



Dane County Planning and Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Dane County Personnel & Finance Committee

FROM: Todd A. Violante, AICP, Director

DATE: October 28, 2019

RE: Status of Planning & Development Department Equity & Sustainability Efforts

The following outlines the Planning and Development Department's activities with respect to equity and sustainability. These activities are consistent with comments that I made at the September 12, 2019 presentation to the County Board on the department's 2020 budget. Although the department has yet to finalize its strategic plan, my plan is to finish and submit it to OEI within the next month, by the end of November, 2019. Nonetheless, the following list hopefully demonstrates that the department has not been dismissive of this very important priority of Dane County and the Planning and Development Department. The department has already taken strides in promoting equity and sustainability in Dane County, and it will continue to do so into 2020 and beyond as an integral part of its mission.

1. We've been working for a number of years to make the department more equitable from a gender perspective. The last nine positions filled in the department, both permanent and LTE, have been by women, including a Senior Planner, two Zoning Inspectors, Clerk I-II, III, and IV positions, a GIS Mapping Technician, and previously two Land Use Inventory interns. Women presently comprise 40 percent of total department staff, but only 32 percent of our permanent staff, so there is still work to be done.
2. Regarding racial equity, we took part in the RESJ training sessions and Racial Equity Analysis process in 2015, and I continue to actively participate in the monthly RESJ leadership team meetings coordinated by the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI).
3. Wesley Sparkman and Carrie Braxton of OEI facilitated a Planning and Development Department workshop on equity and culture as a kickoff to the department's strategic planning process on August 10, 2017. Steve Steinhoff of CARPC also presented on a well done study they completed called a Fair Housing Equity Assessment of Dane County.

4. I presented at our department RESJ kick-off meeting – and at LWRD’s kick-off and at a countywide RESJ team meeting – on the relationship between land use and racial inequity, particularly on the topic of redlining in Dane County.
5. The department formed a workgroup of seven (7) staff – two members from each of the three divisions of the department and the department director – who met over a dozen times to educate ourselves on the topic of equity and diversity and begin formulating the department’s RESJ goals and objectives.
6. Several staff have attended multiple RESJ training opportunities, including the national GARE conference in New Mexico this year.
7. The department has participated in the Boys & Girls Club internship program for the last two summers and will continue to do so each summer hereafter. One of our interns, our GIS Mapping Intern, has been with the department as a part-time intern over the past year, and is planning to continue with us through this next year. She does an amazing job, learns extremely quickly, and we’re very happy to have her on our team. We could not have done this without support from Dane County’s OEI staff.
8. We have been in contact with the director of the Simpson Street Free Press, Jim Kramer, to establish a relationship between the department and SSFP on the model provided by the Land and Water Resources Department. We’ve provided detailed information to SSFP on multiple projects in which we’re involved, which SSFP staff can research and write articles about.
9. The department prepared for and hosted the 5th annual Dane County Housing Summit on October 10, 2019, thanks to the great efforts of Senior Planner Olivia Parry and members of the Dane County Housing Initiative (DCHI). This year’s summit had a particular emphasis on equity and housing affordability, including multiple sessions pertaining to racial equity and diversity.
10. The department has representation on the Dane County Affordable Housing Development Fund program committee, which allocates millions each year to promote the construction of affordable housing in Dane County. Providing more affordable housing is critical to promoting racial equity in our community.
11. The department has taken part in changing the names of two water bodies in Dane County – Ella Wheeler Wilcox Creek and Wiicawak Bay on Lake Monona – to honor women and indigenous peoples of Dane County.
12. Beginning with the 2020 Plat Book, the department will begin highlighting Dane County’s diverse resident cultures with each biennial publication. The 2020 Plat Book will feature Dane County’s American Indian heritage.
13. Our office is staffing the Dane County Complete Count Committee associated with the 2020 Decennial Census. The CCC has met twice so far this fall, and it will continue to do so until the 2020 Census process is completed. Promoting a complete count of historically undercounted populations is critical to promoting equity and diversity in our community.
14. Regarding environmental sustainability, almost every essential activity of the department either directly or indirectly serves to protect our county’s sensitive natural resources, from agricultural preservation to shoreland, floodplain and wetland protections, to special projects oriented around combatting climate change.