

# Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative



## Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Mission:

Establish racial equity and social justice as a core principle in all decisions, policies and functions of the City of Madison.

## RESJ Vision: Imagine a Madison where...

- Living wage jobs, safe neighborhoods, high-quality education, a healthy, sustainable natural environment, parks and green spaces, efficient public transit, affordable and safe housing and healthy food are afforded to all residents;
- The benefits of growth and change are equitably shared across our communities;
- All residents have opportunities for fair and just inclusion in public processes and decisions; and
- One's future is not limited by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, income, place of birth, place of residence or other group status.

## Priority Areas & Current Activities

### 1. Equity in City Operations

- City Clerk's Office used an overarching *equity and empowerment* focus in its 2014-15 operational plan.
- Human Resources Department introduced the *Employee Engagement and Equity* initiative in 2013.

### 2. Equity in City Policies and Budgets

- Interdepartmental City RESJ Team established to develop an equity impact analysis tool and to recommend concrete strategies to Common Council, the Mayor's Office and City Departments.

### 3. Equity in the Community

- RESJ initiative has begun hosting community discussions to gather input and begin working together to achieve racial and social equity in Madison.
- RESJ will participate in local, regional and national networks to coordinate and build on best practices.



## Timeline:

Common Council unanimously approved the RESJ recommendations on July 15, 2014, and the City of Madison expects to have RESJ operating in all of its decisions, policies, and functions by 2016.



## Questions:

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## **FAQ: Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJ)**

### **Q: Why focus on the internal City of Madison decisions, policies, and functions? What about the rest of the community?**

RESJ is working to create change in the areas we can have the strongest initial impact, like departmental operations, hiring, budgeting, and policymaking. The initial RESJ recommendations include ways to engage and support communities and neighborhoods in more sustained and authentic ways. Our partners in the community have been leading the way on racial equity and social justice in their own communities, and we will continue supporting and aligning with their efforts in every way we can.

### **Q: Why focus on race? What about other protected classes or historically disenfranchised groups?**

It is important and necessary to focus on race. Evidence suggests efforts that address poverty and other social conditions without specifically naming race as a focus can actually widen racial inequities. Statistics show that racial inequities are very real in the City of Madison, Dane County, and the State of Wisconsin. RESJ's explicit focus on both racial equity and social justice aims to adequately address the specific problems faced in our community. RESJ values and recognizes there are many intersections of identity that will be positively impacted through its social justice focus such as socioeconomic status, gender, disability, place of birth, age, place of residence, along with many others.

### **Q: Which racial and ethnic communities are considered?**

Madison is very diverse and there are many represented racial and ethnic groups. Inequities have had a negative impact on many communities of color, including but not limited to African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and the Southeast Asian communities. RESJ is meant to focus on all disenfranchised racial and ethnic groups.

### **Q: Who is involved in RESJ?**

Representatives from each city department work on the city-wide RESJ initiative team, as well as in their own departments. RESJ has close ties to the community through focus groups, community forums, and presentations to community groups that meet on an ongoing basis. RESJ is interested in strengthening the City of Madison's connections to the community to promote accountability and transparency. Long-term goals include building in permanent structures to ensure accountability, such as a community roundtable or community liaison model.

### **Q: When will the impact of this work be visible in the community?**

RESJ has celebrated several early wins, including the development and piloting of the RESJ equity impact analysis tool, departments adopting equity in their mission statements with a strong focus on equity in their work planning, serving as a partner to the Dane County RESJ, and training many employees and elected officials in all of Dane County. Racial disparities have been formed over the course of centuries in the United States. We have a long term focus, as we want to build sustainable capacity to make the urgent, deliberate, and monumental change that is needed. We often say RESJ work is a marathon, not a sprint.

### **Q: How will progress be measured?**

Community engagement, transparency, communication, and data are a key part of measuring RESJ's work. The RESJ Team already has several important data points that can be used to track the City's progress, such as employment demographics and demographics of the city's commissions and committees. There are also many external data points that RESJ is organizing to set a roadmap for progress and success. We also plan to regularly check-in with community members to track our progress.