

# Outline for Centering Equity and Anti-Racism in the Transition to the New Form of Government

Version 8.0 – June 21, 2023

## **Preamble:**

The Charter Review Commission created a set of three interrelated, proposed changes to the City of Portland Charter and referred them to Portlanders to consider at the November 8, 2022 election. The three proposed changes were approved by the majority of voters. The Charter Transition Project launched the day after the election with the charge of implementing the changes approved by voters. Equity and anti-racism, two of the City's six core values, are central to the implementation of the three Charter changes and other Council-led changes. This document seeks to explicitly describe how the project incorporates equity and anti-racism to its work.

## **Guiding Principles:**

The Transition process will be guided by both the City of Portland's Core values and the language provided by the voter approved ballot measure.

The City's Core Values include equity, anti-racism, collaboration, communication, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. A priority for implementing the voter-approved changes to the Charter is centering racial equity and anti-racism and not recreating oppressive policies, procedures and practices rooted in white supremacy.

The project seeks to implement the desired outcomes of supporting a participatory and growing democracy and an accessible, transparent, reflective, responsive, accountable, and trustworthy government.

Engaging a broad array of stakeholders is crucial to ensure that equity, anti-racism and the other City values are clearly demonstrated within the new form of government. Involving and centering the voices of marginalized communities throughout the Charter Transition process is of paramount importance.

City of Portland employees are an important stakeholder group for transition. The transition team will encourage staff to participate in the process and provide input. The voices and experience of employees who are in marginalized communities will also be centered.

Equity and anti-racism will be applied in an intersectional way, to ensure that the outcomes of the Transition will benefit all Portlanders and City employees, without inadvertently causing harm and further marginalizing anyone because of their identities.

The six core City of Portland values, especially equity and anti-racism, will be used to make decisions throughout the transition to resolve competing interests and prioritize courses of action.

The Portland City Council appointed the Governance Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) to advise on the implementation the voter-approved Charter amendments. Committee members' roles include soliciting public input and ensuring it is meaningfully integrated into the Charter Transition. One of the

Committee members' selection criteria was commitment to and experience with advancing the City's six core values, including equity and anti-racism.

Trust is at foundation of the project team and our work for the community.

### **Implementation of the Three Charter Changes**

The Charter Transition Project is incorporating equity and anti-racism in the implementation of the three Charter changes in the following ways:

#### ***Allow voters to rank candidates in order of their preference, using ranked choice voting (RCV)***

- RCV will allow voters to rank candidates in order of their preference, creating more opportunities for a diversity of voices and candidates to serve.
- Eliminating the primary in city candidate elections, advancing the goal that the electorate is more reflective of our entire community and that election of candidates occurs in the election where the most voters participate.
- Voter education, especially among Portlanders from marginalized communities that do not participate in the electoral process as much as white, affluent Portlanders, will be a key aspect of this implementation work.
- The desired goals of voter education are to familiarize voters with the proposed ranked choice voting methods, ensure that Portlanders understand RCV and can express their preferences, and increase participation of Portlanders from marginalized communities in the electoral process.

#### ***Create four new geographic districts, with three members elected to represent each district, expanding the City Council to a total of 12 members***

- The creation of four districts is an effort to promote equity, increase representation, and remove barriers to political participation for people who have not traditionally been elected to the City Council.
- The districting process must ensure that each district, as nearly as practicable, will: be contiguous and compact, utilize existing geographic or political boundaries, not divide communities of common interest, be connected by transportation links, and be of equal population.
- Also, no district may be drawn for the purpose of favoring any political party, incumbent elected official, or another person. No district may be drawn for the purpose of diluting the voting strength of any language or ethnic minority group. Additional criteria may be considered, consistent with state and federal law.
- Equitable engagement, especially among Portlanders from marginalized communities, will be a key aspect of this work.
- Using the most up-to-date demographic data, disaggregated by race, income and other identity categories to the extent possible, will be another crucial aspect of this work.
- Supporting the Independent District Commission, which represents our diverse communities and upholds the City's core values and the Charter Commission's desired outcomes, is also key.

#### ***Establish a Mayor-Council government structure with a City Administrator:***

- This Charter change will allow the City Council to focus on setting policy by transitioning day-to-day oversight of bureaus to the Mayor (elected citywide) and a professional City Administrator.
- The Transition Project will work to ensure the necessary physical, policy, and operational frameworks are and put them in place for the new Mayor, 12-member City Council, and City Administrator to conduct city business and operate in accordance with City Code and City Charter when the new elected officials take office January 2025.
- The Transition Project will develop a City Administrator position description that centers the City of Portland's core values, especially equity and anti-racism.
- The Transition Project will also operationalize the new Charter requirement that the Mayor advance the City of Portland's core values of anti-racism and equity in the new City Administrator's recruitment.
- Supporting the Independent Salary Commission to uphold the City's core values and the project's desired outcomes will be a key aspect of this work. A key consideration will be to ensure that the future salaries of the City's elected officials support the participation of Portlanders who have not traditionally been elected to the Council or as Mayors in the electoral process.
- Changes in the physical, policy and operational frameworks will advance equity and anti-racism by making it easier for Portlanders from marginalized communities to access their elected representatives and make community priorities more likely to be included in City policies and decisions.
- At Council's direction, the transition team will also create a proposal to realign the City's organizational structure to reflect the new governance model and report to the city administrator. The transition team will aim to build and perpetuate an equitable and anti-racist organization and work to build a better government rooted in breaking down systems of oppression and advancing Portland's equity and anti-racism goals, values and priorities.

**Engagement Framework:**

The project will create a comprehensive engagement framework to ensure that Portlanders and City employees have opportunities to participate in the planning and implementation of the Charter changes.

The engagement framework will center the equity and anti-racism values in the following ways:

- Use the Charter Commission's Community Engagement Framework as its foundation
- The GTAC will advise and support the development of a community engagement plan, and work to ensure that community voices are heard in the process. The GTAC and the community engagement process will contribute to centering racial equity and anti-racism in the transition project.
- Elevate the community public comment and priorities learned throughout the charter review engagement process.
- Create opportunities for City employees to provide input on the implementation of the three Charter changes.

## **Project Implementation Principles and Strategies:**

Implementation principles:

The following principles will guide the implementation of the transition:

- Center community and stakeholder voices, encouraging and enabling meaningful interaction with the project through engagement efforts. Focus on the voices of Portlanders from marginalized communities.
- Create a space where new ideas are welcome, particularly from people from communities that have traditionally been cut out of decision-making, both external and internal to the City.
- Engage purposefully, focusing on honest and transparent communication and engagement where it is feasible.
- Ensure that employees, including those who do not work on computers all day participate in Charter Transition implementation.
- Remain committed to the core values of the City and the language provided by the voter approved ballot measure.
- Cultivate a Charter Transition team with diverse perspectives and keep our collective minds open to new ways of operating

Implementation Strategies

The following are some of the strategies that the project will use to implement equitable concepts:

1. Use the City of Portland's Core Values and the language provided by the voter approved ballot measure as the metrics to evaluate options when the transition team and the Mayor's Office and Council Offices are not aligned on a decision. The final decisions will strive to achieve the best balance between values, desired outcomes, political realities, and limited capacities that move the Transition Project closest to equitable outcomes.
2. Intentionally recruit and retain Black, Indigenous, people of color and people with disabilities into vacant positions on the Charter Transition Team.
3. Create meaningful engagement with stakeholders who have the least access to privilege and power by committing the significant time resources to non-traditional engagement methods that may require more effort.

## **Evaluation framework:**

The language provided by the voter approved ballot measure and the transition goals, objectives and desired outcomes act as the evaluation framework for the transition. The team will work alongside Council offices and stakeholders to create the methodology and tools used to measure the success of the three Charter amendments implementation and the City Organization and Future Improvements plan. The team acknowledges that a complete transition is a longer-term project, beyond the scope of the Transition Plan, better assessed in a longitudinal way, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators and success measures.