

# Information Report

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Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Friday, February 18, 2022
Subject	<b>Community Plan Update - We are Community</b>

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to share the new section of [A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan](#), entitled, "We are Community," found in Attachment-1. A Glossary of Terms that applies to Attachment-1 aims to be helpful in understanding the terminology presented in this new section; it can be found in Attachment-2. This Glossary of Terms is based on best practice research and with input from members of the community.

After 18 months of listening and engaging with the Guelph community, it was identified that the Community Plan required an update to focus on anti-racism and discrimination to specifically state the goal that everyone should feel a sense of belonging in Guelph. Evolving and revising the Community Plan has been a journey. The journey required the community to engage in conscious unlearning and relearning from those in our broader community who possess the knowledge, expertise and lived experience to change these systems.

### Key Findings

Guelph's Community Plan, developed in 2019, was always intended to evolve and grow with the community. With the social, political and economic shifts that have occurred globally in 2020 and 2021, the community highlighted a need for a formal commitment to identify Guelph's most vulnerable populations; to listen closely to their stories, struggles, and pain; and to commit the City not merely to work toward equity, but toward the permanent elimination of systemic racism in all forms.

The goal is to support the community's effort to set the community standard for the elimination of systemic racism through eight (8) new guiding principles:

- Understanding community
- Relationship driven
- Truth and reconciliation
- Working across systems
- Pace and urgency
- Safe space
- Data and story sovereignty
- Shared language and understanding

In 2022 and beyond, the principles of the new section of the Community Plan will be incorporated into the City's engagement approach as we continuously learn and improve our practices. Staff will update the Community Plan documentation and website with this new section. The City's anti-systemic racism work will shift to action planning in 2022 with implementation occurring along the way. This work will be undertaken in partnership with community members, organizations and institutions to eliminate systemic racism and barriers to inclusion from our institutions, policies and governance structures. The City committed to this next phase when it [joined the Coalition for Inclusive Municipalities](#).

## **Financial Implications**

None. This work was completed using existing resources.

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## **Report**

### **Details**

[A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan](#) was presented to Council on May 16, 2019, after 18 months of research and extensive community engagement. Guelph's Community Plan was always intended to evolve and grow with the community.

The conversations that have led to the creation and continued evolution of the Community Plan were conducted on the land originally home to the Attawandaron peoples of the Iroquois Nation and is the Ancestral and Treaty Land of the Michizaagiig of the Ojibwe, Aanishinaabek Nation now known as the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd had an immediate impact in cities and towns across the continent. Calls for governments to listen to equity seeking groups, build trust, enter into authentic discussions, and act eliminate systemic racism were immediate. In Guelph, the Community Plan was the platform used for convening this important work.

Prior to Floyd's killing, Guelph's Community Plan served as guidance for City officials and departments as well as partner organizations seeking to align to community priorities, values and goals. The Plan spoke to inclusion and diversity but was silent on the topic of systemic racism. The Plan was always intended to be a living document that would evolve along with the members of the communities whose aspirations it reflects.

Community conversations made it clear that a more ambitious, immediate, and necessary goal related to equity and anti-racism was needed: a resolute commitment to identify Guelph's most vulnerable populations; to listen closely to their stories, struggles, and pain; and to commit the City not merely to work toward equity, but toward the permanent elimination of systemic racism in all forms.

The first iteration of the Community Plan, in the [We Feel Well section](#), identified as one of its sub-goals that, "Community members feel accepted for who they are and do not face any discrimination or stigma." This was one of the few statements in the original Community Plan related to systemic racism and discrimination. The community, supported by City staff, is working to address the significant omission

of specific direction related to systemic racism in the first version of the Plan. The journey requires us to engage in conscious unlearning and relearning from those in our broader community who possess the knowledge, expertise and lived experience to change these systems. After more than a year of working with community leaders, open engagement with the community at large, and reconfirmation with community leaders, staff are pleased to present a new section that will be added to the Community Plan as Attachment-1 to this report, entitled “We are Community.”

This new section of the Community Plan speaks of a vision for how Guelph must work as a united community. It also speaks to the importance of building the relationships and trust necessary for the sustained effort required to eradicate the racism and colonialism embedded in our structural systems.

There is acknowledgement that racism and exclusion exist in many forms including but not limited to: Anti-Black racism, Anti-Indigenous racism, Anti-Asian racism, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Anti-2SLGBTQIA+, ageism, ableism and sizism.

Each of the eight new category sections were developed based on conversations with people and communities from across Guelph, and are explained further in Attachment-1:

- Understanding community – This category explores the definition of community, who makes up the community, and how the community has been created over time.
- Relationship driven – This category explores how a sense of community is created through relationships and trust, and the time it takes to build those relationships.
- Truth and reconciliation – This category explores the issues that have been created by our colonial past with respect to the Indigenous population and what can be done to address some of the issues.
- Working across systems – This category explores the need for changes to be implemented in a holistic manner with shared learning across all institutions.
- Pace and urgency – This category explores the need for this work to happen at its own speed, how there is an urgency for change, while acknowledging the necessary time it takes to make true changes to our current systems.
- Safe Spaces – This category explores the need for space, both physical and otherwise, to allow the community to engage in meaningful ways with each other.
- Data and story sovereignty – This category explores the ownership, collection, use and reporting of qualitative data, especially individual experiences, in community development work.
- Shared language and understanding – This category explores the evolution of language and understanding of systemic racism, its causes and effects. Sharing what we learn and our evolved understanding among community institutions is vital to growth and change across the City.

### **What comes next?**

Working in a community-driven and City-supported way has taught staff to be flexible about the next steps as they will be developed and considered in partnership with the community. This is a high-level outline of future actions:

1. The principles of the new section of the Community Plan will be incorporated into the City's engagement approach as we continuously learn and improve our practices.
2. The Community Plan documentation and website will be updated to include this new section.
3. The City's anti-systemic racism work will shift from "how we need to work together" to "what we need to do together" to set the community standard for the elimination of systemic racism.
4. Work with community members, organizations and institutions to co-create an action plan to outline the specific strategies and actions that must be taken to eliminate systemic racism and barriers to inclusion from our institutions, policies and governance structures. The City committed to this next phase when it [joined the Coalition for Inclusive Municipalities](#).

### **Financial Implications**

None. This work was undertaken using existing resources.

### **Consultations**

The Community Plan is community-driven and City-supported. Consultations with community leaders, and equity deserving groups across Guelph occurred through targeted conversations, focus groups and generally through the City's engagement website. Additionally, Sara Sayyed, the City of Guelph Senior Advisor, Equity, Anti-Racism and Indigenous Initiatives has been involved in this work.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

The Community Plan is the guiding document and an input for the Guelph. Future Ready 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. This additional section seeks to evolve the Guelph Community Plan to incorporate current conditions.

### **Attachments**

Attachment-1: We are Community

Attachment-2: Glossary of Terms

### **Departmental Approval**

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