



# Our City Government

## **Where We Are and How We Got Here:**

Local government bears a responsibility to improve communities and positively impact the lives of neighbors through laws, policies, and public investment. This responsibility is underscored by the reality that for the past century of American history, government at the federal, state, and local levels have played an instrumental role in establishing and reinforcing racial and economic disparities that are still experienced by neighbors in Gainesville today.

At the national and local level the perspectives and priorities of underserved communities, particularly communities of color have been largely underrepresented in critical decision making processes around planning, budgeting, and public investment. The absence of these perspectives was a direct result of systems that were designed to limit access to civic decision-making by communities that were often most negatively impacted by government actions. Conversely, the voices of more affluent, white residents with greater access to and knowledge of the political process were amplified, translating to public investments being made in parts of the City that were less in need than others.

Through this Comprehensive Plan, the City of Gainesville government is committing to advance racial equity by working to close disparities in housing, transportation, child welfare, health care access and outcomes, cultural and recreational amenities, education, and economic development and local resiliency. This chapter identifies outcomes and strategies that will be implemented in whole or in part by the City of Gainesville and its partners to advance equity at the community level while concurrently working to align internal plans and embed equity within decision-making processes to create a more inclusive, representative, and accountable city organization.

## **Progress to Build On:**

The City of Gainesville has begun to take important, incremental steps towards creating an organization focused on eliminating racial disparities in the community. Our collective future as a city hinges on our commitment to racial equity and our success in embedding this commitment into the foundation of the organization. The Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan, annual budget, as well as city policies governing human resources, purchasing, and community engagement all play a critical role in the basic functions of the City. Below is a sample of the ongoing racial equity work that is currently underway in the City.

### **Office of Equity and Inclusion:**

- Racial equity training
- Disparity Study
- Racial equity toolkit

### **Communications and Engagement Office:**

- Community Engagement Guidebook
- Community Cultivators

### **Office of Strategic Initiatives:**

- Strategic Plan

### **Department of Sustainable Development:**

- Comprehensive Plan



# Our City Government

## What's at Stake?

This is a seminal moment in Gainesville, where the focus on racial disparities at the national level has created an opportunity at the City to critically evaluate, dismantle, and rebuild the systems and structures of government to benefit the entire community by eliminating the racial disparities that hold back economic and social progress within our community. The work described in this chapter and the rest of the Comprehensive Plan is existential to the success of the City and the well-being of its residents.

## Outcome 1: All Gainesville residents have clarity and resources to understand how the City prioritizes and invests in the community through zoning, planning, and budgeting processes.

Gainesville finds itself thrust into a new era of community engagement. With dozens of new communications formats, community builders are doing more work than ever before, yet a gap exists in the ability to influence strategic resource decisions and reach historically marginalized communities. The current state of community engagement empowers a handful of voices to dominate the conversation. Future efforts will improve access for all Gainesville residents to play a meaningful role in the creation and oversight of key plans such as the Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan and the Financial and Operating Plan.

### **Strategies:**

- 1. Expand efforts to build community capacity and understanding of City governmental functions, powers, and processes to prepare neighbors to meaningfully advocate for their interests and participate in the development of strategies and decision-making sessions, especially in historically marginalized communities.** The City of Gainesville is committed to building transparency concerning how City government operates and makes decisions, to ensure residents can be actively involved in decision-making. The Departments of Sustainable Development, Strategic Initiatives, and Communications will undertake the following priority actions:
  - Use storytelling communication strategies to ensure City decision-making processes, outreach, and strategy development efforts are easy to understand, transparent, and communicated with clear intervals/milestones.
  - Update the former “Citizens’ Academy” and establish a “Neighbor Academy Series” civic education program with four learning areas related to consensus building; budgeting processes; key concepts in planning, zoning, and development; and key concepts in economic development. Adapt the training modules for use in County schools by working with local youth service organizations to ensure that youth have access to a modified, youth-friendly version.
  - Explore new approaches to make public comment forums and city commission meetings more accessible for all Gainesville residents.
  - Allocate 2 hours per week of staff time in all departments that have regular interaction with neighbors to do non-project related community outreach and engagement in historically disinvested communities. Through this ongoing engagement, city staff will invest in relationships with residents to build trust and community capacity for advocacy and democratic participation.
  - Expand the Community Cultivator fellowship program to work on projects and strategies from neighborhoods that will be affected by city decisions. The city will create Community Cultivator positions and directly hire local community members to work on major community-based projects and initiatives. Cultivators will receive training on the basics of city government



## Our City Government

as well as project specifics. They will work with staff to build locally relevant engagement plans and conduct engagement with their neighbors.

- Expand and formalize relationships with partner organizations including local faith organizations and advocacy groups to build involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan. To do this, the Departments of Strategic Initiatives, Sustainable Development, and Communications will host regular sessions with partner organizations to support civic education and create feedback opportunities. These sessions will inform the major policy priorities of the City as expressed in the Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and annual budget. In addition, the City will identify opportunities to partner with these organizations to advance implementation of priority strategies.

**2. All City departments, when setting priorities and making decisions regarding the annual budget, strategic plan, and other major investments, will consider: a) disaggregated socioeconomic data (when appropriate and available), b) priorities of impacted residents and other stakeholders, and c) lived experience as shared by impacted communities.**

The Department of Communications and Engagement Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Office of Equity and Inclusion will work with City departments to develop processes to regularly collect and interpret this data both during specific planning processes and on an ongoing basis. This coordination will connect departmental teams conducting outreach, ensure outreach efforts are aligned with each other, and build accountability. This work will build on the engagement conducted as a part of the Imagine GNV process, where Community Builders from across City departments led outreach and facilitated community sessions. Priority actions will include:

- Develop a shared and standardized list of disaggregated socioeconomic data, tied to the Census, that all of the City departments involved in community engagement will use when collecting information from neighbors when conducting surveys or soliciting community feedback.
- Align community engagement across departments through continued participation in the Community Builders Working Group, a cross-department effort to increase community outreach.
- Use the Community Engagement Guidebook to guide and direct community engagement efforts across all City departments. The City of Gainesville is committed to centering the needs and priorities of community members in all of its work. The Departments of Communications and Engagement and Office of Equity and Inclusion will partner with City departments to ensure that all staff receive trainings in community outreach and engagement grounded in Gainesville's Community Engagement Guidebook. In support, in advance of all City-conducted engagement, City staff will be required publicly define the goals of engagement, how feedback will be used, and what it will inform.

**3. Designate communities to serve as Imagine GNV Neighborhoods to guide implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and develop community projects.** In each neighborhood, the City will convene community organizations and neighbors quarterly to discuss local issues that relate to topics covered in this plan and seek input on specific Imagine GNV strategies the City is working to implement. Priority actions include:

- Allocate annual funding with each two-year budget cycle to fund community-driven neighborhood projects within Imagine GNV Neighborhoods.
- Provide planning and technical support as needed to support the development of community projects. The Department of Sustainable Development will partner with the most appropriate



## Our City Government

departments to assist Imagine GNV Neighborhoods to develop projects that address local need and priorities.

- Create a dedicated position within the Department of Sustainable Development to administer the Imagine GNV Neighborhood program with support from other City Departments.

#### **4. Establish a percentage of the City's budget to fund an annual participatory budgeting project with neighbors experiencing poverty and live in historically disinvested neighborhoods.**

Participatory budgeting gives neighbors a voice to decide how to spend part of the public budget, enabling funding decisions to be based on community priorities.

##### **Indicators:**

- Percentage of annual budget allocated to community / participatory projects
- Attendance records of city outreach initiatives by zip code, race/ethnicity
- Evidence of Community Engagement Guidebook theories used in engagement plans in key departments/charters... DSD, GRU, CAPER, GCRA.
- Evidence of mutual understanding (staff and community members) as indicated by exit surveys from Neighborhood Academy workshops
- Percentage of staff time dedicated to conducting non-project related community outreach and engagement, especially in historically disinvested communities.
- Percent of qualitative engagement goals achieved by Community Cultivators for each project.

### **Outcome 2: All City policies, plans, and agreements are grounded in racial equity.**

While Gainesville has made great strides towards being fair and just, racial inequity is deep-rooted in housing, employment, education, justice and health. Because local government has a unique responsibility to all neighbors, these inequities can and must be addressed. The public sector must be for the public good; current racial inequities are destructive. We must go beyond individual, intentional discrimination and examine the policies, plans and agreements that can advance racial equity. Toolkits, frameworks and training can put a theory of change into action to achieve a collective vision of racial equity.

##### **Strategies:**

**1. Develop and implement an equity assessment tool to guide budgeting decisions and major city planning projects.** This will ensure that strategies and outcomes from the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans are advancing racial equity. It will also ensure that annual budget allocations support the strategies and outcomes in each plan and prioritize community need and address disparities.

**2. Develop and implement a racial equity framework to guide City decision-making and collaboration with outside partners.** The Department of Equity and Inclusion will lead the framework development, which will clearly articulate racial equity, implicit and explicit bias, and individual, institutional, and structural racism using the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) definition as a baseline. To support the racial equity framework implementation, the Department of Equity and Inclusion will work with city departments to:

- Develop and adopt a citywide data policy to require data disaggregation by race and neighborhood.



## Our City Government

- Collect and regularly update data and information on inequity in Gainesville to measure progress and ensure accountability to racial equity goals.
- Build and publish a public dashboard that reports on real-time data and progress toward racial equity goals.

**3. Develop and expand the use of equity and implicit bias guides, toolkits, and trainings citywide to ensure policy decisions and resource allocation are grounded in racial equity considerations and the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.** The Departments of Equity and Inclusion will work with city departments to build capacity for racial equity, which includes training to build skills and implement strategies that promote racial equity on a day-to-day basis.

**4. Revise inter-local and joint planning agreements with the University of Florida, Alachua County, and the School Board of Alachua County to adopt a shared racial equity framework, which will consider how joint decisions influence racial equity outcomes.** The Department of Sustainable Development will partner with city departments to revise agreements with partner institutions to explicitly name racial equity as a shared goal with specific targets.

### Indicators:

- Number of plans and partnership agreements that name racial equity as a shared goal with a clear definition and targets
- Number of city departments that collect and measure disaggregated data
- Frequency that disaggregated data is collected or updated

### Outcome 3: City staff, leadership, and committees are representative of all of Gainesville, and City contracting supports racial equity.

Racial inequity is a critical barrier in the fields of workforce development, representative governance and procurement. Fortunately, there are practical solutions to make tangible and impactful gains toward racial equity. Achieving racial equity in the workforce will require large-scale investments, multi-level policy changes, structural transformation, and the work of numerous stakeholders. By identifying current inequities in the workforce development process, the composition of governing boards and in procurement policies, Gainesville will adopt a framework that promotes and sustains racial equity.

- 1. Audit the City's recruitment, training, promotion, and staff development policies and practices to remove any barriers to hiring and sustaining a diverse workforce across City government.**  
The City of Gainesville is committed to building a diverse government across functions and management levels that reflects the communities we serve. The audit will draw on qualitative and quantitative data to understand the current City workforce, and analyze hiring, pay, advancement, job classifications, and other characteristics based on race/ethnicity and gender.
- 2. The City's Human Resources Department, Office of Equity and Inclusion and GRU's Office of Inclusion will use training and employee development programs to support and retain an inclusive workforce and build a culture that supports the City's diversity and inclusion goals.**  
Examples of these programs include leadership development through the Emerging Leaders program, as well as training focused on inclusion and intercultural competency using the Filter Shift training program and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) tool.
- 3. Audit the composition of City boards, charters, and committees to identify diversity, equity, and inclusion gaps and develop plans to achieve representation that is proportionate to Gainesville residents.** The audit will assess the City's boards, committees, commission, and charters



## Our City Government

related to age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The City will measure progress against the initial audit and regularly report updates.

4. **Revise definition of diverse suppliers and contractors to ensure inclusion of a variety of business types and backgrounds.** By revising the definition, the City will set clear targets for share of contracts awarded to MBEs and DBEs that are aligned with racial equity and the Comprehensive Plan goals.
5. **Review the City's contract and procurement system and identify barriers to participation for underrepresented entrepreneurs such as minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) in the procurement process and develop strategies that enable these businesses the opportunity to benefit from City spending.** MBEs and DBEs often compete with larger companies that have greater access to financing and are able to navigate bureaucratic processes with ease. This review is a first step in Gainesville's commitment to creating fair contract opportunities. The Office of Equity and Inclusion will develop strategies to address barriers, which may include streamlining business certification processes, eliminating financial burdens for small businesses, supporting subcontractors to become prime contractors, among others.
6. **Audit long-term contracts and major supplier agreements with contractors and vendors to ensure that businesses supported with taxpayer dollars align with principles of racial equity.** An audit is a first step to ensuring that dollars used for contracting, consulting, and procurement benefit Gainesville residents, proportionate to the demographics of our communities. The audit will include considerations of business size and location, DBE and MBE goals, hiring and pay practices.

### Indicators:

- Composition of City boards, charters, and committees by race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and zip code
- Composition of staff employed by City government by race/ethnicity, gender, zip code
- Percentage of City contract spending awarded to locally-owned, minority-owned, or otherwise disadvantaged businesses