

Spokane Matters 3.0: District 1 Equity and Inclusion Initiative Community Engagement Summary

January 2020

Overview

[Spokane Matters](#)ⁱ was a program of Mayor Condon’s Administration from 2017-2019 where City Council District-wide concerns are addressed with community-led, thoughtful, and interdepartmental problem-solving. In 2019 during the third program year, City Council District 1—which covers nine neighborhoods in Northeast Spokane—selected the Equity and Inclusion Initiative as its top priority for Spokane Matters 3.0. Spokane Matters 3.0 District 1 Equity and Inclusion Initiative (referred to as the Initiative in this summary) explored equity through conversations with District 1 stakeholders and community leaders.



**East Central is part of District 1 and 2.*

Through discussions, research, and exploration, this Initiative looks at the need for the community and the City of Spokane to address equity in an authentic and intentional way. This paper provides a hopeful catalyst to build awareness and a common understanding of equity and inclusion in District 1 as well as across the city. In addition to community conversation, this project explores equity data and highlights equity work from across the community and region. Through conversations, the community provided feedback for moving the conversation forward into strategic action.

According to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 85.3% of the city population in Spokane is white, which is 8.6% higher than the state level and 12.3% higher than the national level.ⁱⁱ But nearly [one-third of Spokane Public Schools](#)ⁱⁱⁱ students are students of color, with the percentage of students of color growing in the school district every year. Additionally, District 1 in NE Spokane encompasses the most racially and ethnically diverse district in Spokane with 20.1% of residents people of color and 8.1% Hispanic or Latino origin, compared to 15.8% and 6.8% citywide.^{iv} On average, District 1 neighborhoods are 9.6% immigrant population compared to 5.5% citywide.^v

As Spokane grows and changes, it is important for the City to become more culturally competent and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to meet their full potential, and that there is full inclusion and access in programs, policies, services, and staffing. The 2017 City [Joint Administration-Council 6-Year Strategic Plan](#)^{vi} envisions Spokane as a “safe, diverse, resilient, sustainable, and growing city known for its natural beauty, economic prosperity, and exceptional quality of life for all.” This initiative is aligned with the City’s goal to increase and embrace diversity.

Process

The Equity and Inclusion Initiative reached out to equity-focused organizations and leaders based in District 1 or serving District 1 residents. The process held three community conversations from June to November, in addition to individual discussions with partners. Participants included:

*Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center
Spokane Regional Health District
Spokane Public Schools
Gonzaga University Center for Community Engagement
Spokane Public Library
The Zone Project*

*Logan Neighborhood Council
Arc of Spokane
Excelerate Success at United Way
Latinos en Spokane
Spokane Community College
Greater Spokane Progress*

The focus was to hear from community stakeholders about equity and gain an understanding of the ongoing work and resources in District 1. The project was successful in bringing together community leaders and encouraging important conversations. We learned about the varied work the community is doing to further equity, and the

varied themes surrounding equity, including education, economic opportunity, health, housing, environment, safety, criminal justice, and transportation. Through conversations, community members shared an understanding of how the City can be a partner in this work.

This initiative also faced several challenges. This included bringing everyone to the table in a convenient and effective way; navigating conversations about equity with the community and within government; and making progress on tangible actions with limited time. However, a hope shared by stakeholders is that the City of Spokane will continue to explore and invest in equity and inclusion, and that this project can serve as a starting point for further engagement and partnership with the City.

Why Equity?

In every city throughout the country, inequities—especially by race and place— continue to persist across every indicator for success: housing, health, criminal justice, education, jobs, and beyond.^{vii} These inequities affect all of us, impacting our collective prosperity and ability to live well and thrive.

Historical and current disparities affect different races and ethnicities. Outlined by the American Planning Association in the report *Planning With Diverse Communities* (PAS Report 593)^{viii}, segregation, discrimination, and racial oppression are chief explanatory factors for understanding the inequities that have plagued communities of color in the United States. The three most significant factors of segregation and inequities in cities have been:

- Urban redevelopment and renewal in the mid-20th century, including the construction of the interstate highway system that physically separated people of color not only from white communities but also employment and other opportunities;
- Housing discrimination policies^x like redlining and racial covenants which can be seen in Spokane’s historical redlining map^x; and
- Enduring income and wealth disparities among racial and ethnic groups by affecting the kinds of neighborhoods where people can afford to live.

Like other cities, these factors have been present in Spokane, and we heard through the community conversations that they have disproportionately impacted Spokane’s communities of color, low income populations, immigrant and refugee populations and other marginalized groups. Data from the Spokane Regional Health District’s [County Health Insights](#)^{xi} shows that District 1 neighborhoods have some of the lowest life expectancy rates in the County, with an average life expectancy of 74.8 years compared to 78.5 years at the County level. When aggregating the data by race, the outcomes are even more drastic. But inequity does not have to be permanent. The [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) (GARE)^{xii}, a national network of government working to achieve racial equity, recognizes government has a key role in advancing equity, and local government can be a leader in proactively working towards an inclusive, equitable, and effective democracy. The Spokane Matters 3.0 District 1 Equity and Inclusion Initiative explores this conversation among community leaders and the City.

It is important to note that although Spokane Matters is a District-focused program, inequities are seen across city-wide, state-wide, and national scale. This speaks to the systemic nature of inequities and the need to collaborate with the community, organizations, and institutions to address these issues, including the Spokane Regional Health District, Spokane Public Schools, Spokane Public Library, and Spokane County.

Building a Foundation

This project helped identify some of the work that the City has been doing to address diversity, equity and inclusion in recent years. There is an opportunity to grow this into a concerted effort of commitment. The following provides an overview of previous and current initiatives in the City.

Gender and Race Pay Equity Task Force: The Spokane City Council established the Gender and Race Pay Equity Task Force to make recommendations on policies, practices, and strategies to decrease gender and race-based pay

disparities in the community. The task force produced a report in 2016 titled “[Gender and Racial Equity at the City of Spokane](#)”^{xiii} which provides data, feedback, and recommendations to achieve pay equity.

Cultural Fund Grant Program: In 2018, the City created the [Cultural Fund Grant](#)^{xiv} to support programs and events that honor and celebrate the rich diversity of the City’s cultural communities. In 2018, the City allocated \$50,000 for activities that promote cultural diversity through festivals, celebrations, lectures and workshops centered on different cultures.

21st Century Workforce: The City established the initiative [21st Century Workforce](#)^{xv} to support jobs that provide a high quality of life for workers, have a meaningful impact in the community, and diversify the workforce so that it reflects the population of our community. The 21st Century Task Force, which consists of representatives from many of the community’s diverse groups, has been instrumental in guiding City efforts to promote a workplace culture that is welcoming to all, including working to update policy and investigation protocol, establishing nursing rooms in City facilities, and promoting wellness initiatives for City employees.

Diversity Strategic Plan: In 2019, Mayor Condon’s office created the City of Spokane Diversity Strategic Plan for 2019-2022.^{xvi} The plan was authored by Dr. Shari Clarke of SJC Cultural Consultant & Associates, LLC. Dr. Clarke is also the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at Eastern Washington University. Conversations were held with community leaders, organizations, groups, and city influencers to understand the strengths, opportunities, growth and forward direction for the city. The plan states that “moving the city forward inclusive of the lived experiences of diverse individuals, multicultural perspectives, and the hopes and dreams of all Spokane residents is viewed as pivotal to the growth of the fabric of the city.”

The Diversity Strategic Plan highlights the city’s growing multicultural population and rich indigenous history and culture as the homeland of the Spokane Tribe, Kalispel Tribe, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, in addition to over 300 tribes represented in the Spokane region today. The plan also recognizes the history and dedication to social justice by a number of active citizens that has been in existence of decades. The plan defines diversity as a “process of inclusion in which marginalized individuals and groups whose voices were not heard and who have historically been excluded will have a seat at the table. All perspectives and voices are valued, included and respected”. The feedback from the Spokane Matters Equity and Inclusion Initiative supports the direction in the Diversity Strategic Plan.

The five goals, each with action steps, are:

1. City Leaders will Promote and Provide Visible & Engaged Leadership.
2. Create a Director of Diversity Position for the City of Spokane.
3. Provide Diversity & Inclusion Training, Education & Awareness for City Leaders and the Residents of the City of Spokane.
4. Collaborate with the Office of Human Resources to develop and enhance policies that will attract a diverse candidate pool and increase diversity hires, including strategies for retaining employees who contribute to diversity.
5. Actively support a Diversity Supplier Program.

Community Feedback

The following is a summary of community feedback categorized into overarching themes. The feedback was shared through conversations with community members and partners based in or focused on serving District 1.

Community participants shared that equity and inclusion work requires trust, understanding, relationships, and time. Communities of color, leaders, and organizations have been working towards racial equity and inclusion in Spokane for decades. Their expertise, community-building, and lived experience are valuable to understanding equity in District 1 as well as opportunities for furthering equity across the City. For the City to be an effective partner, stakeholders shared that there must be a shared understanding of the complex systems in structural and

institutional racism, as well as how to adopt a racial equity framework. The community expressed that equity is a collaborative effort that is developed by meeting people where they are at, building authentic relationships, and taking intentional action.

Call to Action

- This effort cannot stop after Spokane Matters 3.0. Continue to engage the community and partners on equity by listening and creating a forum to have the conversation.
- Community organizations and individuals focusing on equity have been asking for an audience with the City but have not been adequately heard.
- Communities know what they need best, and the City and other institutions should listen to the community voice.
- City needs to be an active participant in community discussions about racial equity, inclusion, and representation.

Understanding Equity

- Adequately acknowledge and communicate the narrative of equity and inequity in the area.
- In starting this conversation, the City needs to prepare for emotional responses and difficult discussions that will come forth.
- Collaborate with the community to develop a shared definition for what equity and inclusion means.
- Identify equity indicators and develop a framework to establish a baseline and metrics.
- Disaggregate and analyze City data by race, ethnicity, and other equity indicators. Provide data at neighborhood, district, and city level. Make data more easily accessible and share with community and partner organizations.
- Explore opportunities for the City to partner with agencies, organizations, institutions, and others to advance equity in District 1 and across the city.

Empower Communities and Partners

- Amplify community voice on equity and inclusion. Empower the community to tell their own story, and to tell the story of assets in the community.
- Recognize the resilience of the NE neighborhoods.
- Connect the dots of organizations doing equity work in District 1 and across the city.
- Tap into community knowledge and institutionalize it into City policies, programs, and projects.
- Encourage neighborhoods in District 1 to organize and begin the conversation on equity at the neighborhood level.

Internal Work on Equity at the City of Spokane

- Develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion training framework for City staff.
- Join GARE membership for the City (or for a department first).
- Establish an Office of Equity.
- Build collaboration across departments and with other agencies, institutions, organizations, and jurisdictions already doing this work.
- Implement the recommendations in the Gender and Racial Equity report by the Gender and Race Pay Equity Task Force.
- Share out and implement the goals and recommendations in the City's Diversity Strategic Plan.
- Commit resources, capacity, and funding to equity and inclusion.
- Employ Results-Based Accountability (RBA) to ensure that actions move toward community results with stakeholder-driven implementation.

PARTNER EFFORTS AND AREA SPOTLIGHTS

The Zone Project



The Zone Project is a place-based community initiative in the Northeast quadrant of

the City of Spokane that covers most of District 1.^{xvii} We work collaboratively between residents and multi-sector organizations to develop 2 Generational (2Gen), equity-based strategies that advance health, education and economic opportunity in the eight Spokane neighborhoods that feed students to Shaw and Garry Middle Schools.

Our collective impact work is focused on three results areas: Children are Safe and Nurtured, Families have what they need to Thrive, and Residents are connected to School and Neighborhood. All of our community strategies and how we measure our progress relate to these three goals and use an equity, whole family, multi-generational lens. We are supported by the backbone of the Northeast Community Center and have partnerships with the City of Spokane, Spokane Public Schools, and 50+ organizations, schools, businesses and hundreds of resident families.

The neighborhoods of Northeast Spokane experience some of the greatest health disparities, as well as housing, education and income inequalities.

- o With a median household income of \$33,000, 39% of children living in poverty, and 54% of single mothers with children living in poverty, financial instability is a constant worry for many families.*
- o Over 80% of children in the Zone are eligible for Free and Reduced lunch – most schools top 90%.*
- o The racial and ethnic demographics of these neighborhoods are changing from a predominantly White population to a more diverse mix of races and cultures, especially younger residents.*
- o Over 40% of children in the 11 Spokane Public Schools in NE Spokane under the age of 18 in NE Spokane identify as a persons of color or Hispanic ethnicity.*
- o Many world refugees have resettled in our neighborhoods. Some of the most common languages spoken include Marshallese, Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Ukrainian.*

Ultimately, we aspire to all children, youth and families reaching their full potential, no matter their zip code, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or ability. We are doing this by building upon the many human assets, institutional assets like schools and colleges, private business assets and public institution and infrastructure

assets in NE Spokane, and aligning resources and opportunity.

We also aspire to develop strong relationships, to understand racial, economic and education inequities, to use data effectively, and to work at an individual, organizational and community level to heal past injustices, to transform our understanding of identity and power, to reclaim resident voice and power, and to create the community capacity for lasting policy, relationship and system changes that eliminate social and economic opportunity gaps and health inequities.

We aspire to have resident and staff leadership that reflect the diverse voices and desires of our community and for this initiative to be sustainable beyond current leadership and funding streams to create a positive, long-term impact in Northeast Spokane families and neighborhoods.

Guiding principles that drive our theory of change:

- o We are asset-based – building from community resources that currently exist, including the lived experiences and skill of residents.*
- o We encourage 2Gen approaches to achieve greater educational, health, safety, and economic outcomes for both children and adults in the same household.*
- o We work to understand and address inequities based on race, gender, economic status, ability, to close the opportunity gap for families.*
- o We collect and use data to identify inequities, focus strategies and track impact at the individual, school and neighborhood levels.*
- o We develop and implement holistic, multi-sector strategies to break down system barriers that prevent kids and families from reaching their full potential.*
- o We release the power of residents, especially parents, through skills-building, leadership opportunities, and strong partnerships with and between organizations to support lasting impact.*

Four main objectives in the next 3 years:

- 1. Align programs and services that support the Whole Family.*
- 2. Provide backbone support for community-based actions that lead to impact.*
- 3. Increase racial equity and diversity in leadership and governance.*
- 4. Improve backbone capacity to track and report on community impact and tell our story.*

Spokane Regional Health Department



The [Spokane Regional Health District](#) (SRHD)^{xviii} is dedicated to achieving health equity, which is when every person has the opportunity to “attain his or her full health potential” and no one is “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because

of social position or other socially determined circumstances.” Health inequities are reflected in differences in length of life; quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and death; severity of disease; and access to treatment. by eliminating avoidable health inequities and health disparities requiring short-and long-term actions.

SRHD is a member of GARE and currently the only member in Eastern Washington. This new role will be the Chief Health Strategist for eliminating health inequities in our region. SRHD will work more effectively and strategically with a broader array of private, public, and community partners to eliminate health inequities, strengthen resilience, and optimize health of all people, truly embodying the Chief Health Strategist role. We plan to broaden our partnerships to authentically engage people from marginalized communities, including communities of color, immigrants, and low-income neighborhoods as full partners in addressing environmental, economic, and social determinants of health challenges in our community. We will increase our internal coordination of resources to have maximum impact when we are working with the broader community and priority populations. We also plan to internally fund a dedicated staff person within the agency to help drive the momentum of this effort across agency divisions and programs.

This transformation includes the development of an agency-level framework and internal plan to guide our shift to addressing more upstream factors that contribute to poor health. Staff will engage in conversations and training to acquire the identified skills needed to address health inequities. We will accelerate, resource, and prioritize the development of an agency-wide, systematic approach to address health inequities in the community. New SRHD leadership is committed to changing policy and agency organization to develop this new capacity.

SRHD is a respected agency that is best known in the community for the reliable health data we produce. SRHD tracks health equity indicators for Spokane as part of the County Health Insights project, which gives the community information on health issues and affected populations. While we believe that data-informed decision making is

critical, it is also our desire to be the catalyst in identifying and implementing solutions to health inequities. As the data provider, we act as a mirror to the community. A second and perhaps more significant role is to become the conscience of the community by seeking to question whether the inequities identified are acceptable, appropriate or sustainable as we transition health care into community health activities. We believe that our community will support us in this role.

In our role as Chief Health Strategist, SRHD’s leadership in addressing health inequities will influence the broader community. SRHD recently created the Center for Equity and has two staff members dedicating half their time to supporting the center. SRHD has been identified as a public health leader for many efforts and as a medium sized health jurisdiction, many other public health jurisdictions can learn from our approach and potentially replicate it in their communities. SRHD was chosen as Center of Excellence within the state to help other local health jurisdictions improve their assessment and evaluation efforts. Developing a viable model and structure to address health equity within our agency will have ripple effects across the state and influence how other public health agencies are addressing health equity.

(This was adapted from GARE.)^{xix}

Spokane County



Spokane County established the [Spokane Regional Law & Justice Racial Equity Committee](#) in 2018 to develop a clear and complete action plan to address the disproportionate impact on people of color within our regional criminal justice system

as a matter of fairness and integrity.^{xx} The Racial Equity Committee is made up of community members, County staff, and representatives of organizations. The Committee have been able to recommend and sponsor several racial equity trainings.

Implicit Bias Training, January 2018:

January 18th and 19th 2018, the Racial Equity committee brought in Ada Shen-Jaffe funded by the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge Grant, who conducted 3 identical 1.5 hour sessions of Implicit Bias training to over 325 of the City and County justice workers including Judges, Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Corrections officers, Probation officers, Pretrial officers,

City of Tacoma



While conducting public outreach for the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan, City of Tacoma staff and consultants identified four major themes that were consistently brought up in discussions with community

members: Equity, Opportunity, Partnerships, and Accountability. More specifically, community members have indicated a strong desire to see “equity and racial justice”, race and social equity analysis of public programs, and support for new immigrants. Building on this momentum, the city proposed an Equity and Empowerment Initiative that was adopted by the city council in October 2014.

In this resolution, the City of Tacoma defined equity as “when everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being and achieve their full potential.” This shared equity framework articulates a vision for an inclusive and equitable Tacoma, as well as a specific mission “to achieve equity in our service delivery, decision-making and community engagement... by identifying and eliminating the underlying drivers within our community that perpetuate racial inequity and provide opportunity

Police and Sheriff deputies and more. This introductory training was well received by the trainees and was the 1st of several training efforts this subcommittee is planning in efforts toward reduction of racial and ethnic disparities in the regional criminal justice system.

GARE Racial Equity Toolkit Training, April 2018:

On April 26, 2018 representatives from the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) were brought in to train Criminal Justice system leaders on the implementation of a Racial Equity Toolkit. “Racial equity tools are designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process. Use of a racial equity tool can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups.”

Implicit Bias and Social Cognition “Train the Trainer” workshops, November 2018:

Over 20 city and county employees as well as community members attended an all-day workshop to learn how to train others on Racial Equity.

for all.” Tacoma’s equity framework further identifies five specific goals:

- For the city’s workforce to better reflect the community it serves.
- For more purposeful community outreach and engagement.
- For equitable service delivery to all residents and visitors.
- To support human rights and opportunities for everyone to achieve their full potential.
- To commit to equity in local government decision-making.

Tacoma established an [Office for Equity and Human Rights](#) (OEHR) in January 2015 with 10 dedicated full-time staff to advance these goals. As one step forward, the initiative invested in the capacity of the city’s leadership by providing racial equity workshops. To continue building capacity through internal infrastructure, the city established an internal ‘think tank’ comprised of both department directors and line staff to support innovation in equitable service delivery. The city also developed a handbook to promote equitable recruiting and hiring practices as a practical equity tool for staff to use. Tacoma is a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).^{xxi} (Adapted from GARE.)^{xxii}

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