




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager 

**DATE:** July 31, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Information Regarding the Creation of the Community and Business Equity Department

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I wanted to offer you more detail behind my recommendation to create a new unique, all-equity encompassing department called the Community and Business Equity Department. Considering last week's Budget Public Hearing comments as well as additional questions raised by all of you, I would like to share my rationale.

First, let me reiterate that creating this new department, devoted to all things equity-related, along with civil rights, will in no way diminish the existing offices. The Equity Office, Office of Civil Rights, and Small and Minority Business Resources (SMBR) will serve as distinct units within the new department. Neither Equity nor Civil Rights will be absorbed into SMBR. Rather, each of the three will continue to be distinct offices with their budgets and staff levels intact and will now be within a single department. The Equity Office staff will continue to be located at the Snell Building on East 11th Street. SMBR and Civil Rights will continue to move forward with their office relocations to One Texas Center which was already underway. Officers heading up all three units will continue to participate in Directors' meetings and maintain the authority and position they currently hold within the organization.

While there will be more work done to establish additional priorities for the newly created department, designated responsibilities will include:

- Advancing racial equity in departmental policies, practices and procedures and making recommendations to City Management to ensure city services are provided equitably;
- Enforcing federal civil rights statutes and the city's civil rights anti-discrimination ordinance; and
- Promoting and encouraging minority, female, and disadvantaged business owners to participate in and compete for contracting opportunities with the city.

As you are aware, this is not the only reorganization being recommended to achieve better efficiency and effectiveness while providing additional support to existing stand-alone offices. A great deal of thought went into each decision. As it relates to the Community and Business Equity Department, we did review peer cities across the State as well as outside of Texas to see if there were similarly inclusive departments. The answer we found is yes. By way of example, San Antonio has a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) department comprised of three divisions: Disability Access office, Office of Equity and a Civil Rights Division that receives and investigates discrimination complaints. In Dallas, the City of Dallas Office of Equity and Inclusion is comprised of four divisions: Equity, Fair Housing, Human Rights and Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs. Fort Worth has a Diversity and Inclusion Department comprised of three divisions: Business Equity, Municipal Equity and Civil Rights Enforcement. Nationally, the City of Atlanta Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion oversees civil rights enforcement in relation to employment, housing, and Title VI discrimination complaints. The City of Philadelphia's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion includes a variety of efforts to support racial equity and equity for people with disabilities, LGBTQIA affairs, and governmental procurement. Additionally, the City of Seattle's Office of Equity and Economic Inclusion supports Minority/Women Business Enterprise procurement programs, racial and social justice initiatives, Equal Employment Opportunity initiatives, and transportation equity initiatives.

There have been concerns expressed that the work currently underway by these offices would somehow be disrupted, redirected, subverted, or deprioritized. Far from it, this reorganization is designed to ensure that advancing equity and protecting civil rights are continued and amplified with additional support and resources. Expressed objectives and work plans for Equity, Civil Rights and SMBR will not only continue with no change but also be expanded.

I also want to assure you that the Director ultimately chosen to oversee the new department will hold the values of the entire department. We do plan to appoint an interim director, once the department comes to fruition, but will then work immediately to begin a national search to identify an individual who can represent the needs and priorities related to all units within the new department.

There have also been concerns raised about the timing of the change, given what is happening both at the State and Federal level on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In actuality, the creation of a strong department focused on all things related to equity and civil rights should solidify the City's stance on the value and importance that is placed on these critically important functions.

I've noted it before, but it bears repeating, my highest priority is to position our people and our work so that we are organized cohesively and support an integrated approach to problem solving and enterprise-wide thinking. Everyone within the new department will continue to have the full support and weight of the City Manager's Office behind them so that they can continue their great work and report directly to me any issues they may encounter.

I am happy to answer any additional questions you may have.

cc: CMO Executive Team  
Department Directors