

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 22, 2024

Item 2, Report No. 14 of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on April 22, 2024.

2. REIMAGINING BLACK FUTURES IN VAUGHAN: 2024-2031 ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACTION PLAN

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendations contained in the report of the Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer, dated April 16, 2024:

Recommendations

1. That the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan be approved for implementation; and
2. That staff be directed to monitor and measure progress and provide annual updates to Council via the annual updates on the overall Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 16, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: REIMAGINING BLACK FUTURES IN VAUGHAN: 2024-2031
ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACTION PLAN**

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council's approval of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, which outlines the City's strategic approach, action plan and key measures addressing barriers to the full and meaningful participation of the Black community in services, programs, events and general city life.

Report Highlights

- The Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan was developed in consultation with diverse Black communities in the City, the Special Advisory Committee and relevant stakeholders using online surveys, in-person and online focus groups.
- The Action Plan spans 8 years or two terms of Council, containing 3 pillars aligning with the Term of Council Strategic Priorities with approximately 25 Objectives, 58 Key Action items and accountability measures.
- The Action Plan takes a universal approach to addressing anti-Black racism, with 31% of key activities that address broad systemic inequities. The remaining 69% are highly adaptable and can be used to achieve similar outcomes with different communities (i.e., accessibility, newcomers, Indigenous, etc.).

Recommendations

1. That the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan be approved for implementation; and
2. That staff be directed to monitor and measure progress and provide annual updates to Council via the annual updates on the overall Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Background

Anti-Black racism is historic, pervasive, and systemic in Canada. It is both visible and invisible. It is entrenched into societal practices that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada. Anti-Black racism is micro (as seen in day-to-day interactions) and structural (as seen in laws and policies). While racism negatively impacts all racialized people, disparities between Black people and other marginalized groups clearly show that Black people continue to be more profoundly impacted by racism.

Through the development of Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (Action Plan), the City is committed to identifying and addressing barriers to the full and meaningful participation of the Black community in services, programs, events and general city life. The City, through the procurement process, contracted the Diversity Institute (DI) to conduct community consultations to inform and develop the final strategy, action plan and key measures.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021 \(Item 16, Report No. 29 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of April 26, 2022 \(Item 1, Report No. 16 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2023 \(Item 9, Report No. 48 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

Community Engagement

Community Consultation: Survey

The Diversity Institute (DI), in collaboration with the City, developed a survey focused on the following sections:

- Experiences with anti-Black racism in the City: to understand perceptions and experiences of anti-Black racism, as well as senses of belonging and allyship.

- Experiences with City events and services: to understand experiences accessing and using City services, as well as to understand participation in City events and the needs of Black entrepreneurs and Black business owners in the City.
- Experiences communicating and engaging with the City: to understand experiences receiving City information, channels used, and opportunities for improvement. Further, to understand perceptions of engagement – whether diverse Black communities believe that the City seeks their input and feedback on initiatives.
- Open-ended questions: embedded throughout sections to provide diverse Black communities with an opportunity to share recommendations for change related to services, events, communications, and others. The survey also included open-ended questions at the end of the survey geared towards understanding what the City does well broadly and what can be improved.

The survey collected demographic information including racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, whether participants are living with a disability, information on citizenship and newcomer status, age, religion, and languages spoken. This accounts for intersectionality, and where possible, DI will disaggregate findings to understand specific experiences and needs across diverse Black communities.

Community Consultations: Focus Groups

DI held a series of community conversations in 2023 with individuals from diverse Black communities in the City to understand current experiences and barriers to participation in City initiatives, as well as their recommendations for change. Sessions were held both virtually and in person to provide flexibility and consideration for individuals with different needs.

- March 12: General experiences of Black individuals
- March 14: Experiences of Black Immigrant individuals
- March 15: Experiences of Black Seniors
- March 27: Experiences of Black Youth
- March 28: Experiences of Black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- March 29: General experiences of Black individuals
- March 30: Experiences of Black Business Owners
- April 12: General Session
- April 20: Youth in-person session
- April 25: Adult in-person session

Session planning centred around the following efforts:

- **Intentional engagement and outreach:** In Phase 1 and Phase 2, DI intentionally and proactively reached out to organizations supporting diverse Black communities, as well as individuals part of the Black community, to share project efforts and objectives, and to encourage individuals to participate.
- **Widespread, accessible, and intersectional participation:** DI mitigated and addressed barriers to participation in engagement activities for diverse Black communities, including planning around other City events, providing virtual and in-person sessions, considering religious holidays and practices, and others. DI further ensured that sessions considered the intersectional experiences of the Black population and held sessions specific for Black immigrants, Black youth, Black seniors, Black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and Black business owners.
- **Respectful and solutions-oriented dialogues:** DI created safe and welcoming spaces for Black individuals to share stories, barriers, and experiences of anti-Black racism while focusing conversations on solutions and recommendations for change. This was fostered through pre-session communications on session expectations and goals, mindful facilitation tactics, and trauma counsellor support.

Participation

- Consultations/focus groups/1-1 meetings: across both virtual and in-person sessions from Phases 1 & 2, 81 individuals participated.
- Survey: 108 individuals completed the survey, and 83 of them were Black.
- A total of 81 unique individuals attended the sessions in Phases 1 and 2, which were held either virtually or in person. This figure excludes any repeat attendances within the same session and the presence of DI individuals. However, it does include people who attended multiple different sessions, such as someone who participated in both a virtual and an in-person session.

City Department Meetings

DI engaged with City departments to share information about the project, understand departmental responsibilities and activities, and seek staff and leadership perspectives on how they envision their department's work supporting diverse Black communities.

Following the drafting of the Action Plan, the DI re-engaged the various City departments to ensure the drafted recommendations aligned with the City's various responsibilities, plans, etc. This internal City review involved feedback from 14 departments to ensure that City staff remained informed and engaged, and the appropriate department had been engaged. This feedback was used to further revise the plan ahead of the public feedback campaign in a manner that ensures the City

remains committed to eliminating the biases and barriers that impact diverse Black communities.

Public Validation Workshops

DI held a series of virtual and in-person workshops in 2023 to present the draft Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan and ensure the community had an opportunity to comment on the plan components. In conversation with community leaders, diverse Black communities, and individuals who had previously engaged in the survey and prior consultations, DI hosted several collaborative workshops to share the draft plan and receive feedback:

- Sept 13: In person at the Civic Centre Resource Library with the public
- Sept 14: Virtual over Microsoft Teams with the SAC
- Sept 18: Virtual over Zoom with the public

Special Advisory Committee

Throughout the process, DI engaged and collaborated with the Special Advisory Committee (SAC) to share progress, findings, and the draft Action Plan for their review and feedback. In addition to the virtual validation workshop, the SAC was given additional opportunities to provide written feedback on the plan. The SAC was also provided space in the plan to include a message, ensuring their perspectives are integrated into the final plan.

Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan's commitment to addressing anti-Black racism is reflected in our comprehensive action plan, which has been shaped through extensive community consultations. These consultations revealed the diverse experiences and feedback of Black communities within Vaughan, underlining the critical need for an action plan that not only addresses anti-Black racism but also fosters meaningful connections between the City and its Black residents. This plan aims to continuously engage the community, providing pathways to build stronger, collaborative relationships that enable full and meaningful participation in the City's civic, cultural, and economic life.

The action plan is extensive, reflecting the depth and breadth of the issues at hand, as well as the City's commitment to long-term, sustainable change. The Action Plan takes a universal approach to addressing anti-Black racism, with 31% of key activities that address broad systemic inequities. The remaining 69% are highly adaptable and can be used to achieve similar outcomes with different communities (i.e., accessibility, newcomers, Indigenous, etc.). It spans across two council terms, approximately from 2024 to 2031, allowing sufficient time for the development and implementation of a detailed plan. This timeline ensures that the City can align the action items with

departmental capabilities, staff, and budget resources, while also accommodating necessary adjustments over time.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** By incorporating feedback and experiences directly from the Black communities in Vaughan, the action plan ensures that initiatives are grounded in real needs and perspectives, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance.
- **Strengthened Relationships:** The plan emphasizes building collaborative relationships between the City and Black communities, fostering trust and mutual respect, which are foundational for meaningful participation and inclusion.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The involvement of Senior Leadership Leaders and all departments ensures that the action plan is fully integrated into the City's broader strategic objectives, enhancing cohesion and impact across initiatives.

Risks:

- **Implementation Challenges:** Given the extensive scope of the plan, there may be challenges in aligning departmental capabilities and resources along with competing priorities with the planned initiatives, requiring ongoing adjustments and flexibility.
- **Community Engagement:** Sustaining long-term engagement with the community may present challenges, necessitating innovative approaches to keep stakeholders involved and informed throughout the implementation phase.

Financial Impact

Through careful planning, budgetary considerations, and business case reviews, the plan will work toward ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to support its objectives.

Operational Impact

In developing the action plan, DI and the City's DEI team collaborated closely with key internal departments and leaders to secure buy-in and ensure the plan's actions were both relevant and feasible. This foundational work ensures organizational support and a clear understanding of departmental roles in advancing the plan's goals.

Upon approval of the Action Plan, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team will lead the development of the implementation plan, working with all City departments to ensure appropriate timelines for execution. This phase will involve providing support and working collaboratively with relevant stakeholder departments to identify necessary staff and budget resources to support the implementation of the Action Plan through the City's Business Case Review process.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The action plan thoughtfully includes key items that extend support to the broader initiatives of York Region, addressing areas like immigration and settlement that are beyond the City's jurisdiction. By aligning certain aspects of our strategy with regional efforts, we aim to foster a collaborative approach to systemic change across the region. This alignment ensures that our action plan contributes to a unified regional effort, leveraging our collective resources and influence to address anti-Black racism more effectively.

Conclusion

In summary, the approval and implementation of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024 – 2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, a comprehensive strategy designed to address anti-Black racism within our community, is recommended. To ensure the plan's effectiveness and its alignment with our long-term goals, we also recommend that staff be tasked with monitoring progress and delivering annual updates to Council as part of the broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan. Together, these steps represent a committed, structured approach to combating anti-Black racism, fostering a more inclusive and equitable community for all.

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Attachment

1. Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan.

Prepared by

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Ext. 8159.

An Nguyen, Project Lead - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Ext. 8164.

Approved by



Michael Coroneos, DCM, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and CFO

Reviewed by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager



Reimagining Black Futures In Vaughan

Addressing Anti-Black Racism
Action Plan 2024-2031

The Diversity Institute undertakes research on diversity in the workplace to improve practices in organizations. We work with organizations to develop customized strategies, programming and resources to promote new, interdisciplinary knowledge and practice about diversity with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, Indigenous Peoples, abilities and sexual orientation. Using an ecological model of change, our action-oriented, evidence-based approach drives social innovation across sectors.

Vaughan is a vibrant and prosperous community and one of Canada's fastest-growing cities. Home to nearly 345,000 people, its globally competitive economy includes more than 19,500 businesses, employing approximately 227,000 individuals. Vaughan traces its roots back to the historic communities of Concord, Kleinburg, Maple, Thornhill and Woodbridge.

This welcoming, diverse and forward-looking municipality is in the heart of York Region. Major city-building projects, like Vaughan's emerging downtown – the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre – and Canada's first smart hospital – the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital – as well as the 900-acre North Maple Regional Park, continue to generate momentum and excitement.



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is currently home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.

AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge those who have gone before us. Over centuries, over generations, over the years, peoples of African descent arrived on Canada's shores and through Canada's ports – some involuntarily, others willingly when seeking better lives for themselves and their families. Peoples of African descent and continental Africans: as enslaved peoples, as displaced peoples across Africa's diaspora, as migrants and as settlers – we have survived. Collectively, we have made an indelible mark. Despite the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and over 400 years of enslavement, peoples of African descent have contributed to Canada's rich cultural and economic history. We have thrived. In solidarity, as members of Canada's African, Caribbean and Black communities, we fight against the impact and effects of structural and institutional racism that African continental and diasporic peoples face every day. In so doing, as African descendants, we honour our African ancestors, regardless of origin.

Message from the Mayor



We recognize that anti-Black racism is a deeply ingrained systemic issue in Canada, and our city is not immune to it. The diversity of the Black community in Vaughan is representative of Canada's dynamic mosaic of communities, and we are dedicated to addressing anti-Black racism together. One of the key components of our efforts is to engage in continuous and meaningful dialogue with diverse Black communities in decision-making processes. We also aim to identify and adapt City policies and procedures to reduce institutional barriers for communities. We recognize that progress is not always linear, and moments of learning, pain, compassion and reconciliation will accompany our shared healing journey. While our experiences on this journey may differ, they remain firmly intertwined.

As we strive to advance a municipality where all residents, employees, businesses and visitors are provided equitable and accessible opportunities to engage and participate, it is important to celebrate and recognize the significant contributions diverse Black communities make to Vaughan's cultural, economic and social achievements.

We recognize there is more work to do – and we are committed to doing it.

This action plan is a step forward in that commitment.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this project by voicing their perspectives and collaborating to develop recommendations for sustainable change. It is greatly improved thanks to your participation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven Del Duca". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steven Del Duca
Mayor, City of Vaughan

Message from the City Manager



The City of Vaughan is committed to forging connections and pursuing opportunities that foster an inclusive community that truly appreciates the diversity that enriches us.

We recognize that anti-Black racism is perpetual, pervasive and systemic in Canada, and we have created a strategy to challenge anti-Black racism in all its forms at the municipal level. The Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan highlights the steps the City is taking to improve municipal programs, policies, procedures and services to address anti-Black racism.

Thank you to the City staff who were involved with preparing this comprehensive plan. I also want to acknowledge the Special Advisory Committee, as well as the individuals from the diverse Black communities, organizations serving the diverse Black communities living in Vaughan and community leaders who participated in the engagement opportunities and gave valuable feedback to help inform this plan.

Addressing anti-Black racism is a key deliverable in our [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan](#) and essential to creating an active, engaged and inclusive community – one of the priorities in the [2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan](#).

As an award-winning organization for excellence in diversity and inclusion, the City takes pride in celebrating the many cultures that thrive in Vaughan. Collectively, the administration is working towards a shared vision that ensures Black community members and City employees continue to be heard, appreciated and valued.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri

City Manager, City of Vaughan

Special Advisory Committee

The City established the Addressing Anti-Black Racism Community Engagement Action Plan Project Special Advisory Committee to ensure the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan centred the voices and expertise of the diverse Black communities and organizations that support diverse Black communities. The Special Advisory Committee, made up of seven diverse Black community members, provided guidance and assistance on the various components and phases of the action plan development and content. The committee also shared insight into public engagement efforts as well as the objectives, key actions and accountability measures embedded within the action plan.



Dr. Jacqui
Getfield



Shernett
Martin



Cecil
Roach



Jumol
Royes



Olamide
Sadare



Dr. Elizabeth
Sinclair



Gary
Thompson

Message from the Special Advisory Committee

“Nothing for us, without us.”

The City of Vaughan is home to diverse African, Caribbean and Black communities. Our unique contributions have helped to build a vibrant and prosperous city where people from different backgrounds, identities and living experiences live, work and play together. We celebrate our contributions and achievements while recognizing that anti-Black racism exists and must be addressed and dismantled.

The Addressing Anti-Black Racism Special Advisory Committee was established to centre the voices, expertise and lived experiences of African, Caribbean and Black communities, and the organizations that serve them, as the City embarked on a historic project to address anti-Black racism and dismantle barriers preventing the full and meaningful participation of these communities in services, programs, events and general city life through the development of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan.

Comprised of Black community members and policy leaders with lived and learned experience and/or expertise, we aim to:

- provide advice on the project.
- facilitate community connections.
- advise and guide the community engagement process.
- provide feedback on the reports in each phase of the project.
- provide feedback on the recommendations and action plan.

To members of African, Caribbean and Black communities: We see you, we hear you. You matter. We are committed to ensuring your perspectives are included through continuous engagement and have advocated for the implementation

of an accountability framework that embeds transparency throughout all stages of the action plan while monitoring progress and holding stakeholders responsible.

It should be noted that addressing anti-Black racism isn't the sole responsibility of a special advisory committee or community members who courageously step forward to share their experiences and help identify and address anti-Black racism by improving City programs, policies, procedures and services. It's the shared responsibility of each and every one of us: the Mayor, Council, City staff, and all residents and visitors.

We cannot hope to effectively address anti-Black racism without listening to, learning about and believing lived experiences of African, Caribbean and Black communities, even when those experiences don't match our own. This requires empathy. It's a collective step we can all take towards reimagining Black futures in the city of Vaughan.

We hope you'll walk alongside us as we journey together.

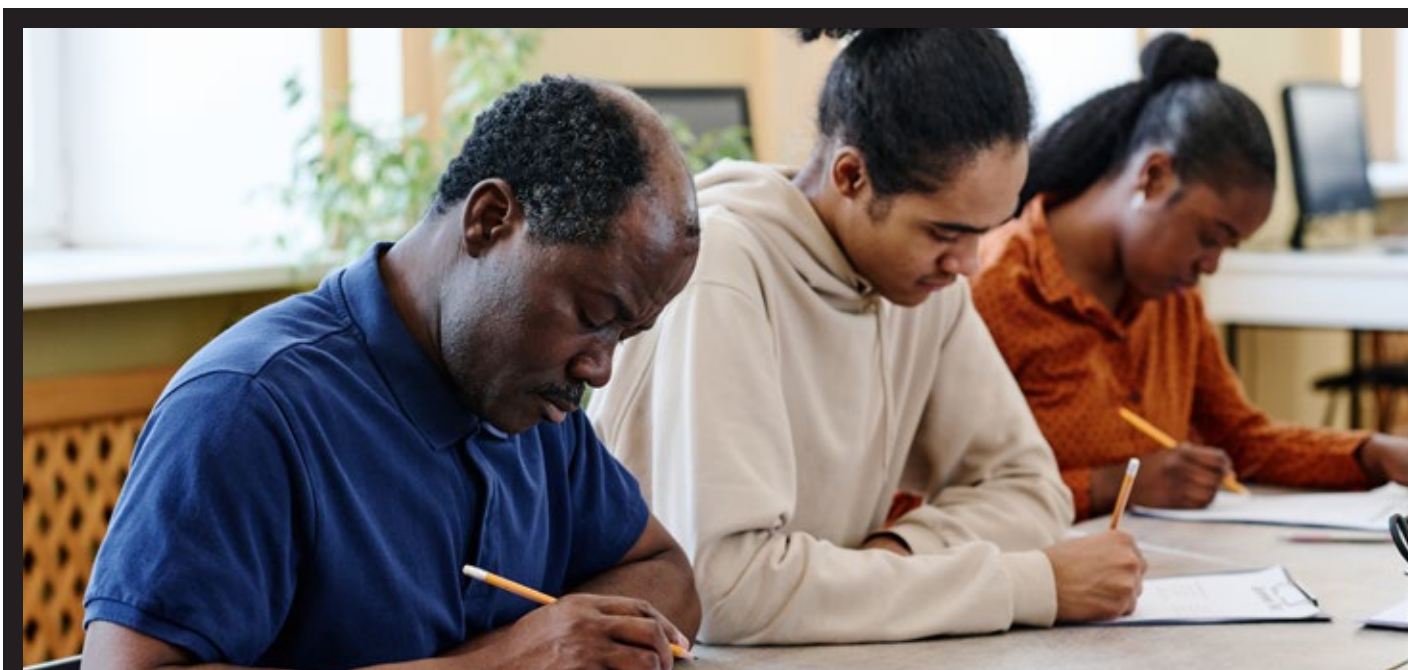


Community Profile

The Black community in the city, as part of Canada's broader mosaic, is a testament to the rich diversity and dynamic growth that characterizes our nation. Statistics Canada data from 2021 paints a portrait of a community that is not only expanding, but also increasingly contributing to the socio-cultural and economic fabric of the country.

GROWING POPULATION AND DIVERSITY

- In 2021, more than 1.5 million people in Canada identified as Black, a significant increase of 349,000 since 2016.¹ This growth underlines the expansion of diverse Black communities.
- The Black population in Canada reported more than 300 ethnic or cultural origins, with the most frequently reported being African, Jamaican, Haitian and Canadian.² This diversity enriches our city with a multitude of perspectives, traditions and experiences.





EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- 32.4 per cent of the Black population aged 25 to 64 years held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2021, an increase from 27 per cent in 2016.³ This trend underscores the community's commitment to education and professional development.
- The educational achievements vary within the community, with 57 per cent of second-generation African-origin Black women holding a bachelor's degree or higher, significantly contributing to the intellectual and skilled workforce in the city.⁴

LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

- The participation of the Black community in the labour market is robust, with about two-thirds (66.6 per cent) of Black Canadians aged 15 years and older being employed as of December 2022.⁵ This is a testament to the community's strong work ethic and desire to contribute meaningfully to the economy.

AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

- The Black population is notably younger than the total population in Canada, with a median age of 30.2 years.⁶ This youthful demographic is a valuable asset, bringing energy, innovation and a forward-looking perspective to the city.

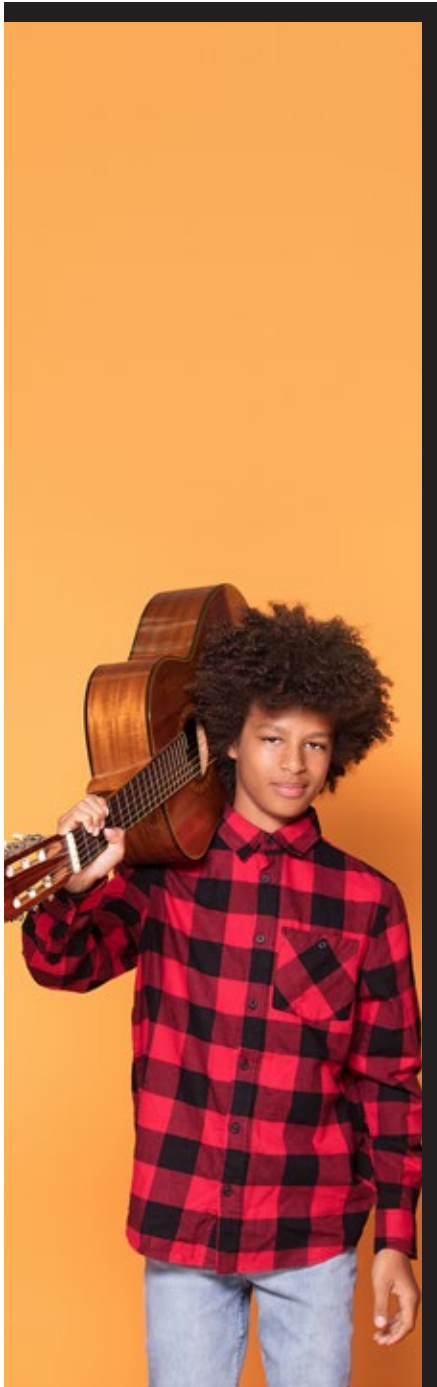


HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- The contributions of the Black community to Canada's heritage are long-standing and significant, dating back to the early 1600s with figures like Mathieu Da Costa, who is said to have interpreted for French and Dutch traders and explorers in the early 17th century.⁷ This rich history is a cornerstone of our nation's story.

BLACK CANADIANS IN THE MILITARY

- Black individuals have a rich and long-standing history of serving in the military, dating back to the early settlement and conflicts in what is now Canada. They have served in different military actions, including the War of 1812.⁸ They have been part of the Canadian Armed Forces in various capacities, overcoming challenges and discrimination, especially during earlier periods. Their contributions span multiple conflicts and peacekeeping missions. Notably, during the First World War and Second World War, Black Canadian soldiers served with distinction, although they often faced segregation and limited opportunities.⁹ Over time, their perseverance and dedication helped pave the way for more inclusive policies in the Canadian military, reflecting the country's growing recognition of diversity and equality within its armed forces.



SPORT

- Black Canadians have excelled in sports, breaking barriers and achieving remarkable success. Marita Payne-Wiggins, a track and field athlete, and her son Andrew Wiggins, a professional basketball player, are among the many inspirational figures.¹⁰ Their association with the city highlights the homegrown talent and athletes who achieve national and international acclaim. Moreover, Black Canadians have played a crucial role in advocating for diversity and inclusion in sports, extending impact beyond athletic accomplishments.

ARTS

- Black Canadian artists have made significant contributions to the arts, including visual arts and music, where they continue to influence other artists and contribute to a legacy that resonates within and beyond Canada's borders.

LOOKING AHEAD

- The Black community in Canada continues to grow, with projections suggesting a doubling of the population by 2041.¹¹ This growth represents not just numbers, but an expansion of ideas, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

As we observe and celebrate the International Decade for People of African Descent, it is crucial to recognize and appreciate the multi-faceted nature of the Black population in the city. Their diverse backgrounds, educational accomplishments and active participation in the labour market are integral to the city's prosperity and vibrancy. As a community, we are committed to supporting and uplifting this vital segment of our population, acknowledging their challenges and celebrating their successes.



OUR COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSE BLACK COMMUNITIES

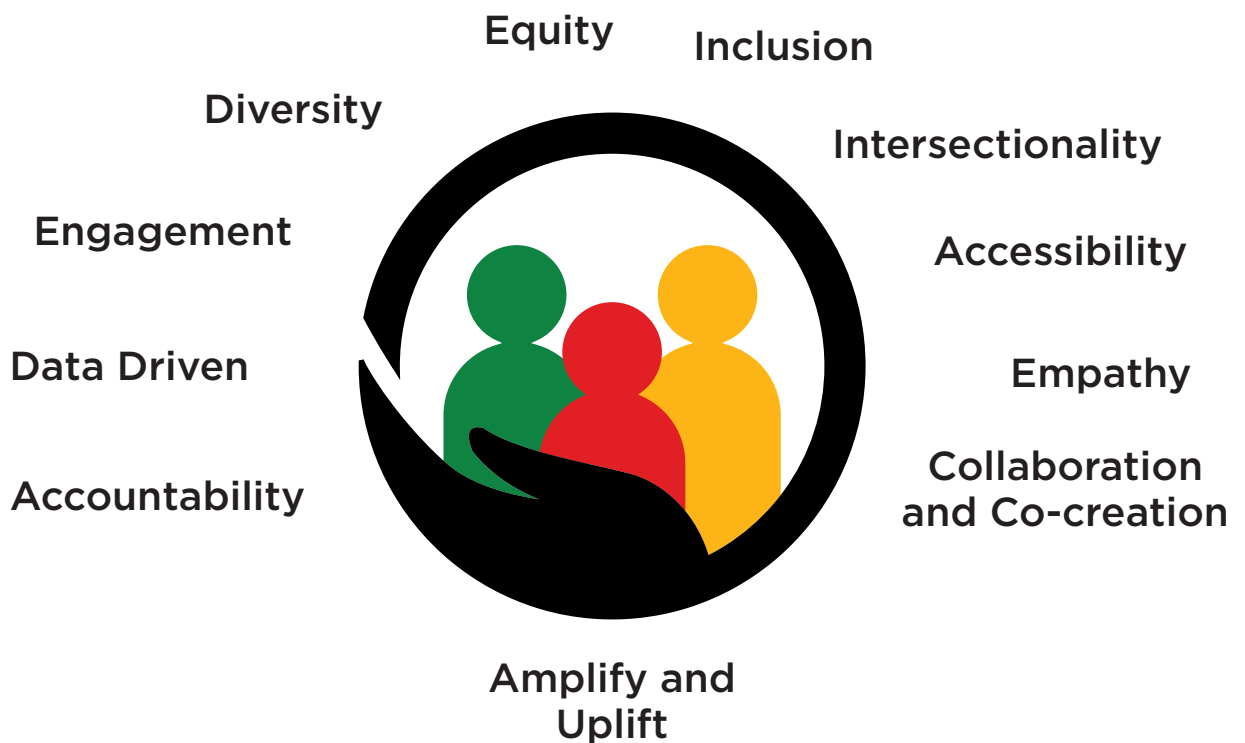
The city is home to a large, vibrant and diverse Black community with a rich history and culture. The community contributes to the growth and economic prosperity of the city through local Black-owned businesses and Black-owned organizations supporting community initiatives. Addressing and dismantling all forms of anti-Black racism is crucial for ensuring diverse Black communities are supported.

According to the Government of Ontario, anti-Black racism refers to attitudes, beliefs and discriminatory practices, among others, that are directed at Black individuals and communities.¹² This includes individual acts of prejudice, discrimination and racism, as well as racism that is embedded within systems, institutions and societal structures.¹³ Although the Black community may share common experiences of racism and discrimination, experiences may vary within the community given intersectionality and overlapping and compounded forms of oppression related to ability, citizenship, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion and other forms of identity.

The City is committed to identifying and dismantling barriers to the full participation of communities in City initiatives and fostering inclusive services, programming and events. In our efforts to ensure inclusive societies and communities, we must ensure that we do not overlook the specific and unique needs of different communities, particularly those who have experienced, and continue to experience, racism and discrimination. Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (the action plan) forms part of this commitment and reflects our ongoing effort to dismantle anti-Black racism and support diverse Black communities. By focusing on and implementing strategies aimed at intentionally dismantling systemic barriers, we lay a foundation for creating more equitable and inclusive societies and communities for all.

Our Shared Values

As part of the consultation process, diverse Black communities were asked to share the key priorities they wanted to see reflected throughout this action plan, as well as in the daily work of the City. These shared values represent important values that can be applied in the development and administration of City processes to break down barriers and promote belonging. The shared values below are intended to give context to the actions throughout the plan and serve as a cornerstone of collaboration between the City and the diverse Black communities living in Vaughan.



Developing the Action Plan

Addressing anti-Black racism is outlined as a key priority in the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026, and the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan further aligns with the strategic priorities of the City's 2022-2026 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan. The action plan provides key actions for supporting diverse Black communities that fall within the City's jurisdiction and was built in collaboration with diverse Black communities in the city. Their insights, perspectives and recommendations have shaped the objectives, key actions and accountability measures within the action plan. Community engagement was central to the action plan's development, including the following efforts.



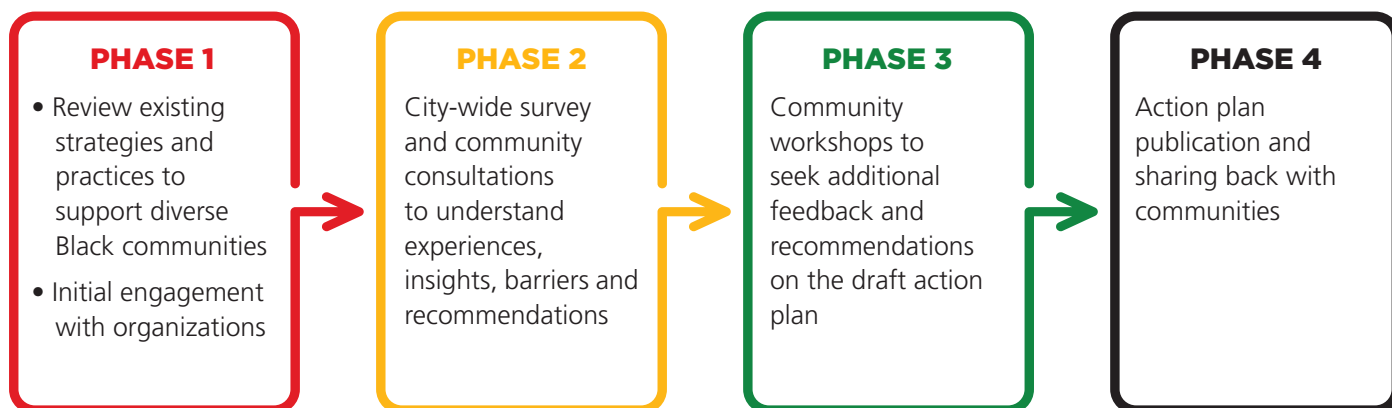
Community Engagement

CITY-WIDE SURVEY

A comprehensive survey was used to understand community perspectives on anti-Black racism in the city, experiences with City events and services, City communications, business development and other areas of focus. The findings from the survey were used to develop the objectives, key actions and accountability measures embedded within the action plan.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Community consultations were held with diverse Black communities, including Black seniors, youth, newcomers, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and business owners. Sessions aimed to understand experiences of anti-Black racism, as well as experiences accessing and using City services, events, communication materials and channels, and others. Sessions focused on building recommendations and determining ways the City can support diverse Black communities. Following a draft of the action plan, diverse Black communities participated in a series of workshops to review the proposed objectives, key actions and accountability measures to provide additional feedback and insights.



General Accountability Framework

Implementing the action plan includes creating a general accountability framework designed to foster transparency, uphold responsibility and monitor progress.

MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

The Mayor and Members of Council will provide oversight of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, and receive annual updates from the City Manager on the municipality's progress toward the action plan's key priorities and objectives.

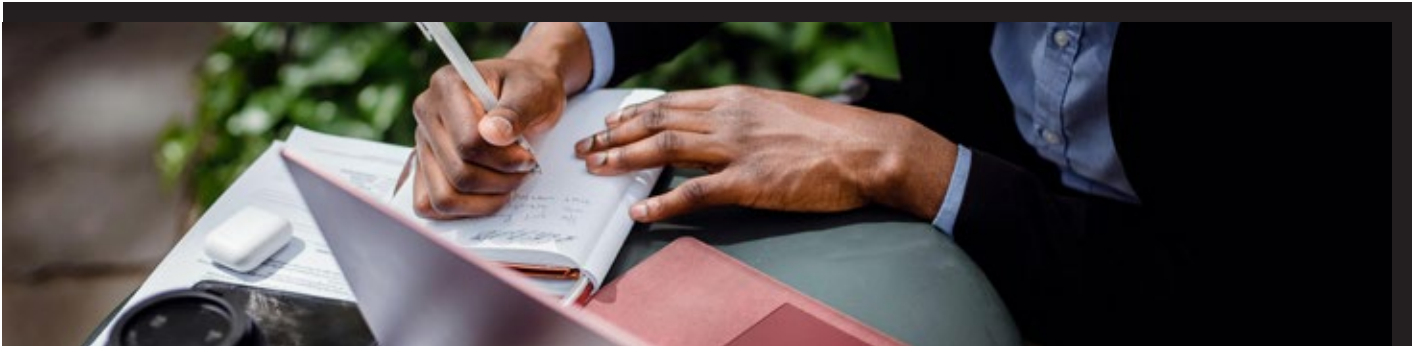
SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM – EXECUTIVE

The Senior Leadership Team – Executive will lead the accountability for the action plan at the municipal level, and will receive and review quarterly reports on the progress of the action plan's objectives and key activities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) OFFICE

The Diversity and Inclusion Officer will create an implementation plan as well as onboard senior leaders and Council to the action plan. The implementation plan will be used to provide annual reports to senior leadership and Council to highlight the progress and outcomes achieved.





INTERNAL AUDIT

The City's anti-Black Racism efforts may be subject to audits by the City's Internal Audit department.

UPDATED FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

A recurring theme heard throughout the community consultations was a request for a mechanism to review and resolve complaints, including those related to racism and discrimination. While the City currently has a mechanism for filing complaints (including a webpage to do so), there are opportunities for this system to be expanded in consultation with stakeholder departments, including the DEI Office. An updated complaints process should include clear policies and procedures that aim to improve services for the benefit of all residents, visitors and the public. The complaints mechanism should include provisions to identify complaints stemming from treatment that the complainant feels violates the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is recommended that the expansion of the current complaints process be determined using the City's business case review process and all relevant departments be consulted.

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM

It is recommended that the City forms a Standing Advisory Committee (SAC). This committee will advise Vaughan Council on issues faced by diverse Black communities and provide oversight and consultation on the implementation of this action plan. The SAC will help ensure all administrative processes and decisions are informed by a comprehensive understanding of community needs and aspirations. This proactive approach not only ensures inclusion and fairness, but also strengthens public trust and accountability. It is recommended that the committee be provided with an honoraria recognizing lived and learned expertise.

Commitment to Continuous Engagement

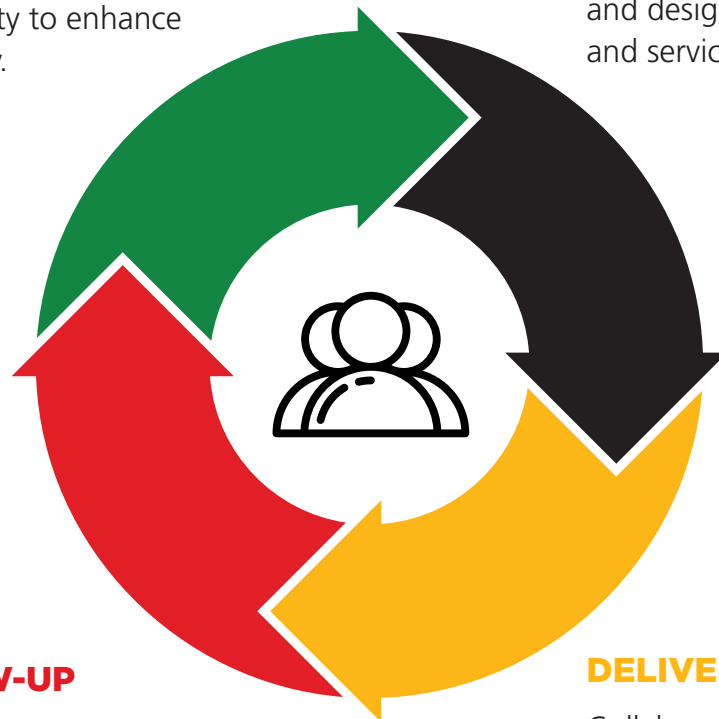
City programs, services, initiatives and engagement frameworks themselves should be designed in collaboration with diverse Black communities and the SAC.

RESULTS

Share results from efforts with diverse Black communities and the SAC and communities across the city to enhance transparency.

DEVELOPMENT

Collaborate with diverse Black communities and the SAC in the development and design of initiatives and services.



FOLLOW-UP

Engage diverse Black communities and the SAC in the follow-up, regrouping and aftermath of initiatives and services.

DELIVERY

Collaborate with diverse Black communities and the SAC in the delivery of initiatives and services.

Action Plan

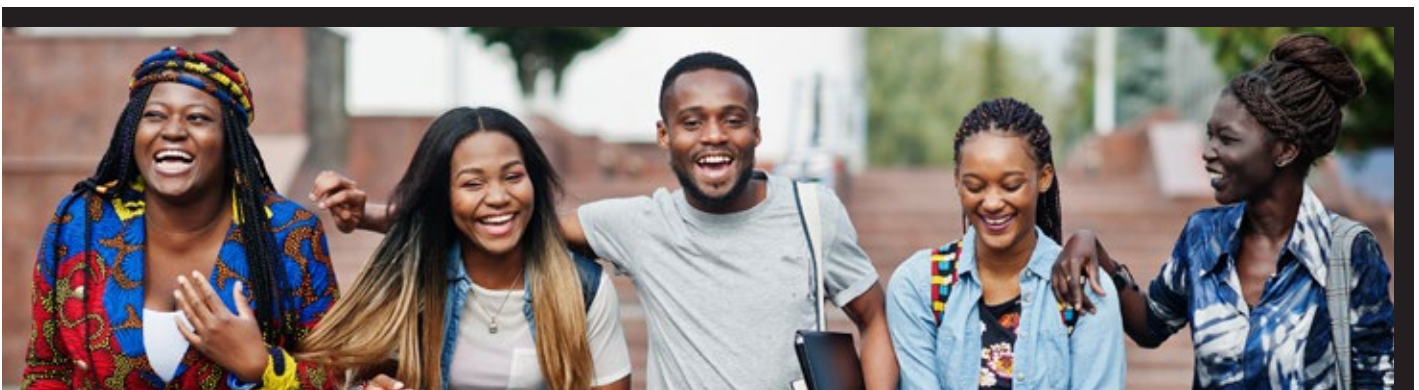
OVERARCHING COMMITMENTS

The City is committed to including diverse Black communities in decision-making processes and removing biases and barriers from policies and procedures. The objectives and key actions within these overarching commitments reflect the City's ongoing effort to continuously address systemic barriers across all departments and all City initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 1: Embed the perspectives of diverse Black communities in City initiatives, and promote the engagement of diverse Black communities in City initiatives and feedback mechanisms.

Key Actions:

- Re-examine the City's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategy and Policy using an equity and inclusion lens to ensure the inclusive and fair involvement of diverse Black communities in projects and programs.
- Use best practices for engagement:
 - Engage with diverse Black communities to identify opportunities and mitigate existing service gaps.
 - Create welcoming spaces for open community dialogue.
 - Maintain ongoing communication throughout the engagement process.



OBJECTIVE 2: Encourage relationships with Black community organizations.

Key Actions:

- Continue to develop relationships with diverse Black organizations, service providers, community leaders and individuals.
- Establish a SAC of diverse Black individuals to advise Vaughan Council on City services, programs and events and guide the implementation of the action plan.
- Ensure opportunities for Vaughan Council and staff to attend and join events organized by diverse Black communities.

OBJECTIVE 3: Identify and adapt City policies and procedures to reduce systemic and institutional barriers for diverse Black communities.

Key Actions:

- Incorporate an addressing anti-Black racism lens into existing policy review cycles in consultation with the DEI Office.
- Provide ongoing training to all policy writers on addressing and preventing anti-Black racism in policy development and implementation.





PILLAR 1: SERVICE EXCELLENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The City aims to provide services that are affordable, accessible and inclusive of the communities it serves.

Theme 1: City Services and Programming

DEI Office

OBJECTIVE: Provide City leadership, staff and volunteers with knowledge and tools to create inclusive environments.

Key Actions:

- Provide learning and development opportunities on addressing anti-Black racism to enhance awareness among Vaughan Council, leadership and staff.
- Ensure training is tailored to roles, responsibilities, services and programs, and is reviewed by the SAC.

OBJECTIVE: Develop an inclusive complaint process for City services and programs that addresses various forms of discrimination, with an emphasis on anti-Black racism.

Key Actions:

- Implement an external mechanism for documenting racism and discrimination.
- Provide guidance and support to ensure complaints related to racism and discrimination are appropriately addressed according to the updated complaints policy and procedure for complaint intake, resolution and documentation.



- Conduct reviews on complaints leveraging the suggested complaints process above.
- Involve offices such as the Integrity Commissioner, Internal Audit or third-party firms as required.

DEI Office Accountability Measures:

- Regularly benchmark and measure community satisfaction levels against progress in addressing racism and promoting inclusion.
- Continuous engagement by the established SAC on the implementation of the action plan.
- Ongoing review and documentation of received complaints and actions taken in response.
- Review and address complaints received via the expanded complaints process based on a determined, set review schedule.

Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development

OBJECTIVE: Develop and maintain spaces that incorporate the contributions of Black communities, ensuring the involvement of Black artists and designers in the planning and development of public spaces.

Key Actions:

- Develop inclusive signage within parks to highlight Black history, culture and art.
- Engage Black artists in designing public spaces via the Public Art Program and the future Social Procurement Policy.
- Review and amend the City's naming policies to honour Black individuals and refrain from names linked to colonialism and slavery.

Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Accountability Measures:

- Biennial review of multilingual and culturally relevant signage.
- Quantitative involvement of Black artists in projects.



By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services

The By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services department has a responsibility to investigate and enforce potential regulatory by-law violations. The department is committed to ensuring enforcement mitigates biases and is informed by a nuanced understanding of anti-Black racism.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure unbiased by-law enforcement.

Key Action:

- Provide training for by-law staff to identify and address anti-Black racism.

OBJECTIVE: Enhance transparency in departmental and special event permitting processes.

Key Actions:

- Review and update the Special Events Permit among other permitting processes for clarity as needed.
- Offer support on permit application completion.

By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services Accountability Measures:

- Regular training sessions and feedback monitoring.
- Review effectiveness of application assistance.

Office of the City Clerk

OBJECTIVE: Encourage diverse Black community representation in Council committees through targeted outreach.

Key Actions:

- Review and communicate existing protocol services to ensure clarity.
- Implement intentional outreach and recruitment to increase diverse Black community representation in standing committees.

Office of the City Clerk Accountability Measure:

- Increased targeted promotion, outreach and communication aimed at increasing the participation of Black individuals in standing committees.

Public Records: Archives

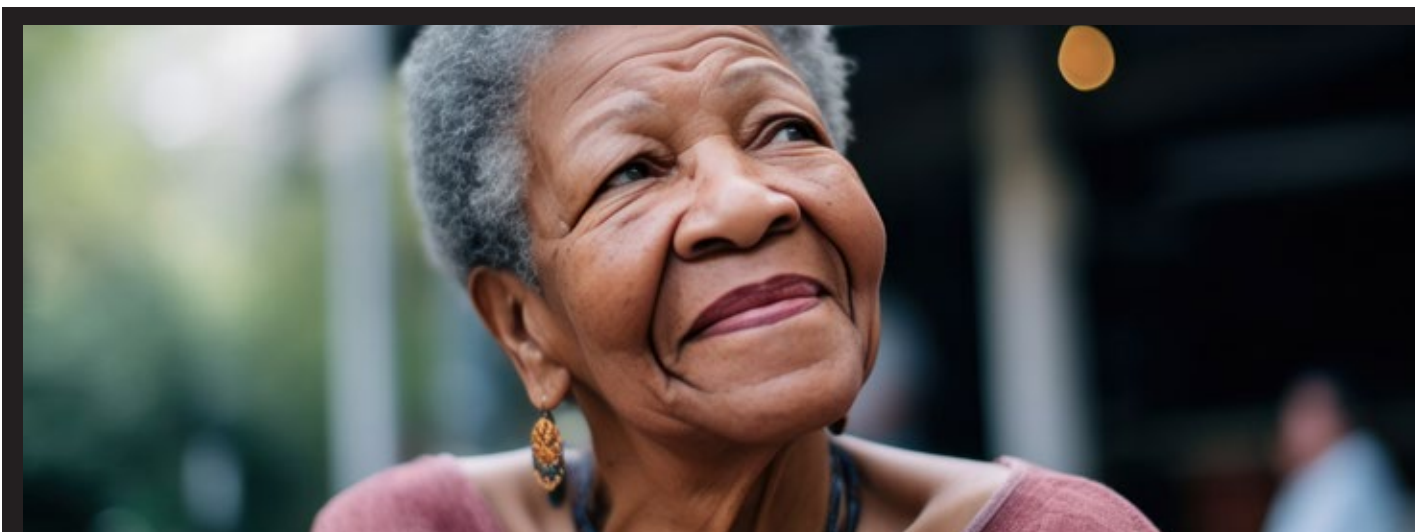
OBJECTIVE: Represent diverse Black community histories within City archives.

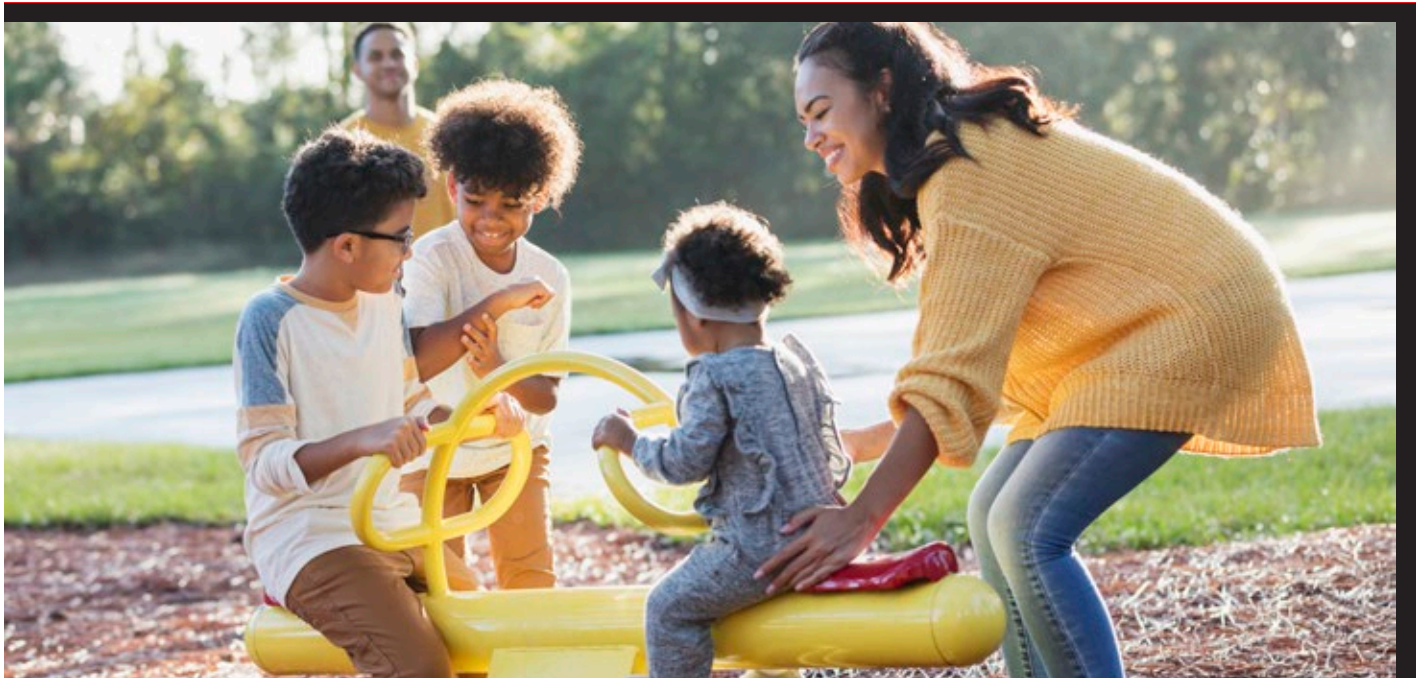
Key Actions:

- Integrate comprehensive diverse Black community histories on the City's website.
- Collaborate with community groups, universities, libraries and experts in Black history to expand the City's archives including historical context of the city's name.

Public Records Accountability Measure:

- Continuous review of the archives.





Recreation Services

OBJECTIVE: Enhance equitable and inclusive access to diverse recreational activities for diverse Black communities.

Key Actions:

- Provide culturally relevant programming for diverse Black communities offering a range of programming that may include, but is not limited to, knitting and card classes, art classes, Caribbean and African music classes.
- Where possible, programs designed for diverse Black communities are facilitated by people with lived experience.
- Create and maintain inclusive and welcoming spaces for all Black community members including Black seniors, youth and Black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, among others.
- Promote existing options for affordable recreational support in accordance with the User Fee Policy and through RecAssist and regional subsidy programs.
- Gather and analyze data on the allocation of spaces to user groups, including tracking the number of requests approved and denied.

Recreation Services Accountability Measure:

- Conduct regular satisfaction surveys to gauge community perceptions of inclusion within recreational services and programming.

Vaughan Public Libraries

OBJECTIVE: Continue to incorporate the stories of diverse Black communities into all library services.

Key Actions:

- Continue to provide resources, collections and programming featuring and celebrating diverse Black communities.
- Ensure library collections feature materials reflecting diverse Black experiences and are authored by diverse Black writers.
- Maintain a focus on collections to highlight positive and strengths-based Black stories and histories.
- Continue to host programming that supports diverse Black communities: book clubs, story times, intergenerational story time events for children and youth, lectures and cultural events spotlighting diverse Black authors and voices.

Vaughan Public Libraries Accountability Measure:

- Monitor and assess the reach and impact of resources, collections and programs that focus on diverse Black communities.



Theme 2: Newcomer Supports

OBJECTIVE: Promote networking opportunities to ensure newcomers to the city have the necessary information to access educational, employment and social support.

Key Actions:

- Where feasible, partner with York Region to promote events aimed at newcomer networking and information sharing, fostering connections and enhancing awareness among communities, City staff and Vaughan Council.
- Where possible, collaborate with the York Region Welcome Centre to initiate multilingual awareness campaigns.
- Advocate for the development of educational initiatives in alignment with the refreshed 2023-2026 York Region Newcomer Strategy.

Newcomer Supports Accountability Measure:

- Monitor and track increased satisfaction and perceptions of inclusion among newcomers accessing support.

Theme 3: City Hiring, Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

OBJECTIVE: Address barriers and enhance processes in recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion within the City to better accommodate diverse Black individuals.

Key Actions – Recruitment:

- Foster partnerships and create avenues for diverse Black individuals to work and volunteer with the City.
- Engage with colleges and universities, as well as organize job fairs during recreational activities, in collaboration with schools, community centres and local organizations to promote available opportunities.
- Develop a talent acquisition strategy focused on minimizing biases in recruitment and hiring.
- Review job postings and guidelines to reduce biases and emphasize transferable skills and competencies.
- Where possible, consider the use of applicant anonymizing tools during recruitment processes to mitigate hiring biases.



- Recognize international credentials and offer requisite training for internationally trained professionals where possible.
- Continue the collection of demographic information during the application and hiring process.

Key Actions – Retention and Promotion:

- Continue employee engagement surveys to gain insights into workplace inclusion, particularly for diverse Black employees.
- Develop opportunities to access networking, mentoring, professional advancement and succession planning resources tailored for diverse Black staff.
- Collaborate with the DEI Office to offer ongoing learning and development to all staff members on addressing anti-Black racism, racial trauma, bias, microaggressions and related topics.
- Collaborate with the DEI Office to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion knowledge into the staff onboarding process.
- Conduct stay interviews.

Key Action – Exit:

- Collect data on exit interviews to understand experiences and turnover of Black employees.

City Hiring, Recruitment, Retention and Promotion Accountability Measures:

- Track and analyze recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention and turnover of Black staff.
- Establish a database to track outreach channels for job opportunities including growth metrics.
- Systematic process for reviewing job postings and hiring.
- Employee resource groups established to support diverse Black staff.
- Employee engagement survey results to indicate inclusion and belonging levels among diverse Black City staff.
- Enhanced understanding and application of diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism principles.
- Collaborative consultations with department heads annually to review disaggregated data to pinpoint areas aiding in the retention of diverse Black staff.

Theme 4: Resource Allocation

OBJECTIVE: Strengthen financial and resource commitments to counteract anti-Black racism.

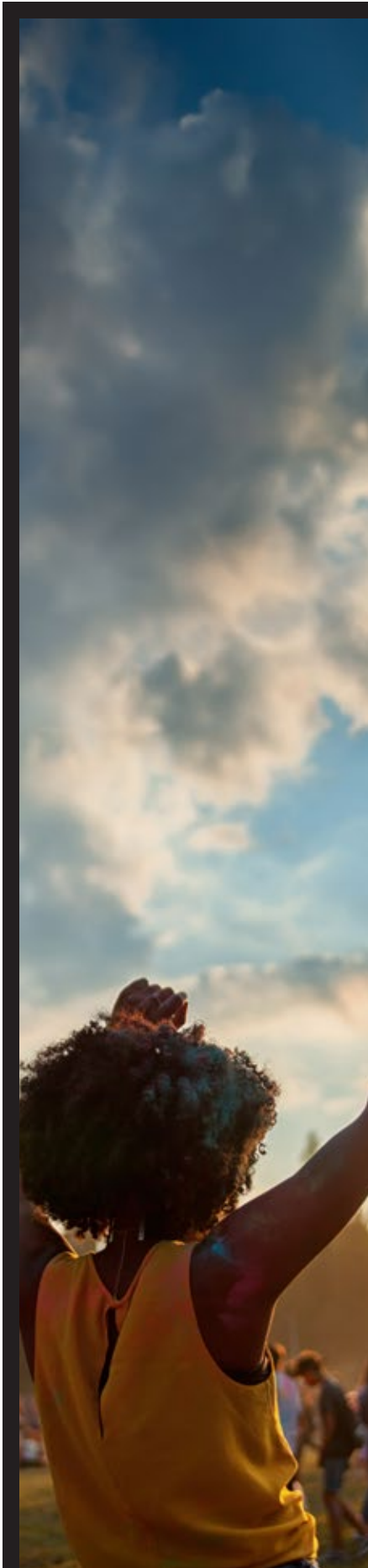
Key Actions:

- Proportionally increase the allocation of financial, human and material resources focused on dismantling anti-Black racism. This includes providing sufficient resources for the proposals described in the action plan.
- Allocate funding to support data collection and public engagement mechanisms, such as surveys.

Resource Allocation Accountability Measures:

- Business case created to highlight the need for additional financial support.
- Increased allocation from the City's operating and capital budgets to support the goals and key actions in this action plan and other supplementary tasks and initiatives.





PILLAR 2: ACTIVE, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

The City recognizes the importance of developing events that celebrate Black history, culture and community.

Theme 1: Events and Empowerment

OBJECTIVE: Engage with diverse Black communities in the development of broad City-led initiatives, as well as those that promote and honour Black history, culture and community.

Key Actions:

- Engage with diverse Black communities, organizations and business owners in events celebrating diverse Black history and culture year-round (e.g. Black History Month, Emancipation Day), as well as in general events (e.g. Winterfest, Concerts in the Park).
- Establish pre- and post-event feedback in City-hosted events to identify successes and areas for improvement.
- Use the future Social Procurement Policy and diverse suppliers list in City event planning and hosting.

OBJECTIVE: Support communities in organizing events, simplifying logistics and providing clear requirements.

Key Actions:

Develop a user-friendly event-hosting process which includes:

- providing clear and concise information on how to host an event.
- sharing application requirements and deadlines.
- supporting organizers on the processes and providing guidance.

Events and Empowerment Accountability Measures:

- Increased satisfaction with City events among diverse Black communities.
- Increased use of Black vendors in City events.
- Monitor and increase targeted and general communication about available resources.



Theme 2: Outreach and Engagement

OBJECTIVE: Foster ongoing dialogue between the City and diverse Black communities for input, perspectives and feedback on services and programs.

Key Actions:

- Identify organizations supporting diverse Black communities, leaders, individuals and preferred gathering places.
- Build and maintain a list of diverse Black community service organizations for guidance.
- Collaborate with individuals with lived and professional experience when engaging diverse Black communities.
- Create accessible and safe platforms for cross-community dialogues and engagement through events and initiatives.
- Engage with diverse Black communities when conducting focus groups and surveys at gathering spaces such as churches and community events.
- Develop relationships with diverse Black community organizations to continue to inform services, programs and event planning.
- Measure satisfaction with City services among the diverse Black communities (e.g. City protocol services, enforcement, permits and events).

Outreach and Engagement Accountability Measures:

- Updated community stakeholder map.
- Increased collaborations and consultations with stakeholders.
- Measure and increase satisfaction of City services among diverse Black communities, for example City protocol services, enforcement, permits and events.



Theme 3: Inclusive Communications

OBJECTIVE: Improve inclusive and targeted communication to reach diverse Black communities.

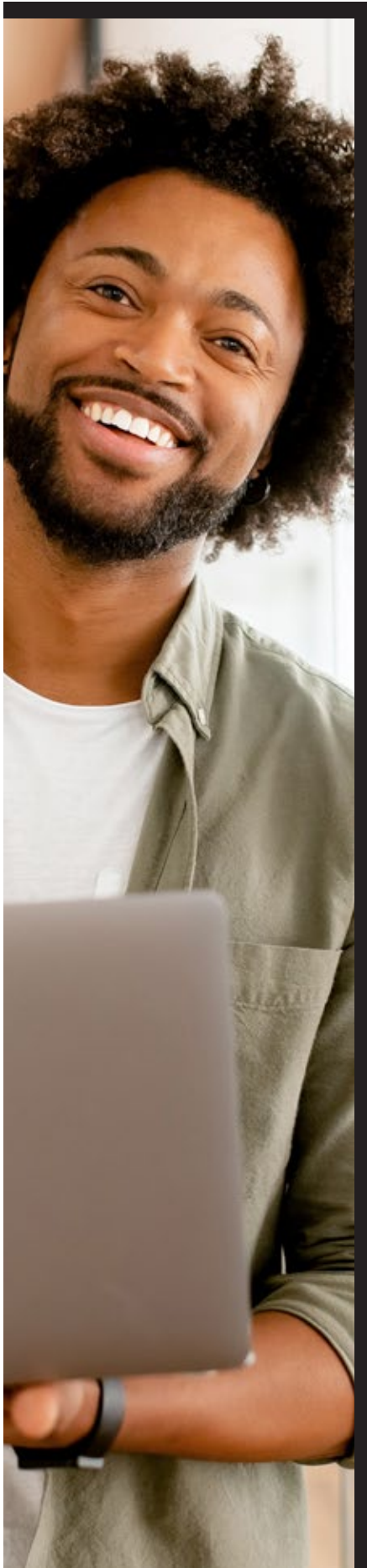
Key Actions:

- Consult with the SAC on what communication channels, such as Black-owned and Black-serving media outlets, resonate with diverse Black communities.
- Create and maintain a media contact list for Black-owned and Black-serving media outlets and ensure these media outlets are included when media products are distributed.

OBJECTIVE: Ensure the City's communication messaging and imagery highlight diverse Black communities.

Key Actions:

- Provide training for staff in communication and marketing roles on inclusive communication practices, including:
 - choosing appropriate and targeted channels.
 - crafting inclusive and proactive messages.
 - showcasing diverse Black communities in City communications while avoiding stereotypes.



OBJECTIVE: Develop public awareness campaigns to increase awareness, educate and drive engagement with City services and programs.

Key Actions:

- Advocate for collaboration among local municipalities in York Region to share information and cross-promote initiatives aimed at supporting diverse Black communities.
- Promote, where possible, the services of York Region, COSTI, Vaughan Welcome Centre and associations supporting Black immigrants to share information, provide employment opportunities and understand specific needs.
- Use various communication channels to highlight the City's:
 - efforts to combat anti-Black racism and progress updates on the action plan.
 - Recreation Services policies and procedures, including facility allocation and Community Service Organization (CSO) policies.
 - Real Estate Leasing Strategy, policies and procedures.
 - complaint process, with a focus on reporting discrimination and anti-Black racism.
 - Special Event Permit, hosting events and the associated guidelines.
 - protocol and permitting processes.
- Engage the SAC on an ongoing basis to enhance awareness, communication and marketing campaigns, with a particular focus on effectively targeting diverse Black communities.

Inclusive Communications Accountability Measures:

- Regular review of communication channels used to determine new avenues to explore.
- Ongoing data collection, where possible, on the demographics of the audiences using current communication channels.
- Regular staff training sessions developed and conducted.
- Public awareness campaigns developed with feedback collected.



PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND JOB CREATION

The City is committed to promoting economic prosperity and job creation and supporting diverse Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses.

Theme 1: Supporting Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners

OBJECTIVE: Encourage participation of diverse Black-owned and Black-serving businesses in the City's procurement process.

Key Action:

- Develop a Social Procurement Policy to encourage diverse suppliers in bidding on City contracts.

OBJECTIVE: Strengthen the support network for diverse Black business owners via tailored services and programs.

Key Actions:

- Enhance awareness and education among diverse Black business owners and entrepreneurs on how to participate in the public procurement process through events, webinars, training videos, etc.
- Host business networking events and provide financial planning seminars and mentorship opportunities for diverse Black business owners and youth entrepreneurs.
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify strategies to assist the diverse Black business community.
- Use the outcomes of this assessment to support the development of a Black-owned, Black-operated Business Association or Chamber of Commerce.
- Increase targeted communication about available programs, especially services designed for diverse Black youth entrepreneurs.

Supporting Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners Accountability Measures:

- Development of a Social Procurement Policy.
- Establishment, enactment and data monitoring related to mentorship schemes, gauging the engagement of diverse Black communities in these programs.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility: Mitigating barriers to ensure the full participation of individuals and communities in initiatives, services, events and others. According to Accessibility Services Canada, this includes the “design of products, devices, services or environments for people who experience disabilities”.¹⁴

Accountability: Taking responsibility for commitments, particularly those identified in the action plan, and ensuring identified objectives, key actions and accountability measures are carried out.

Amplify and Uplift: The City’s ongoing effort to support diverse Black communities by showing up for them in meaningful ways, for example: supporting Black businesses through programming, ensuring opportunities for Vaughan Council and staff to attend and join events organized by diverse Black communities and others.

Collaboration and Co-creation: An effort to work together towards common goals and ensure communities are involved in the design, development and delivery of initiatives.

Data Driven: A process of leveraging data and findings to make informed decisions. This includes the collection of disaggregated data, which is data that is broken down to analyze different demographic groups.¹⁵ An example of this would be analyzing data on service usage by race.

Diversity: The presence of different and multiple human dimensions, qualities or characteristics within an organization, group or society.¹⁶ This can include, but is not limited to race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical ability, language, educational background, expertise and socioeconomic status.¹⁷

Empathy: The ability to sense the emotions of another person and imagine what someone else may be feeling or going through,¹⁸ which can result in compassionate behaviour.¹⁹

Engagement: A process to ensure the active participation and involvement of diverse Black communities in City initiatives.

Equity: An equitable approach recognizes that diverse communities may need unique and varied supports in order to better “level the playing field.”²⁰

Inclusion: “Acknowledging and valuing people’s differences to enrich social planning, decision-making and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive municipality, we each have a sense of belonging, acceptance and are recognized as valued members of society.”²¹

Intersectionality: “Intersectionality is the intersection, or crossover, of our many identities that affect how each of us experiences the municipality. These intersections occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power.”²²

Transparency: Ensuring actions and efforts, particularly those within the action plan, are documented, clear and widely available.



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