

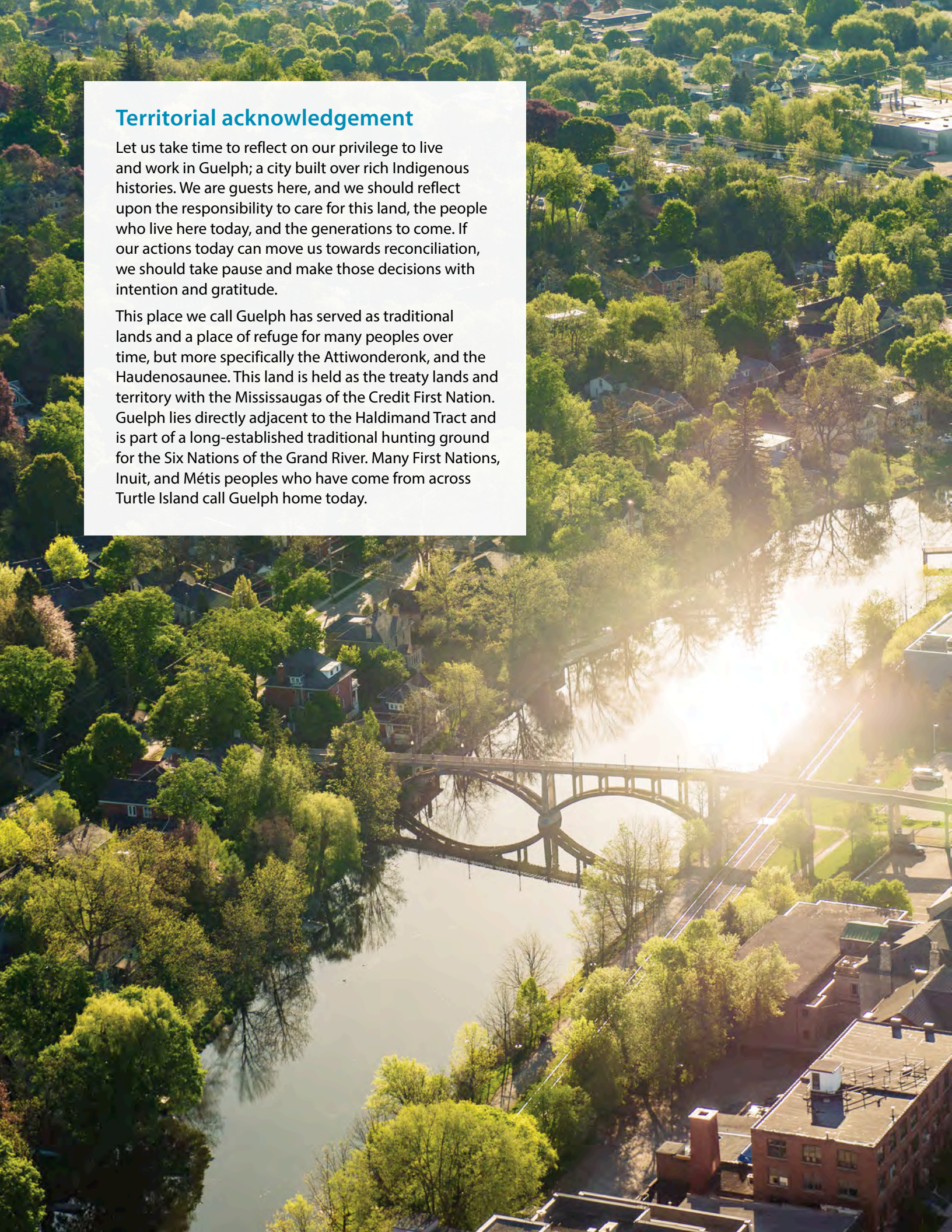
City of Guelph **Equity and Anti-racism** Action Plan



Territorial acknowledgement

Let us take time to reflect on our privilege to live and work in Guelph; a city built over rich Indigenous histories. We are guests here, and we should reflect upon the responsibility to care for this land, the people who live here today, and the generations to come. If our actions today can move us towards reconciliation, we should take pause and make those decisions with intention and gratitude.

This place we call Guelph has served as traditional lands and a place of refuge for many peoples over time, but more specifically the Attiwonderonk, and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands and territory with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Guelph lies directly adjacent to the Haldimand Tract and is part of a long-established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have come from across Turtle Island call Guelph home today.



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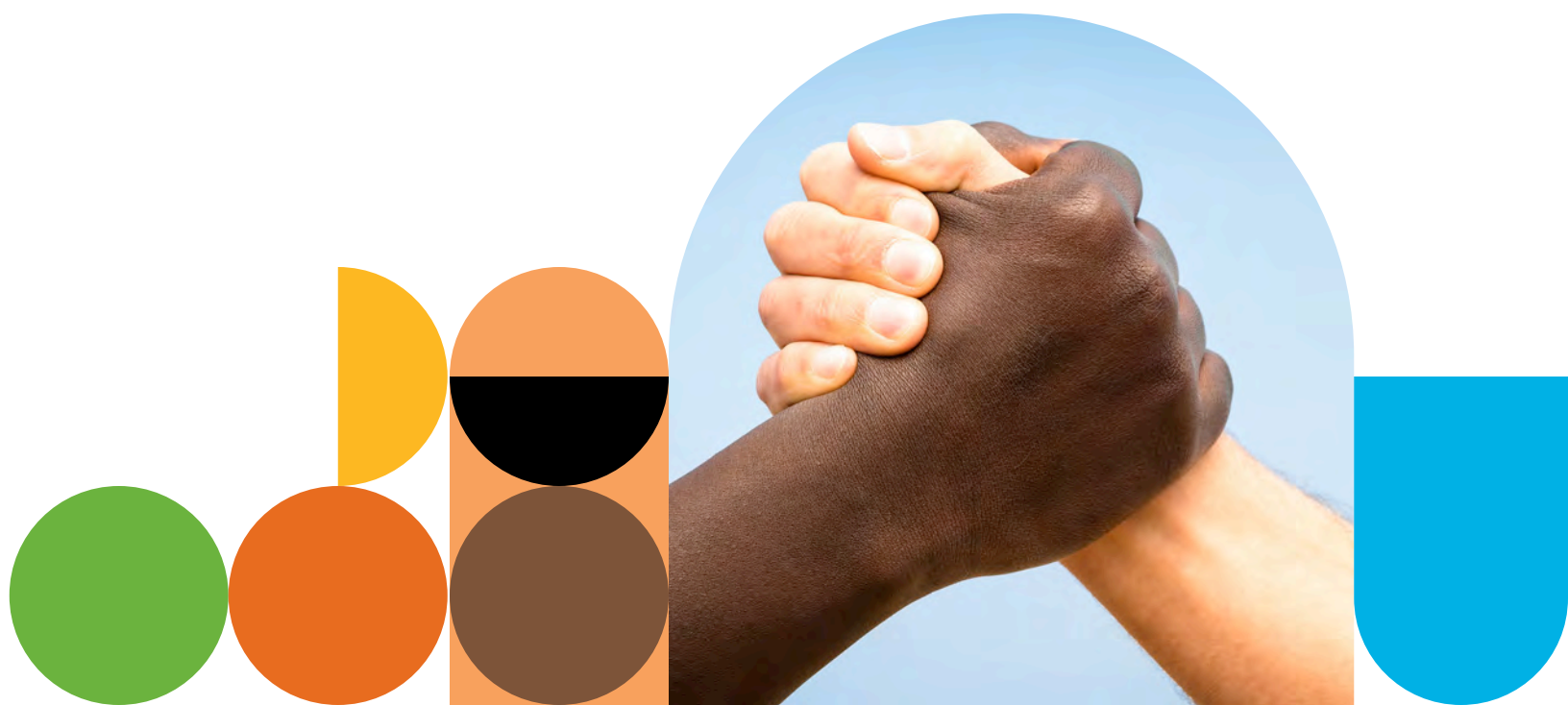
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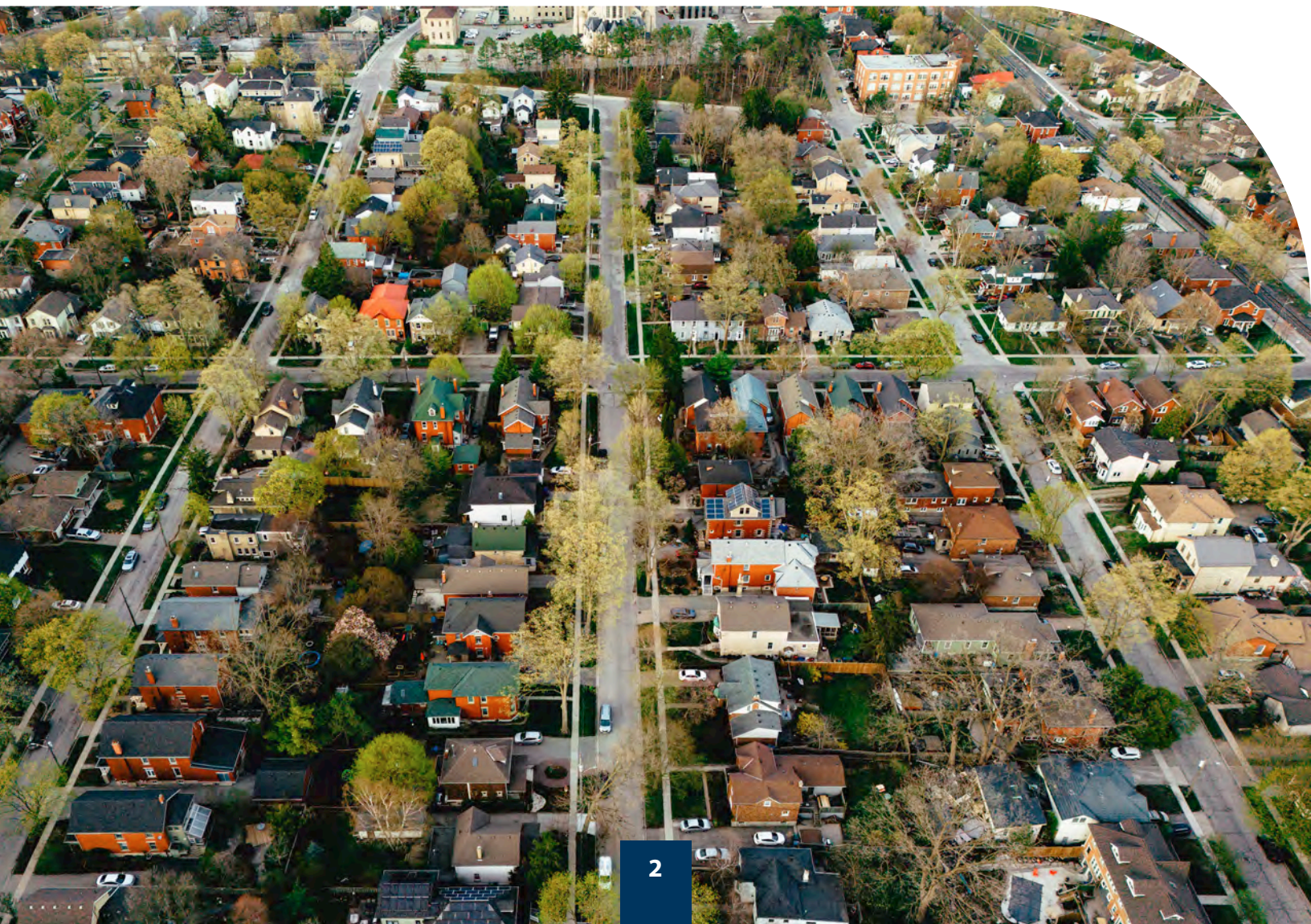
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Purpose

Equity and inclusion are foundational to building sustainable cities where individuals from all backgrounds have the right and opportunity to fully participate in social, economic, political, and cultural life. Municipalities play a leading role in this work by deepening their understanding of community perspectives and implementing practices that positively impact residents.

As part of the City of Guelph's commitment to fostering a more just and equitable society, this report presents an Equity and Anti-Racism Action Plan. The plan outlines strategic steps to address systemic inequities and dismantle structures of oppression within municipal systems. It reflects a proactive approach to embedding equity into governance, service delivery, and community engagement—ensuring that all residents have fair access to opportunities and resources that support their ability to thrive.



City of Guelph Foundations

This Equity and Anti-Racism Action Plan is based on existing guiding commitments for Guelph. The Community Plan, the Canadian Commission United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (CCUNESCO) Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CIM), and the Equity Lens through the Future Guelph Strategic Plan 2024–2027.

Community Plan “We are community” Guiding Principles

In 2021, City staff reconvened the Community Plan in response to world events and a growing call for action. The additional pillar “We are community” was developed with a focus on anti-racism. This addition to the Community Plan was created through many months of intentional learning and unlearning and presented to Council and adopted in February 2022.

Collaborating with the Community Advisors’ Circle, the City established guiding principles to direct efforts in eliminating racism and colonialism embedded within municipal systems. Community conversations made it clear that a more ambitious, immediate, and essential approach to equity and anti-racism was needed. These guiding principles emphasize the importance of impact over intent and reflect the City’s commitment to advancing equity and setting a standard for the elimination of systemic racism.

In summary, the guiding principles are as follows:

- Build relationships with those who have been historically marginalized and erased.
- Recognize the urgency of equity and anti-racism work.
- Demonstrate respect in all aspects of our work.
- Mitigate harm through intentional and informed actions.
- Create safe and brave spaces for dialogue, reflection, and growth.
- Let community guide the direction and priorities of our work.
- Hold in trust the knowledge shared through stories and lived experiences, alongside data.

Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities

In January of 2021, the City became an official signatory of CCUNESCO’s CIM. The main objective of the coalition is to improve practices for social inclusion, establish policies to eradicate racism and discrimination, and promote human rights and diversity.

The [10 commitments of the CIM](#) can be summarized into three major focus areas:

1. Promoting Equity and Inclusion: This involves ensuring equal opportunities in employment, services, housing, and education, as well as supporting measures that promote diversity and challenge discrimination.
2. Combating Racism and Discrimination: This includes increasing vigilance against racism, monitoring and reporting on discrimination, supporting victims, and encouraging non-discriminatory practices in policing and other institutions.
3. Engaging and Empowering the Community: This focuses on involving community in anti-racism initiatives, giving them a voice in decision-making, and fostering respect and appreciation for cultural diversity, including the inclusion of Indigenous peoples.

Holding these guiding principles of the Community Plan and the Common Commitments of the CCUNESCO’s CIM, the City is formalizing an Equity and Anti-Racism Action Plan that prioritizes social inclusion, equity, and diversity in municipal governance.

Equity Lens

With a renewed strategic plan, Future Guelph: Strategic Plan 2024-2027, the commitment to equity was firmly embedded in strategic initiative 5.3 ‘remove barriers by integrating Guelph’s Equity Lens into everything we do’. By using the equity lens in advance of service, policy and program changes and reviews we seek to broaden our view and understanding of where and how racism, inequities and barriers may exist and to remove them.

Action Plan

The City of Guelph continues to strive to create environments which actively work towards equity and inclusion for all people. This action plan outlines three major focus areas essential for moving our city forward: promoting equity and inclusion, combating racism and discrimination, and engaging and empowering the community.

These focus areas form the foundation of the City's commitment to ensuring that all residents—regardless of background—have equitable access to opportunities and resources that support a vibrant, cohesive community. By prioritizing equity and inclusion, the City aims to create spaces where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully in civic life.

In tackling the pervasive issues of racism and discrimination, we acknowledge the need for deliberate and sustained actions to dismantle systemic barriers that exist in municipal systems. This work is essential to fostering an environment that embraces all identities, promotes equity, and ensures that every resident feels respected, included, and empowered.

Finally, engaging and empowering the community remains paramount. By fostering dialogue, encouraging collaboration, and supporting active participation, the City can build trust and mutual understanding. This approach ensures that diverse voices are meaningfully included in decision-making processes that shape our collective future.

The Community Plan Guiding Principles provide direction for how this work should be approached and implemented. They emphasize the importance of prioritizing impact over intent, recognizing that the outcomes of actions are more critical than the intentions behind them. This focus ensures that efforts are aligned with community needs and genuinely contribute to positive change.

By fostering an environment of inclusion and support, the City aims to empower individuals to share their voices, expertise, and lived experiences. This participatory approach helps ensure that policies, programs, and actions are responsive, relevant, and rooted in community realities.

Applying the Equity Lens to all we do in advance of review and creation of policy, programs and services will ensure that key questions are asked and addressed:



Identify clear goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes for service/policy/program.



Engage community for guidance and understanding on benefits and burdens in policy, program, or service.



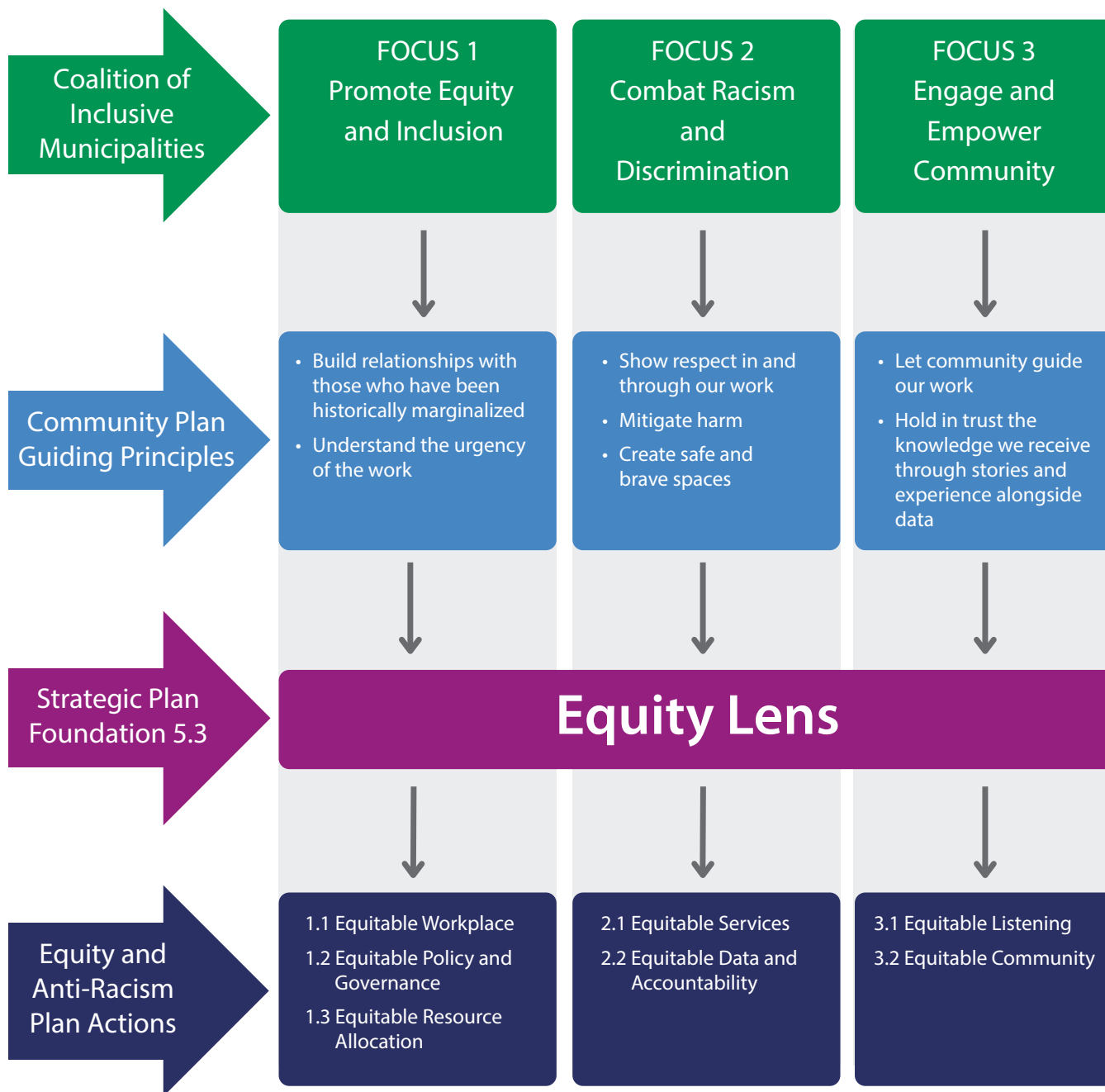
Identify benefits and burdens on communities by a given decision, as well as unintended consequences, so that mitigation strategies can be developed.



Develop tools for successful implementation and evaluation of impact.



Figure 1: Flow chart of equity and anti-racism action plan.



Building on the foundational commitments made, the following action plan expands on the achievements that have already been realized and outlines a clearer direction for future initiatives by highlighting key focus areas, priorities and associated actions.

Focus 1

Promote Equity and Inclusion



1.1 Equitable Workplace Culture

Equitable workplaces foster creativity, drive innovation, enhance collaboration and increase productivity. Employees who feel safe and valued in their workspace are more likely to be more effective, efficient and contribute more. Creating a more equitable workplace shows our commitment to staff well-being, safety and success.

The following are areas of action that support the priority of an equitable workplace culture:

- Encourage employees to share their experiences, fostering empathy and understanding.
- Develop an Inclusive Workplace Action Plan by leveraging strong inclusion scores and employee feedback to create a detailed plan in consultation with stakeholders.
- Foster psychological safety by creating an environment where employees feel safe and can contribute authentically.
- Cultivate a culture of respect, where every voice is heard and valued.
- Use enhanced data analytics to identify areas for improvement and implement feedback mechanisms.
- Strengthening support and resources for Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to lead initiatives and offer feedback.
- Celebrate each other to build stronger teams and drive organizational success.
- Implement leadership training and development of programs to train leaders about inclusive practices and ensure leadership diversity.
- Promote equitable opportunities for growth and development, ensuring everyone has the chance to thrive.
- Ensure accommodation enhancements are available to all job applicants and employees have access to necessary accommodations.
- Enact legislative changes quickly and efficiently to ensure compliance and adaptability.

1.2 Equitable Policy and Governance Systems

Equitable policy framework establishes policies that explicitly address systemic racism and promote equity across all municipal services and programs and actively work to dismantle systemic barriers and promote fairness for all communities. Policy and governance changes signal a long-term commitment to equity.

The following are areas of action that support the priority of equitable policy and governance systems:

- Ensure meaningful participation and representation of diverse community members, including those from marginalized and underrepresented groups, through inclusive practices such as diverse appointments to boards and committees.
- Apply an equity lens across all municipal activities by regularly reviewing and updating policies to uphold equity and inclusivity, while proactively identifying and mitigating unintended harms.
- Conduct comprehensive equity assessments to uncover disparities and evaluate the impacts of policies on diverse populations. Use disaggregated data to identify specific needs and barriers, ensuring policies are responsive and sustainable.
- Foster cross-sector collaboration within and beyond municipal departments to address complex inequities. This includes building partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and other government agencies, and advocating for human rights and equity-based policies.
- Develop long-term strategies, frameworks, and tools that embed equity into all aspects of governance. Recognize that achieving equity is a continuous process requiring sustained leadership and commitment.

1.3 Equitable Resource Allocation

Equitable Resources allocation builds resilient communities. Allocating resources to improve physical infrastructure, such as transportation, housing, and public spaces, enhances the quality of life and resilience of marginalized communities. Equitable allocation of municipal resources involves ensuring that all community members have access to necessary services and opportunities, particularly marginalized or underserved populations.

The following are areas of action that support the priority of equitable resource allocation:

- Reflect the priorities of diverse communities through intentional and equitable resource allocation.
- Use disaggregated data to assess community needs and ensure resource allocation is guided by evidence rather than assumptions.
- Conduct assessments to identify the unique needs of diverse communities within the municipality and reveal disparities in service access and delivery.
- Ensure those involved in resource allocation understand the cultural dynamics and historical contexts of the communities they serve, helping to recognize and value diverse perspectives.
- Collaborate with local organizations, non-profits, and community groups that support marginalized populations to enhance outreach and ensure resources are effectively distributed to where they are needed most.
- Support programs and policies that provide financial assistance and access to essential services, alongside strategic investments that empower community members and strengthen resilience to economic challenges.
- Adopt equity-based frameworks that embed equity into decision-making processes, such as budgeting and capital prioritization, to ensure resource allocation equitably reflects the needs of marginalized communities.
- Incorporate equity principles into resource allocation strategies to promote fair outcomes for all community members, especially those who have been historically marginalized.



Focus 2

Combat Racism and Discrimination



2.1 Equitable Services

Equitable and inclusive services involve two interconnected components: accessibility and inclusivity.

Accessibility ensures we focus on designing services that can be easily accessed and used by people with a range of physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. Inclusivity focuses on ensuring services are available and welcoming to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, language, cultural background, or other factors.

By designing accessible and inclusive services, we create an environment that truly meets the diverse needs of all individuals, promotes equity, and enhances overall community well-being.

The following are areas of future action that support the priority of equitable services:

- Comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act by ensuring all City services are accessible and inclusive for individuals with disabilities.
- Design websites and digital platforms that consistently meet accessibility standards and reflect inclusive practices to serve the needs of all users.
- Provide information and services in multiple languages, using clear, plain, and inclusive language to support comprehension and engagement across diverse communities.
- Reflect the diversity of the community in service staff to build trust, improve cultural responsiveness, and enhance service delivery effectiveness.
- Deliver cultural competency training to all service staff to strengthen understanding of diverse cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Training should emphasize respectful communication and inclusive service practices.
- Implement universal design principles and integrate assistive technologies and communication aids to ensure full participation for all individuals.

2.3 Equitable Data and Accountability

Equitable data and accountability are essential for advancing equity and inclusivity in our work. Equitable data enables us to develop a more comprehensive understanding of community needs and challenges by ensuring that all voices and experiences are represented and heard.

Increased accountability ensures that we establish measures to monitor progress, review and modify policies and programs to promote greater equity and inclusiveness, and provide open and honest reporting.

The following are areas of future action that support the priority of equitable data and accountability:

- Incorporate diverse voices and lived experiences throughout the data collection process to foster transparency, build trust, and ensure community relevance.
- Prioritize accountability and inclusivity in data practices to inform responsible policies that reflect the diverse realities of residents and support the development of equitable solutions.
- Establish clear guidelines and systems for collecting demographic data, lived experiences, and outcomes. Disaggregate data when relevant to identify disparities and utilize qualitative methods—such as surveys and focus groups—to gain deeper insights into equity-denied communities.
- Safeguard data with care and respect, ensuring contributors retain sovereignty over their information and that ethical standards are upheld.
- Collaborate with community organizations and academic institutions to strengthen data collection efforts, enhance credibility, and ensure relevance to local contexts.
- Implement a timeline for systematic equity evaluations across departments to identify gaps, systemic barriers, and areas for improvement in policies, programs, and services.
- Provide training and support for staff to conduct evaluations using tools such as equity impact audits and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+).
- Guide decision-making processes with equity-based tools—including equity lenses and impact audits—to uncover biases, improve resource allocation, and strengthen accountability for equitable outcomes.
- Develop a measurement framework with clear, measurable objectives and targets for equity initiatives. Conduct regular evaluations to monitor progress and assess impact.
- Report and publish data and progress updates on equity initiatives regularly. Highlight successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement, and ensure information is accessible in digital and inclusive formats.



Focus 3

Engage and Empower Community



3.1 Equitable Listening

Equitable listening is an ongoing process that requires commitment, empathy, and responsiveness. By prioritizing it, we foster deeper connections, address challenges effectively, and build a more engaged and resilient community. Ultimately, this creates a stronger, cohesive environment where people feel valued and empowered to shape their community. The City's Community Engagement Charter commits to inclusive and equitable listening and creating meaningful opportunities for community to influence City decisions.

The following are areas of future action that support the priority of equitable listening:

- Nurture relationships and build trust through inclusive listening—a critical component for any equity action plan. Inclusive listening and engagement can foster a safe space for people to express their thoughts and concerns.
- Remove barriers and build capacity for participation by creating environments where individuals feel safe and supported in sharing their experiences and grievances without fear of judgment or retribution.
- Motivate leaders to be accessible, approachable, and open to dialogue, reinforcing the value of community voices in decision-making processes.
- Create meaningful opportunities for engagement through community meetings, surveys, informal gatherings, and other accessible communication methods that invite participation and make individuals feel valued and included.

3.2 Equitable Community

An equitable, livable city is one where there is economic opportunity, social cohesion and quality of life. It is a place where there are spaces and environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and has the opportunity to participate fully.

The following are areas of future action that support the priority of equitable community:

- Foster a business environment by creating opportunities for equity-denied individuals and communities to participate in and benefit from economic activities.
- Support small and medium-sized businesses, especially those owned by equity-denied populations, by improving access to capital, technology, and training to strengthen both economic and community resilience.
- Integrate an equity perspective into advocacy efforts to promote inclusion and help shape a more equitable and representative community.
- Promote a wide range of cultural activities and public arts projects that reflect the community's rich heritage and diverse identities, cultivating an inclusive arts and culture landscape where all residents feel represented and engaged.
- [Recognize that the arts, culture, and heritage sectors](#)—including performing arts centers, museums, galleries, studios, festivals, and community events—in enriching local knowledge, education, and economic development.
- Develop a long-term vision and strategic plans that engage a broad cross-section of community members, ensuring diverse voices are reflected in priorities related to inclusivity, representation, and accessibility.
- Invest in arts and culture resources that specifically support equity-seeking communities, particularly at the neighborhood level, to build a vibrant and inclusive cultural scene that celebrates community diversity.
- Ensure [equity in recreational policy and programming](#) to meets the needs of a growing and diverse population by maintaining affordability, improving accessibility, and offering a variety of inclusive options that reduce barriers to participation.
- Prioritize equitable access to green spaces, parks, and tree canopy in underserved neighborhoods. Recognize that planning without an equity lens can [disproportionately impact already at-risk communities](#), especially as land-use pressures increase.

A strong sense of belonging comes from knowing that experiences are recognized and valued within your community. When people feel seen and validated, they are more likely to engage with the community and contribute to its positive environment.



Conclusion

The City of Guelph is committed to building an inclusive, equitable, and just community. By prioritizing equity and inclusion, actively addressing racism and discrimination, and engaging meaningfully with residents, we are laying the foundation for a brighter and more unified future. Through our collective efforts, we aim to ensure that every individual has equitable access to opportunities and resources that support their ability to thrive.

As we move forward, we must build on past achievements, dismantle systemic barriers within municipal systems, and create a city where diversity is celebrated and every person feels valued, respected, and included.

This comprehensive action plan focuses on identifying and removing systemic barriers that hinder equitable access to City services. It emphasizes the importance of fostering a just and inclusive society where the rights of all individuals are respected and upheld. Through targeted actions, the City aims to reduce burdens on equity-denied communities and foster social cohesion across Guelph.





Glossary of terms

The City of Guelph uses the Government of Canada's [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#) and Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion [glossary of terms](#) for definitions and understanding of terms and phrases to better understand concepts of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism.

Assumptions

Something we presuppose or take for granted without questioning it. We accept these beliefs to be true and use them to interpret the world around us.

Barriers

A physical, structural, technological, socioeconomic or cultural obstruction which can be obvious or subtle that prevents or imposes restrictions on members of society from accessing, using, or doing something that others can readily access, use, or do.

Systemic barriers

Obstacles that exclude groups or communities from full participation and benefits in social, economic, cultural and political life. They may be hidden or unintentional but built into the way society works. Assumptions and stereotypes, along with policies, practices and procedures reinforce them.

Disaggregate Data

Disaggregating data breaks down information into sub-categories of diversity, allowing for intersectional analysis and finding hidden disparities. Due to historical uses of this type of data, however, care must be taken around how this data is used, interpreted, and stored.

Diversity

The mixture of one or more characteristics and dimensions—such as race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, or social class—in a group of people.

Equity And Equitable Action

The aim of equity and equitable actions is to ensure that everyone has access to the resources and opportunities needed to produce equal results and benefits.

Equity means that a person's background, like their race, gender, or other identity traits—doesn't affect their chances of success in life, in their community, at work or prevent participation in social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of community.

Harm

Actions beyond those that cause physical harm that are reinforced by structural systems and existing policies, bias and stereotypes that make individuals or groups feel unwelcome, anxious or unsafe.

Inclusion

Inclusion is creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity. It is a mindful and equitable effort to meet individual needs so everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute to their fullest potential.

Intersectionality

Individuals come from a variety of life experiences, multiple social factors, and crossovers with many groups. It is this intersection of identities of who we are that affects how we experience the city.

Privilege

The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded to members of a dominant group in a society or in each context.

Stereotypes

Making assumptions and generalizations about an entire group of people in a group to be the same, without considering individual differences. These are often based on stereotypes, misconceptions and incomplete information.



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