



Highland Park District Council Equity Plan 2023

The Highland District Council (HDC) serves the 25,111 (2020) people living in the Highland Park Neighborhood. The Council's mission is to foster opportunities for the people who live, learn, work, and play in Highland Park to engage and connect with neighbors, businesses, local government, and to help build a more vibrant, welcoming, and safe neighborhood.

Community Engagement is the process by which community organizations and individuals build working relationships to foster a collective vision for the neighborhood's benefit.

Equity is a principle that is rooted in fairness and justice. In the context of this equity plan, "equity" is interpreted to refer to the fair and just delivery of district council services with an active effort towards inclusion of all community members in our community regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, sexuality, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, gender identity or age.

Equitable community engagement seeks to ensure that all voices are heard. This includes the voices of typically disenfranchised and marginalized individuals, as well as those with minority opinions. The HDC seeks to do this by reducing barriers to participation and engaging residents in meaningful ways. The HDC seeks to provide residents with the means and information they require so they, along with HDC directors and members, can provide support and guidance to the council and the city in decision-making that impacts the livability and safety of our neighborhood.

Our Values

We aspire to be a community that welcomes all, where people feel safe and empowered to participate in decisions that affect them.

Community growth: We will advocate for growth that positively affects community members. Such growth includes development of a variety of housing and business options to encourage people to live, visit and do business in our community.

Transportation: We will advocate for transportation modalities that make Highland Park safe and accessible for all users.

Community Engagement: We will host and promote a variety of activities designed to build a sense of community, welcome new residents, engage the whole community, promote relationship building, and build visibility for Highland Park and for the Highland District Council.

Our Goals



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1. Hold open and welcoming board and committee meetings.

- Post dates and times for all board and committee meetings, emphasizing that meetings are open to the public. Post agenda and minutes online well in advance of meetings and make closed captioning available at Zoom meeting. Post information about topics to be addressed.
- Use multiple venues to reach a broader audience including: social media, newspapers (Villager), signs at the library, community center and other local businesses. Specific outreach ventures might include:
 - Pop-up meetings at informal locations around the neighborhood.
 - Reaching out to specific groups in the community when the Council is dealing with a subject of particular interest to them.
 - Assure council directors attend community-based events in all grids.
 - Promote inter-grid activities and events.
- Identify and provide relevant communications to specific community leaders, businesses, organizations, and management of multi-family housing complexes who represent under-represented communities.
- Increase visibility and promote a welcoming environment for community members by posting signs directing visitors to the meeting room at the community center or the location where the event is being held, greeting community members, and including a statement by the HDC president or committee chair welcoming residents at the beginning of meetings.
- If services or accommodations are required to make attendance possible and more inclusive, and such services can be made available given advance notice, every effort should be made to ensure that they are available. Promotions should include information for how people may request services and accommodations.
- Include continuing education for board and committee members with topics pertinent to this plan.

2. Increase active participation in the Highland District Council.

- Identify organizations, especially volunteer groups such as faith-based, fraternal, and cultural groups who will promote awareness of HDC and involvement in its activities.
- Encourage and increase community member participation on committees; which can be stepping-stones to board involvement and broader civic engagement. More residents



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involved in committees will create a larger pool of potential leaders and board members. Encourage HDC committee community members to volunteer for community events.

- Create recruitment plans for committees and the board, including recruiting members from under-represented neighbors.
- Encourage/ Increase attendance at the Annual Meeting and participation in the election process which may require additional outreach to under-represented neighbors.
- Promote inclusion of district members on city commissions and committees.
- Identify and amend bylaws and procedures which might hinder the active involvement of Highland Park residents, especially the active involvement of under-represented neighbors.

3. In all operations, the Highland District Council will seek to assure:

Transparency

- Communicate clearly and honestly about what decisions have been made, giving as much advance notice as possible to members about changes, especially those which are going to affect them. This includes resolutions, goals, anticipated outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and identification of key decision-makers.
- Report the outcomes and process results of decisions and community engagement activities regularly and promptly.

Accountability

- Start engagement early and seek to understand how communities wish to participate in decision-making processes and engagement activities.
- Respect participant time and investment by communicating how their involvement affects the outcome of decisions.
- Officially review and discuss the Highland District Council Equity Plan outcomes and actions annually with the full board and annually with the Community Engagement Committee. Ensure committees implement SMART goals and review the effectiveness of those goals.

Inclusion

- Identify and remove barriers to participation in planning and decision-making.

Equity

- Ensure community decisions and activities reflect the active participation of all residents.



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Transformation

- Value communities as partners by committing to long-term relationships and ongoing dialogues which endure beyond any specific funding and project periods.
- Monitor the effectiveness of our engagement and partnerships and be open to continuous improvement based on evaluation results and stakeholder feedback.

Sustainability

- Ensure that this Highland District Council Equity Plan is maintained and promoted over time.
- Support a culture of mutual respect, learning, and development.
- Expand the strengths and assets of communities through training, data sharing, technical assistance, and other applicable resources.
- Build awareness of the organization.