



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Robby Hammond, City Manager  
**From:** Simone Brooks, Assistant City Manager  
**Date:** November 19, 2019  
**Subject:** Revision of the City's Equity Statement Draft/November 17 work session

---

### **Requested City Council Action:**

None.

### **Background:**

In 2019, the Hillsboro City Council made it a City priority to “Support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in City policy-making and in the delivery of services by adopting an equity statement, continuing DEI training, and utilizing an equity lens.”

The City of Hillsboro Equity Team presented the draft version of the City's Equity Statement to the City Council during a work session on August 6, 2019. The purpose of this statement is to articulate the City's commitment to and role in achieving a common vision of equity.

In August, community outreach — through the City's website, on social media, and at four (4) listening sessions held at Hillsboro's two library branches and the Civic Center — yielded 135 comments and suggestions from community members, including City employees and members of the Hillsboro City Council.

During a work session on September 3, 2019, the City Council gave input and shared input received from community members. Three themes emerged to help the Equity Statement:

- Provide greater clarity on the definition of equity
- Ensure community members know the City's Equity Statement is internally focused to guide the City's work in providing external services to the public.
- Re-examine terms and wording choices, and revise the Equity Statement with feedback in mind.

### **Revision Process:**

Following the work session on September 3, 2019, a subcommittee of Equity Team members began to review and consider revisions to the draft version of the City's Equity Statement. Each

of the 135 community comments were read aloud and reviewed by the subcommittee. The group then highlighted portions of the draft statement that were cited in comments.

The Equity Team subcommittee clarified the definition of “Equity” and considered each suggestion and comment. Next, the subcommittee moved through the Equity Statement sentence by sentence to enhance the statement and its impact. The subcommittee expanded to include a total of seven Equity Team members (Simone Brooks, Jesus Gonzalez, Rachel Marble, Patrick Preston, Alex Richardson, Andy Smith, and Neha Subramanyam). The entire Equity Team participated in the revision process by offering feedback via email and an Equity Team meeting.

**Recommendation:**

The Equity Team revised the draft version of the City’s Equity Statement with community comments in mind, and with awareness of the City’s DEI consultant, Portillo Consulting. The revised draft version of the City’s Equity Statement (below) is submitted for the City Council to review and provide guidance, before staff proposes a resolution for the Council’s consideration.

**City of Hillsboro — Revised Draft Equity Statement**

The City of Hillsboro is committed to equity. Equity work aims to remove barriers and eliminate social and economic disparities by centering those who have been excluded from the decision-making process. Equity is the pursuit of equal outcomes.

We acknowledge that equity, particularly racial equity, is essential to providing exceptional public services — and to creating an inclusive and safe work environment for everyone.

The City recognizes that people of color and other communities continue to be marginalized and excluded – both intentionally and unintentionally — from constructing the institutions that govern our lives and the services we depend on to protect our health, safety, and well-being. We further acknowledge that structural and cultural barriers impact access to, and representation in, City government.

The City of Hillsboro has a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging for all people. We must be inclusive in developing and implementing policies to ensure that City services are responsive to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other individual identities.

We acknowledge that without an intentional focus on equity, we will continue to perpetuate and deepen inequality.

To realize our mission and core values, the City of Hillsboro commits to integrating equity into the fabric of our organization and the delivery of public services in pursuit of equal, fair, and just outcomes for all.

## **Explanatory Information:**

### Paragraph I: Defining and Committing to Equity

*“The City of Hillsboro is committed to equity. Equity work aims to remove barriers and eliminate social and economic disparities by centering those who have been excluded from the decision-making process. Equity is the pursuit of equal outcomes.”*

The revised Equity Statement begins with a firm, unambiguous commitment to equity. As requested by City Councilors, the word “strive” has been removed from the language.

A key theme that emerged from community engagement on the draft statement was a desire for clarity on the definition of equity. The revised statement defines equity as a means of achieving more equal outcomes related to City services and experiences with City government in which racial and other identities are not determinants of success, access to City government, or experiences with City services.

Inequities exist primarily as a result of institutions and structural practices, in addition to individual prejudices. The statement acknowledges that to achieve equality as referenced above, our collective focus must move beyond individual acts of discrimination and examine how larger systems have created and maintained inequality.

Connecting equity work to equal outcomes will help unify community members and City employees in support of equity work and initiatives. As part of the City’s equity work plan, staff will work to ensure all City employees and Councilors are familiar with equity terminology, such as the word “centering” in the Equity Statement.

### Paragraph II: Leading with Race

*“We acknowledge that equity, particularly racial equity, is essential to providing exceptional public services — and to creating an inclusive and safe work environment for everyone.”*

Racial inequities exist across all indicators of success, including housing, criminal justice, and economic prosperity. Leading with race is crucial to maximizing impacts to address disparate outcomes. Other groups remain marginalized based on non-racial identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, and ability. To address all areas of marginalization, the revised statement does not focus on race alone, but does acknowledge that racial equity is particularly important to understand and address inequality. The compounding effects of institutional marginalization are felt hardest along racial lines.

The statement is significantly informed by the Coalition of Communities of Color and the report titled *Leading with Race: Research Justice in Washington County*. This report plays a critical role in the Equity Team’s understanding of racial disparities in the local community, and the report remains a vast source of information for the City’s racial equity work broadly.

Another key theme that emerged from community engagement was a need to explain the City’s Equity Statement has an internal focus to guide the City’s work in providing external services to the public. The second paragraph describes the need for equity in order to provide “exceptional public services” and to create “an inclusive and safe work environment for everyone.” This demonstrates the Equity Statement’s internal focus.

### Paragraph III: Acknowledging Exclusion

*“The City recognizes that people of color and other communities continue to be marginalized and excluded – both intentionally and unintentionally — from constructing the institutions that govern our lives and the services we depend on to protect our health, safety, and well-being. We further acknowledge that structural and cultural barriers impact access to, and representation in, City government.”*

A critical first step in actively moving toward equality is acknowledging the damage and disenfranchisement that has occurred within marginalized communities as a result of an exclusionary history, with examples such as “redlining.” As a government institution, it is important for the City to recognize that long-standing institutional practices and policies have detrimentally impacted how marginalized communities are engaged, build influence and power, and access the rights and privileges of local government. Efforts to enfranchise communities that have been intentionally excluded from constructing the institutions that govern our lives will require honest examination of our power structures and practice of inclusion.

As suggested, the revised statement removes the word “historically.” Although the term “historically marginalized” is commonly used in equity discussions, there is growing awareness that framing marginalization solely in a historical context fails to recognize ongoing marginalization in our society, institutions, and practices. The revised language accounts for the fact that people of color and other communities continue to be marginalized.

### Paragraph IV: City’s Role in Equity Work

*“The City of Hillsboro has a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging for all people. We must be inclusive in developing and implementing policies to ensure that City services are responsive to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other individual identities.”*

Initially, this paragraph had a wider call to action, demanding that the City ensure all who live in Hillsboro feel a sense of belonging, prosperity, and happiness. “Prosperity and happiness” have been removed from the revised statement, as the City does not have the ability to ensure a successful result. We heard feedback through community engagement that these words carried varying levels of confusion or discomfort.

The City and its employees have the ability to create a “sense of belonging” for community members through policy making and programs, as well as customer service. The revised statement retains “creating a sense of belonging for all people” as an important component of the City’s equity work. Community members need to feel like they count and are respected by their City government. The City can work to ensure community members feel more than merely “welcome” in Hillsboro. The City can work to ensure all community members feel together as one city, one community.

This paragraph’s language has been revised to reflect a commitment to equity as a core focus in the development and implementation of policies, ensuring that City services are responsive to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other individual identities.

Rather than state that services will be delivered regardless of individual identities, the revised statement acknowledges the City must recognize we do not all start from the same place. Instead, the City must meet people where they are and respond to the needs of individual community members in order to achieve equal service outcomes.

The initial language in the draft statement included the phrase “other individual identities” to capture many identities that people in Hillsboro hold that were not listed in the statement. Examples of these identities include, but are not limited to: tribal affiliation, age, religion, beliefs, citizenship, veteran status, and marital status.

During the employee and community listening sessions, the Equity Team heard and received comments regarding whether to expand the list of identities which end this paragraph, including comments specifically asking that religion be included in the statement. The team discussed how the listing of additional identities would further draw attention away from race. While the intersection of other identities is important, it is in addition to race, not in place of race, that these identities hold particular importance in equity work.

As stated previously, leading with race is crucial to maximizing impacts to address disparate outcomes. The equity statement does not focus on race alone, but does acknowledge that racial equity is particularly important to understand and address inequality, especially given that the compounding effects of institutional marginalization are felt hardest along racial lines.

While the Equity Team did not reach consensus on adding the word “religion” to the statement, it is included in the revised statement to allow the Council the opportunity to discuss.

#### Paragraph V: Intentionality

*“We acknowledge that without an intentional focus on equity, we will continue to perpetuate and deepen inequality.”*

Disparate outcomes continue to be pervasive, despite the progress toward achieving equality. In this paragraph, we acknowledge our understanding that not proactively focusing on equitable outcomes will only deepen inequality. Even doing nothing will continue to further systems of institutional racism, systemic inequality, and marginalization — which already exist.

The Equity Team felt strongly that this language should remain in the statement without change, and it has been included as a standalone sentence in a paragraph for emphasis. Changing the language from “without” to “with” and adjusting the remainder of the sentence to create a more positive tone paints the City’s equity work as a worthy goal, rather than a necessity. The wording and tone of this sentence reflects the City’s position and duty to advance equity and move toward a more representative and inclusive government that fully serves everyone.

#### Paragraph VI: Moving from Ideas to Action

*“To realize our mission and core values, the City of Hillsboro commits to integrating equity into the fabric of our organization and the delivery of public services in pursuit of equal, fair, and just outcomes for all.”*

The Equity Statement ends with a commitment to operationalize equity throughout the organization — both internally as an employer and externally in the delivery of public services. Individuals should succeed on their own merits. Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and individual identities should not determine social and economic outcomes. In conclusion, we tie our work toward this collective vision for equity as a means to fully achieve the City’s mission.