

March 2021 Barre City Diversity & Equity Committee Report

Mission Statement:

The Barre City Diversity and Equity Committee will examine the City's studies, ordinances, and policies; identifying barriers to equity and recommending solutions that will support racial, cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic status, and other types of diversity.

Vision Statement:

We dedicate ourselves to working for real, structural change to the ongoing dynamics within our community that have allowed racism, sexism, ableism, and other forms of injustice and oppression to continue.

Definitions:

The purpose of defining the key terms listed below is to create a common understanding for effective communication. We acknowledge that acronyms, though sometimes appropriate, are not a substitute for working to combat bias or invalidation in our language.

BIPOC: BIPOC is an acronym for "Black, Indigenous, and people of color".

Culture: A learned set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors shared by a group of people. For individuals and organizations alike, such cultural groups may be characterized by race, ethnicity, nationality, regional or local geography, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age or generation, educational background, professional background, family structure, socio and/or economic background, disability, and more. Sub-cultures exist within all cultures. Culture is traditionally considered distinct from an individual's personal characteristics.

Diversity: Describes all the ways that people differ, which encompasses the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together. Bringing together diverse perspectives and experiences increases the quality of municipal decisions and actions. Supporting diverse communities and a diverse workforce means tapping into all of the skills, talents, and creativity available to us. No one person or group can represent diversity, though the subgroups of a larger cultural group represent diversity within that given group. A single individual who represents an underrepresented status might not be an accurate descriptor of diversity, but the mix of that individual along with individuals who represent other underrepresented statuses and majority statuses would constitute a diverse group.

Equity: Identifying and removing structural barriers that have historically disadvantaged certain groups in order to ensure full participation of diverse communities in the life of the City, in order to create equitable access to opportunities and benefits to service recipients, whether residents, visitors, or employees. Equity can be defined as a means of achieving equality, and is

realized when one's identity (racial, ethnic, gender, ability, etc.) can no longer predict their failure or success.

Inclusion: Supporting, positively engaging, respecting, and giving access to all regardless of an individuals' background and circumstances, including race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, cultural and geographic background, veteran status, religious belief, age, disability, and other characteristics. Inclusion embraces diversity and provides a safe and unconditional sense of belonging.

LGBTQ+: LGBTQ is an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning". These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The 'plus' is used to signify all gender identities and sexual orientations not specifically covered by the other five initials.

Racism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color in the United States based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.

Systemic/Structural Barriers: Obstacles that exclude groups or communities of people from full participation in, and the benefits of, social, economic, and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional, but are built into the way society works. Existing policies, practices, and procedures, as well as assumptions and stereotypes, reinforce these barriers. In the City, they may be present in housing, policing, education, hiring, physical access, and healthcare, to name a few, and may remain hidden to those who are unaffected by them.

Goals and Objectives:

The committee has developed four working groups designed to best accomplish our vision: Community Needs Assessment (CNA), City Policy and Procedures Review (PPR), D&E Committee Development (DED), and Community Education (CE). Below are two goals with their objectives identified including which working group is tasked with it. Wherever a working group is not identified, the full committee will be charged with the task. Areas of concern to be considered include, but are not limited to, public spaces, mobility and transportation, heritage preservation, gentrification, climate change, resource consumption, and health equity.

GOAL # 1: Combat racism, sexism, ableism, and other forms of injustice and oppression by dedicating ourselves to real structural change.

Objectives -

- Identify and address disparities and barriers experienced by BIPOC in Barre City
- Review city policies for content, language, and intent regarding the stated goal – PPR
- Community assessment – CNA
 - Data collection and analysis including analysis of data gaps
 - Community-wide survey to assess community assets
 - Study of City personnel and leadership to evaluate equity in hiring
 - Review all relevant previous community studies

- Consider environmental issues when analyzing community needs
- Develop a working plan and priorities based on a community assessment
- Organize or recommend comprehensive anti-bias training and workshops for city employees, school personnel, and the general public - CE
- Establish and update common language definitions for accurate use and to foster understanding
- Expand focus to include equity in housing, employment, transportation, infrastructure, and city contracting among others
- Expand focus to include LGBTQ+, older adults, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, and/or other vulnerable populations
- Provide opportunities and tools to educate city leadership, staff, and the general public about equity and justice - CE
- Do no harm
- Involve youth; recruit two youth to the committee, youth survey/summit
- Develop effective communication tools for dissemination to Barre City residents
- Survey the business community, specifically retail establishments, to identify what issues they may have or have observed regarding bias - CNA

GOAL # 2: Coordinate efforts and collaborate closely with city leaders and other committees appointed by the City Council.

Objectives –

- Maintain close communication between the committee and the City Council, appropriate City staff, and other relevant committees such as the ADA, Energy and Police Advisory Committees, and others
- Keep minutes and notes and provide them to city leadership and the general public
- Co-create and/or organize anti-bias and other relevant trainings, workshops and curricula - DED
- Develop projects and assist in meeting the equity goals of other City agencies and Institutions, such as the Aldrich Public Library, Studio Place Arts, service groups, and others. - DED