



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: March 21, 2022

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**SUBJECT:** An Introduction to Markham’s Updated Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan

**PREPARED BY:** Joanne Kinya Baker (Diversity Equity and Inclusion Specialist) and Mona Nazif (Senior Manager, Human Resources)

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT the staff report dated March 21, 2022, titled “An Introduction to Markham’s Updated Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan” be received; and,
2. THAT the introduction to the updated Diversity Action Plan and to the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan be reviewed; and,
3. THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity for members of Council to review the emerging values, guiding principles and areas of focus coming out of the community consultations and online survey supporting the update of the City’s Diversity Action Plan and the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan. Recommendations associated with the action plans will be reviewed with Council later this spring.

**BACKGROUND:**

Diversity is a key strength of the City of Markham and diversity drives the municipality’s vibrancy, success and innovation. In recognition of this important value, the updating of the City’s Diversity Action Plan, *Everyone Welcome*, is embedded in the City’s strategic plan, *Building Markham’s Future Together*. With changing local, national and international contexts, the time is right to embark on an update of the Diversity Action Plan. In reflection of the changing context and in support of the City’s Anti-Black Racism Strategy of 2020, an anti-Black racism action plan has also been developed. The purpose of both plans is to ensure that everyone feels welcome and included in Markham, has a sense of belonging and can live their best life in Markham free from barriers of racism, discrimination and access.

It is crucial that this plan that addresses bias, discrimination and racism towards Markham’s Black population lives as an independent plan based on the assessment of the community’s wellbeing, and data results. In Markham, we acknowledge that all forms of racism and discrimination exist, and this particular acknowledgement also supports the acknowledgement of the historical and ongoing disparities faced by Markham’s Black population.

The two plans have been designed to reflect the experiences and needs of the City's diverse communities. They build upon foundations already made over time, while also creating a pathway for ongoing actions to guide us as a city in our journey to equity and to support Markham to be a socially cohesive and inclusive community for all. A part of this journey entails building a shared language in the City, and this includes embracing a common definition of terms related to the work of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (see attachment on shared language).

We chose the symbolism of a tree to represent this process, because much like a tree, our success in creating equitable outcomes for our community require the right conditions for growth: the ability to adapt to an ever changing climate, strong roots and constant growth. Just like it sheds leaves and grows fruit, the tree is a strong metaphor for change, and our community is changing.

Through a request for proposal and a rigorous vetting process, the City partnered with the Diversity Institute (part of the Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University) to assist in the building of these plans. Led by Dr. Wendy Cukier, the Diversity Institute is an action oriented research centre that utilizes evidence based approaches to advance diversity and inclusion strategies which was a fitting compliment to the City's desired approach.

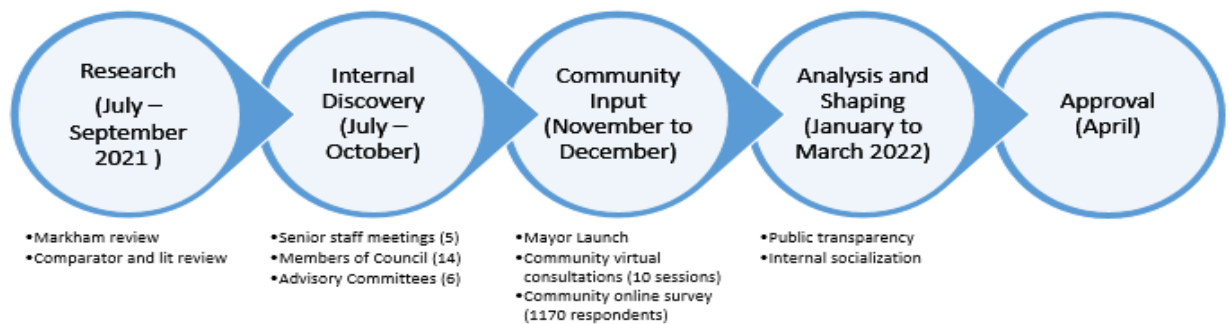
The plans are being anchored in both the four pillars of City's strategic plan *Building Markham's Future Together* as well as in the vision of *the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CIM)*, of which the City of Markham has been a signatory since 2009. CIM invites all Canadian municipalities to take concrete steps to build a barrier free society in which everyone has equal opportunities to participate in its economic, political, social, cultural and recreational life and to reach their full potential. In addition, principles of shared and user friendly language as well as the use of key performance indicators for ongoing tracking and monitoring of progress will be features of the plans.

A number of tools and mechanisms were made available in the development of the two plans to ensure relevance, accessibility, anonymity and a safe space during the public consultation phase for the residents and stakeholders of the City. A range of options for providing perspectives included an anonymous online survey and a series of 11 virtual public consultations. All virtual public consultations included the availability of a trauma informed Counsellor during and immediately after each of the consultations as well as an attestation for aligning with respectful conversation protocols. Public consultations were available in Markham's top five languages (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil and Farsi) and on a targeted basis, American Sign Language was provided. Public consultations were made available for a wide range of personal and intersectional identities including: racialized communities; Black communities; immigrants and newcomers; Indigenous; 2SLGBTQ; religious and faith; performing arts; sports; Persons living with disabilities; community agencies; seniors; youth; economic empowerment and entrepreneurs. To ensure consistent understanding, participants were provided with material in advance of the sessions and this included background information of the Diversity Action Plan, shared language tools and an option to engage directly with staff

and consultants for follow up purposes. The online survey was set up to ensure that disaggregated data by identity could be captured where possible.

### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION/FINDINGS:**

The development of the action plans is following a roadmap of intentional activities from July 2021 to April 2022. There has been significant consultation including 25 internal discovery sessions, 11 public consultations sessions, and 1,170 online survey respondents. The development of the action plans is currently at the analysis and shaping stage.



### **City of Markham Strengths**

As evidenced by results of the online survey, the City of Markham has a number of strengths in place as a foundation for ongoing actions to support social cohesion and the City's journey to equity:

- >80% feel their neighbours treat them with respect
- >75% of respondents reported not being afraid to make a complaint to the City
- >75% of respondents reported feeling safe in Markham however,
  - ( 77% of women reported to feel less safe than 86 % of men (86%), and
  - racialized respondents feel less safe (75%) than non-racialized (87%)
- >60% believe that the City has made efforts to promote the awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion in the community
- 57% of total online survey participants said that City services are inclusive.
- 57% said they know how to contact their City Councillor
- 43% believe there are some opportunities to share ideas / feedback

### **Community Values**

Through the consultations phase, the community has indicated a number of values that they hold of importance. Specifically, the values of importance raised by the community include: acceptance; accessibility; accountability; ally-ship; cohesion; diversity; empathy; equity; fairness; harmony, inclusion; intersectionality, multiculturalism; openness; representation, respect; and transparency.

## Diversity and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan Guiding Principles

The following are guiding principles for the City that emerged through the internal (staff, members of Council, and Council Advisory Committees) and the public consultations and online survey:

- Fostering of **ally-ship** and social cohesion amongst communities
- Feelings of **belonging** are promoted in all City services, programs and initiatives
- There is representation of all communities in City initiatives with intentional effort for intersectionality
- Commitment to **developing** and **strengthening** community, institutional and broader public sector partnerships
- Fostering of **ongoing dialogues** with communities and commitment to education and awareness of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility
- **Inclusive** and **equitable** distribution of, and access to, services and inclusive communications that engage all Markham residents
- **Transparency and accountability** in all actions, including by collecting disaggregated data on community experiences

## Diversity Action Plan Update

The combination of internal discussions and public consultations (both virtual conversations and online surveys) resulted in the following nine community driven areas of focus. The community driven priorities are supported by goals, key performance indicators and recommended actions, and are aligned with the *Building Markham's Future Together* Strategic plan goals.

BMFT Pillar	Exceptional Services by Exceptional People	Engaged, Diverse, Vibrant, Thriving City	Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community	Stewardship of Money and Resources
Areas of Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service inclusion and accessibility</li> <li>- Community engagement and ongoing dialogue</li> <li>- Attracting, retaining and promoting diverse talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social cohesion and ally-ship</li> <li>- Inclusive recreation, arts, sports, trails and playgrounds</li> <li>- Inclusive entrepreneurship and business development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable and accessible transportation and housing</li> <li>- Community safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusive resource management and financial transparency</li> </ul>

## Anti-Black Racism Action Plan

Results from the online survey support the importance of an anti-Black racism action plan: of those surveyed,

- 68% reported experiencing anti-Black racism
- Only 38% are aware of City efforts to address anti-Black racism
- Only 18% know where to report incidents of anti-Black racism
- Only 13% agree that the City tries to engage with the Black community when developing services
- Only 8% agree that there is adequate representation of the Black community among City staff

The combination of internal discussions and public consultations (both virtual conversations and online surveys) resulted in the following nine priorities driven by members of Markham’s Black communities. The community driven priorities are supported by goals, key performance indicators and recommended actions, and are aligned with the *Building Markham’s Future Together* Strategic plan goals.

BMFT Pillar	Exceptional Services by Exceptional People	Engaged, Diverse, Vibrant, Thriving City	Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community	Stewardship of Money and Resources
Areas of Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Service inclusion and accessibility for the Black community</li> <li>-Community engagement and ongoing dialogue with the Black community</li> <li>-Attracting, retaining and promoting Black Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Promoting senses of belonging and allyship among Black community</li> <li>-Inclusive recreation, arts, sports, trails and playgrounds for the Black community</li> <li>-Inclusive entrepreneurship and business support for the Black community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Affordable and accessible transportation and housing for the Black community</li> <li>-Safety for the Black community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Resource allocation for addressing anti-Black racism</li> </ul>

In addition to the above priorities identified for Markham’s Black communities, the following shared understandings about anti-Black racism must be taken into account:

- Elimination of anti-Black racism must address systemic and institutional and interpersonal racism
- Acknowledgement that Markham’s Black communities are diverse and intersectional
- Acknowledgement of past and present incidents of racism as well as the development of long-term solutions for the future
- Ensuring opportunity for Markham’s Black communities to engage and provide input into City decision making and programming
- Ensuring that Markham public spaces are welcome, safe and inclusive for Markham’s Black communities

**Conclusion**

While the public consultations and online survey have provided a rich foundation of community data and perspectives, the information indicates a need for enhanced focus on a number of communities including Persons living with disabilities, Black, African and Caribbean communities and 2SLGBTQ communities. It has also been identified that further data and community dialogues are needed in with Indigenous peoples, religious

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and faith communities and gender minorities in order to build a more robust picture of priorities and goals.

There is momentum and motivation across the organization to participate in this journey, and we are already making intentional strides towards building a community that is rooted in social cohesion. The Diversity Action plan provides us with concrete ways and guideposts on this journey, and we are confident that this journey will be one that supports Markham residents to live their best life, feel safe and have a sense of belonging,

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

While many actions will be dispersed throughout the organization, it is important to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to support the priorities and recommendations arising from the updated Diversity Action Plan and the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan. Funding requirements will be identified and approved as part of the City's annual budget process. Staff will monitor and report back to Council regularly on the status of the action plans.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

The City will continue its commitment to ensure staff have the required learning and education opportunities in the areas of unconscious bias, racism and systemic racism, equity and bias free recruitment to support the City's journey to equity and representation.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The Diversity Action Plan update and the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan and their recommendations have been intentionally anchored in each of the four pillars of the City's strategic plan *Building Markham's Future Together*.

### **BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Senior staff have expressed strong leadership, commitment and support of the priorities and recommendations put forward in each of the update Diversity Action Plan and the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan. Proactive opportunities are being provided to staff across the organization to review, discuss and understand the priorities and recommendations coming out of each of the action plans.

### **RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Joanne Kinya Baker

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Andy Taylor

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Draft Shared language document
- Anti-Black racism background documents:
  - o Markham's 2020 Anti-Black racism strategy
  - o Anti-Black racism Council resolution