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NEW “ONE COMMUNITY” EQUITY INITIATIVE LAUNCHES

“One Community” aimed at creating just & equitable community for all Washtenaw County residents.

WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI., **DATE** – **“One Community: Advancing Racial Equity in Ann Arbor & Washtenaw County”** is the newly launched equity initiative focused on creating a just and equitable community for all Washtenaw County residents.

Washtenaw County – and in particular the City of Ann Arbor - is one of the most economically vibrant, educated and healthy places in Michigan, but not all residents share in the prosperity that defines our quality of life. When we examine indicators of opportunity such as wealth, educational attainment, and job growth, we see that they are not equitably distributed throughout our region:

- Washtenaw County is the 8th most economically segregated metropolitan region in the country.
- There is a 10 year difference in life expectancy between African American and white residents in Washtenaw County, and a 16 year difference in life expectancy between Latino/a/x and white residents.
- 60% of African-Americans in Washtenaw County live in low-opportunity areas with limited job growth.
- Washtenaw County ranks 80 out of 83 counties in Michigan for income inequality.
- A 35-point gap on 3rd grade reading tests between African- American and white students in Washtenaw County exists.

“We know that government has played a significant role in creating and perpetuating these disparities,” **said Felicia Brabec, Washtenaw County Board of Commissioner.** “It is therefore our responsibility to move past documenting disparity and actually do something about it.”

“We value our diversity here in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County,” **said Chuck Warpehoski, Ann Arbor City Councilmember.** “And we firmly believe that our diversity should be celebrated, not determine how we fare in life. We can do better than that.”

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Spearheaded by government leaders from both the City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County, “One Community” is a joint initiative with the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#). GARE is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

“We know that in order to have an impact on racial disparity, we must have a clear focus,” **said Howard Lazarus, City of Ann Arbor Administrator**. “Diffuse strategies are rarely effective, and we know that addressing a challenge as difficult as structural racism will require concentrated and consistent effort.”

“Some might question why we would limit our focus to advancing racial equity,” **said Gregory Dill, Washtenaw County Administrator**. “And to that I would say that we know that what holds back African Americans in our community is also holding back people of all races. If we are successful in addressing the reasons that one group isn’t succeeding, we know all people will reap the benefits.”

Kicking off formally with City and County staff in late January 2018, the initial phase of “One Community” will focus on educating government leaders to become aware of where inequity exists in our community and the role government may play in creating or maintaining that inequity. After the educational phase; a plan to incorporate equity in community services, programs, hiring practices, service delivery model and interactions with the public and community partners will be developed.

GARE will be supporting the City and the County through this learning and plan development process. Formal communication to both the Board of Commissioners and City Council, as well as to the public, will be embedded into this process as well.

Learn how local government is working to create a just and equitable community for all at www.OneCmty.org.

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