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Racial Equity Impact Assessment

Puget Sound Regional Council

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Inside cover: PSRC information

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Introduction

Acknowledgements

This Racial Equity Impact Assessment was developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and was a collaborative effort between PSRC’s Regional Planning, Growth Management Planning, Transportation Planning, and Data groups. It was developed with the input of PSRC’s Equity Advisory Committee. The committee recommended development of the toolkit, provided early input on the design and content of the toolkit, and reviewed and commented on early drafts.

This assessment has been adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity’s (GARE) [Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity](#). We would also like to acknowledge the toolkits of King County, WA and the cities of Portland, OR, Redmond, WA, and Seattle, WA.

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The Region's Vision for Racial Equity

Equity is a key part of the central Puget Sound region’s vision for 2050: "The central Puget Sound region provides an exceptional quality of life and opportunity for all, connected communities, a spectacular natural environment, and an innovative, thriving economy." More specifically, VISION 2050’s goal for equity states: "All people can attain the resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential."

What is a Racial Equity Impact Assessment?

Tools such as this Racial Equity Impact Assessment are designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process and helps to institutionalize the consideration of racial equity. This assessment tool is intended to be used on key proposals emerging from a comprehensive plan. Use of this assessment leads to the development of improved comprehensive plan proposals and strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups. Organizations have taken different approaches to assessing equity on a plan-level. [VISION 2050](#) and the [Regional Transportation Plan](#) both have equity analyses, and the City of Redmond has a [checklist](#) to assess equity and inclusion, sustainability, and resiliency. This assessment differs in that it includes community engagement as part of the process to assess key comprehensive plan proposals.

Using the Racial Equity Impact Assessment

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment has been tailored for use by city and county staff in updating comprehensive plans. However, it could be further tailored for other types of plans and decision making. Community partners who are providing input on the comprehensive plan could also fill out this assessment.

The scope and budget for community engagement and staff time related to this assessment should be considered early in the comprehensive plan update process. Compensation for community engagement work by community partners and members is considered a best practice.

The information below describes the timing for completing each step of the assessment. The first part of the assessment should be shared with the public and decision makers during development of the comprehensive plan, well before the plan is adopted, such as during the formal public comment period. This allows the assessment to be integrated into the draft plan materials and community engagement process, and gives decision makers time to consider the proposals, positive and negative impacts identified, and strategies. Note that community engagement specific to this assessment must occur before the questions in Step 3 can be answered. Users are encouraged to return to earlier steps and repeat the process as needed to achieve desired outcomes.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment Checklist

Complete the worksheet for each proposal to be assessed. Use the checklist below to keep track of your progress using the Racial Equity Impact Assessment. See the guidance and resources for each step for additional information.

- Early inclusive engagement.** Conduct inclusive community engagement before completing the assessment, preferably before the comprehensive plan update process begins.
- Step 1. Identify comprehensive plan proposals to assess.** Select the policies, programs, or other elements of the comprehensive plan to include in the assessment, with consideration of input from the early engagement. Identify desired outcomes.
- Step 2. Gather and analyze information and data.** Once the proposals are identified, use qualitative and quantitative data to analyze proposals.
- Step 3. Engage communities.** Once the proposals are identified, engage the community to learn about potential impacts of the proposal. Completing Step 2 may inform the communities to engage with in Step 3.
- Step 4. Identify strategies for advancing racial equity.** After Steps 3 and 4 are complete, look for potential unintended consequences, identify strategies to reduce disparate impacts, and find opportunities to partner.
- Step 5. Ensure accountability and communicate.** Shortly after the comprehensive plan is adopted, consider how to ensure implementation of the strategies identified in Step 4, including communication strategies and ongoing engagement.
- Step 6. Evaluate outcomes and next steps.** During and after proposal implementation, evaluate whether you are achieving the anticipated outcomes. Adjust actions if negative impacts or unintended consequences arise and incorporate findings into plan updates and other work.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment

Before completing the Racial Equity Impact Assessment: Early Inclusive Community Engagement

Early Inclusive Engagement Guidance and Resources

Community input is key to successfully conducting a Racial Equity Impact Assessment, so identifying marginalized groups and affected communities and conducting inclusive engagement is an important preliminary step. This could be integrated into other efforts to build relationships with communities. This early step can help to identify issues to address in the comprehensive plan, such as increasing affordable housing, providing equitable access to parks and open space, and improving transportation safety. Build in adequate funding for community engagement early in the comprehensive plan update process.

Resources

- PSRC's [Equitable Engagement for Comprehensive Plans](#)

What early inclusive community engagement work has been conducted?

Response

Step 1. Identify comprehensive plan proposals to assess and describe their desired outcomes

Step 1 Guidance and Resources

Clearly describe the policies, programs, or other elements of the comprehensive plan to analyze in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment. These are referred to as “proposals” for brevity. Early inclusive community engagement will help to identify the proposals. Proposals to assess could have fewer benefits or greater negative impacts on communities of color, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups. Research and analysis can also help to identify proposals that may have equity implications. Types of proposals to assess include planning for substantial development or change in a neighborhood, new or updated policies, new major projects, or other important changes. Some comprehensive plan proposals that could have equity implications or disparate effects, such as displacement, include land use changes and center designations, transportation improvements, new and renovated parks, and technology investments. A proposal could be an effort to advance racial equity that you want to assess for the likelihood it will result in the intended outcomes.

Select the proposals of greatest importance to assess as part of the comprehensive plan periodic update. Fill out an assessment worksheet for each proposal separately. Share the draft list and confirm the issues to assess and solicit input for Step 3 as part of early community engagement work, such as scoping.

Resources to help Identify proposals to assess that may have negative equity impacts:

- PolicyLink [All-in Cities Policy Toolkit](#) (list of policy tools to advance racial equity)
- PSRC’s [Displacement Risk Mapping](#) and [List of Indicators](#)
- PSRC’s [Opportunity Mapping](#) and [List of Indicators](#)
- Urban Displacement Project’s [research on displacement and gentrification](#)
- To differentiate shorter and longer-term outcomes, see the Center for Theory of Change’s [article on identifying long-term goals/outcomes](#).

For each proposal:

1.1 What policy, program, or other element of the comprehensive plan (proposal) is being analyzed in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment and how was the proposal selected?

Response

1.2 What are the intended short-term and long-term outcomes of the proposal?

Response

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Step 2. Gather and analyze information and data

Step 2 Guidance and Resources

After identifying comprehensive proposals to assess, gather data relevant to each proposal. Types of quantitative data that can help inform the assessment are listed below.

- [Demographic data](#) to identify the race, income, ability-status, and other characteristics of people living in an affected area
- [Transportation data](#) to identify modes of travel, car ownership, and transit access
- [Housing data](#) to identify housing cost burden and homeownership disparities
- [Parks data](#) to identify gaps in access to parks and open space
- [Health data](#) to identify health disparities
- [Displacement risk data](#) to identify areas with higher or lower risk of displacement

Qualitative information can complement findings from quantitative data analyses. With the data gathered, complete the questions for each proposal.

Resources:

- Legacy of Structural Racism StoryMap ([link](#))
- Equity Tracker ([link](#))
- PSRC [data resources](#), also see list above

2.1 What are likely benefits and impacts (short-term and long-term) the comprehensive plan proposal will have in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)?

Response:

2.2 What are the racial demographics of those living in the area affected by the proposal and the current disparities related to the proposal?

Response:

2.3 How has structural racism impacted the community? (See the interactive report on the legacy of structural racism.) What does data show you about how these inequities persist in the community?

Response:

2.4 What gaps exist in the data? If needed, how can you obtain additional information for analyzing the proposal?

Response:

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Step 3. Engage communities

Step 3 Guidance and Resources

If not already completed, conduct community engagement to help answer the questions below for each proposal. To focus engagement, refer to the disparities identified in earlier steps and the communities that appear to be most marginalized. Local Tribes may also want to be a part of the planning and assessment process. Ask the community about the benefits and burdens of the comprehensive plan proposals and confirm that the assessment is including the most important proposals.

Resources:

- PSRC's [Equitable Engagement for Comprehensive Plans](#)
- PSRC's [Coordination with Tribes in Comprehensive Planning](#)

3.1 Reflecting on Step 2, which communities have been the most marginalized and will likely be most impacted by the comprehensive plan proposal? How have you involved them in the development of the comprehensive plan?

Response:

3.2 What has your engagement process and the lived experience of community members told you about the proposal's burdens, benefits, or unintended consequences for different groups?

Response:

3.3 Which affected communities were not involved in the development of the proposal? What barriers limited your engagement with these groups and how can this be addressed in the future?

Response:

3.4 Are there other issues the community thinks should be considered in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment?

Response:

Step 4. Identify strategies for advancing racial equity

Step 4 Guidance and Resources

After completing Steps 2 and 3, answer the questions below for each comprehensive plan proposal using the findings from your research and community engagement. Unintended consequences are negative outcomes that are not foreseen. Because they are difficult to foresee, the ability to monitor and adjust is important. You may be able to accelerate positive change by building on the work of other agencies and partners.

Resources:

- PSRC [Regional Housing Strategy](#) and [Housing Innovations Program](#)
- PSRC [Equity Planning Resources](#)
- PolicyLink [Anti-displacement Tools](#)
- Puget Sound Sage [Equitable Development Programs](#)
- Article: [Unintended Consequences: Minimizing The 'Oops Factor' In Decision Making](#)

4.1 What are potential strategies for reducing or mitigating the disparities identified for the comprehensive plan proposal and how will they be implemented? Fill in the table below.

| Strategy | Action/Task | Staff Responsible | Deadline | Resources Needed |
|----------|-------------|-------------------|----------|------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

4.2 What are potential unintended consequences of the strategies? Can the proposal be adjusted if unintended consequences arise?

Response:

4.3 What are ways in which existing relationships could be strengthened to maximize positive impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders and other agencies for long-term positive change?

Response:

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Step 5. Ensure accountability and communicate

Step 5 Guidance and Resources

Shortly after the comprehensive plan has been adopted, complete Step 5 for each proposal, as applicable. For the strategies identified in Step 4, consider whether they have:

- Adequate funding
- Adequate personnel
- Adequate mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement
- Adequate resources for on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement
- Been incorporated into relevant plans and programs

Step 6 is about evaluating outcomes. Question 5.5 asks about planning ahead for this evaluation.

Resources:

- Guidance from an upcoming Learning Opportunity session
- GARE [Communications Guide](#) (see page 17 for A-C-T)

5.1 How will you work to implement the strategies identified in Step 4?

Response:

5.2 Are racial equity goals and actions in the comprehensive plan reflected in associated plans and strategies (transportation plan, housing strategy, etc.)?

Response:

5.3 What messages and communication strategies will help advance racial equity as part of your engagement process?

Response:

5.4 How will the outcomes, impacts, and unintended consequences in Step 6 be evaluated and documented?

Response:

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Step 6. Evaluate outcomes and next steps

Step 6 Guidance and Resources

Questions 6.1 and 6.2 should be answered during and after proposal implementation.

Next Steps:

- Adjust actions if negative impacts or unintended consequences arise.
- Incorporate findings into plan updates and other work.

Resources

- [Evaluation Guide for Public Service Program Managers](#)

6.1 Are you achieving the anticipated outcomes? If not, how is this being addressed?

Response:

6.2 Have there been any unintended consequences? If so, how are these being addressed?

Response:

6.3 How are you continuing to engage communities and partners and ensure implementation is sustainable?

Response:

Appendix A. Racial Equity Impact Assessment Summary of Steps and Questions

Before completing the Racial Equity Impact Assessment: Early Inclusive Community Engagement

- What early inclusive community engagement work has been conducted?

Step 1. Identify comprehensive plan proposals to assess and describe their desired outcomes

- 1.1 What policy, program, or other element of the comprehensive plan (proposal) is being analyzed in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment and how was the proposal selected?
- 1.2 What are the intended short-term and long-term outcomes of the proposal?

Step 2. Gather and analyze information and data

- 2.1 What are likely benefits and impacts (short-term and long-term) the comprehensive plan proposal will have in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)?
- 2.2 What are the racial demographics of those living in the area affected by the proposal and the current disparities related to the proposal?
- 2.3 How has structural racism impacted the community? (See the interactive report on the legacy of structural racism.) What does data show you about how these inequities persist in the community?
- 2.4 What gaps exist in the data? If needed, how can you obtain additional information for analyzing the proposal?

Step 3. Engage communities

- 3.1 Reflecting on Step 2, which communities have been the most marginalized and will likely be most impacted by the comprehensive plan proposal. How have you involved them in the development of the comprehensive plan?
- 3.2 What has your engagement process and the lived experience of community members told you about the proposal's burdens, benefits, or unintended consequences for different groups?

- 3.3 Which affected communities were not involved in the development of the proposal? What barriers limited your engagement with these groups and how can this be addressed in the future?
- 3.4 Are there other issues the community thinks should be considered in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment?

Step 4. Identify strategies for advancing racial equity

- 4.1 What are potential strategies for reducing or mitigating the disparities identified for the comprehensive plan proposal and how will they be implemented?
- 4.2 What are potential unintended consequences of the strategies? Can the proposal be adjusted if unintended consequences arise?
- 4.3 What are ways in which existing relationships could be strengthened to maximize positive impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders and other agencies for long-term positive change?

Step 5. Ensure accountability and communicate

- 5.1 How will you work to implement the strategies identified in Step 4?
- 5.2 Are racial equity goals and actions in the comprehensive plan reflected in connected plans and strategies (transportation plan, housing strategy, etc.)?
- 5.3 What messages and communication strategies will help advance racial equity as part of your engagement process?
- 5.4 How will the outcomes, impacts, and unintended consequences in Step 6 be evaluated and documented?

Step 6. Evaluate outcomes and next steps

- 6.1 Are you achieving the anticipated outcomes? If not, how is this being addressed?
- 6.2 Have there been any unintended consequences? If so, how are these being addressed?
- 6.3 How are you continuing to engage communities and partners and ensure implementation is sustainable?

Appendix B. Definitions

- Institutional Racism: Policies, practices, and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally.
- Long-term outcomes: Ultimate changes or impacts, directly connected to short-, mid-, or other long-term outcomes, typically including social, economic, civic, or environmental changes.
- Proposal: Policies, programs, or other elements to be considered by decision makers for inclusion in the updated comprehensive plan.
- Racial equity: Race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.
- Racial inequity: Race can be used to predict life outcomes, e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), etc.
- Scoping: The process to identify work needed to complete the comprehensive plan and/or environmental review
- Short-term outcomes: Intended changes directly connected to activities, typically including awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills; these are the first set of outcomes that might be observed.
- Structural racism: A history and current reality of institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.
- Unintended consequences: Negative outcomes that are not planned or foreseen.