnecting the community. The City's police department, along with the Human Resources and Parks and Recreation departments, developed a Jobs in the Park program to connect youth of color to summer employment in the community. The City strives to build new connections with local businesses and residents, as well as maintain connection and cohesion among neighborhood associations.

### Encourage Community Action

In 2019, the City included special funding for racial equity and inclusion projects in its [Neighborhood Revitalization Grant Program](#). Neighborhood associations were encouraged to apply for additional grant funding up to \$250 to incorporate a racial equity and inclusion component into new or existing programs or events. This year, the City awarded Racial Equity funds to ten local neighborhoods. These funds will be used to finance a range of projects including establishing a racial equity book club, facilitating community discussions around topics of race, and developing targeted engagement strategies. The City hopes this program will promote more equitable distribution of grant funds and support deeper neighborhood connections throughout the community.

### Measure Progress

The City's racial equity work is guided by two primary resources: the [Intercultural Development Inventory \(IDI\)](#) and the Multicultural Organization Development (MCO) model. These tools are used to assess the effectiveness of the City's current internal initiatives, develop targeted strategies, and evaluate progress toward achieving equity and inclusion goals.

The IDI is an individualized assessment of intercultural competence. It evaluates the ability to shift perspectives and adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. In 2018, all City supervisors, managers, council members, and leadership staff completed the IDI assessment. The purpose of this phase was to familiarize City leadership with this tool so that they can provide guidance to their employees. In 2019, 125 City staff completed the IDI. Participants also had the opportunity to review their results with a trained IDI facilitator and develop personal goals for advancing racial equity.

In 2018, all full- and part-time staff had the opportunity to participate in the MCO evaluation. This model helps organizations assess developmental issues, opportunities, and challenges to incorporating social justice and racial equity into everyday practices. The City's evaluation identified a need to diversify its workforce across a range of demographics, not just race. In response, the City changed its hiring practices to create a workforce reflective of the community.

The City will continue to use IDI and MCO to advance racial equity throughout the community. It plans to conduct these assessments every other year to regularly assess its progress and determine areas for improvement.



The Historic Walker Lake Placemaking Committee and GoodSpace Murals are creating a 1,500 sq. ft. mural to bring the community together and tell the collective story of the past, present, and future of the Historic Walker Lake district.