City of Austin Equity Office Update

Vision & Mission

*The **vision** of the City of Austin is to make Austin the most livable city in the nation **for ALL**.*

*The **mission** of the City of Austin Equity Office is to provide leadership, guidance, and insight on equity to improve the quality of life for Austinites.*

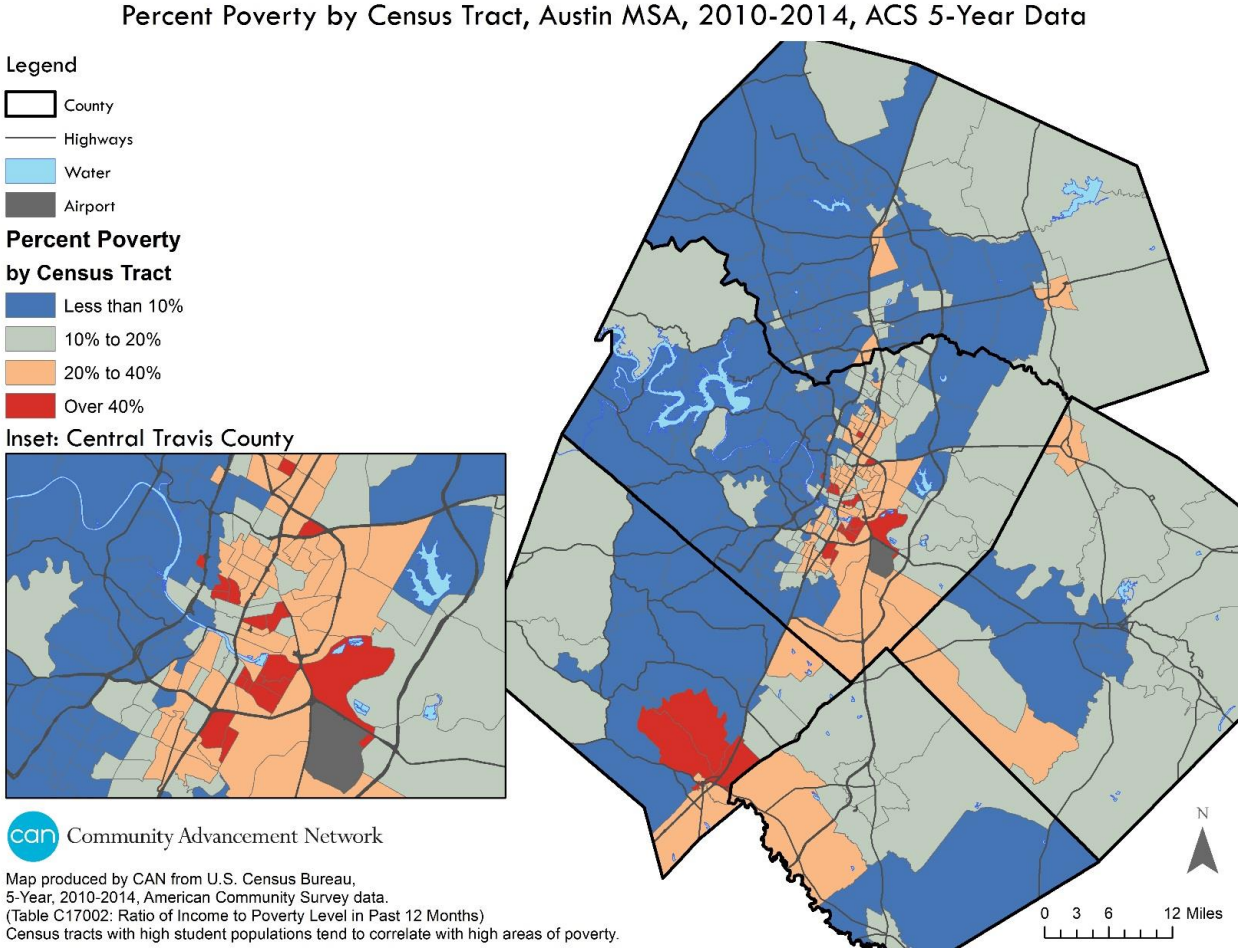
A Tale of Two Cities

Austin is the best place to live in the nation according to *U.S. News and World Report*

&

One of the most economically segregated cities in the U.S. according to the *Martin Prosperity Institute*

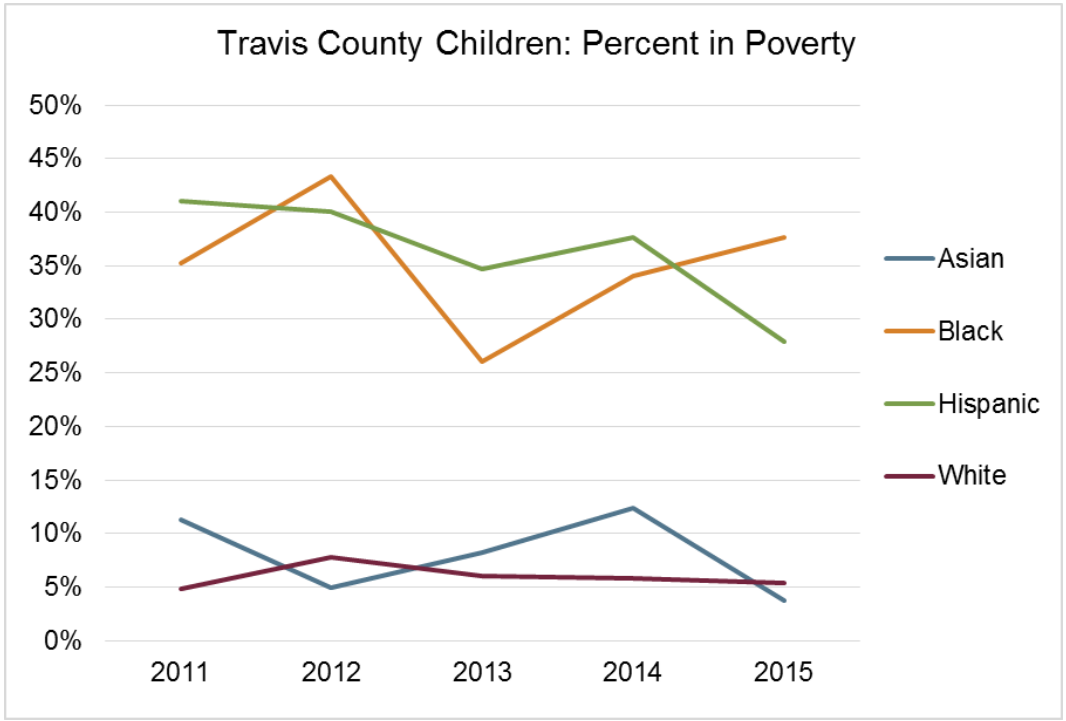
Areas of Concentrated Poverty



Brookings reports people living in concentrated poverty face

- higher crime rates
- poorer physical health
- low-performing schools
- higher drop out rates
- poor job-seeking networks

Child poverty disparities, Travis County



Hispanic and Black children are 5 to 7 times more likely to live in poverty than White or Asian children.

Source: American Community Survey, 1-Year data, 2015

Challenge of Naming Equity Issues

- Public Health = Health Disparities
- Economic Development = Wealth Gap
- Criminal Justice = Disproportionality
- Education = Achievement Gap
- Technology = Digital Divide

Digital Divide Technology

- Since 2000 the gap in percentage of adults that use the internet by race/ethnicity has been eliminated *Pew Research Center*

- However, people of color are more dependent on accessing the internet via smartphones

- What challenge could this pose for the City of Austin?

http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/

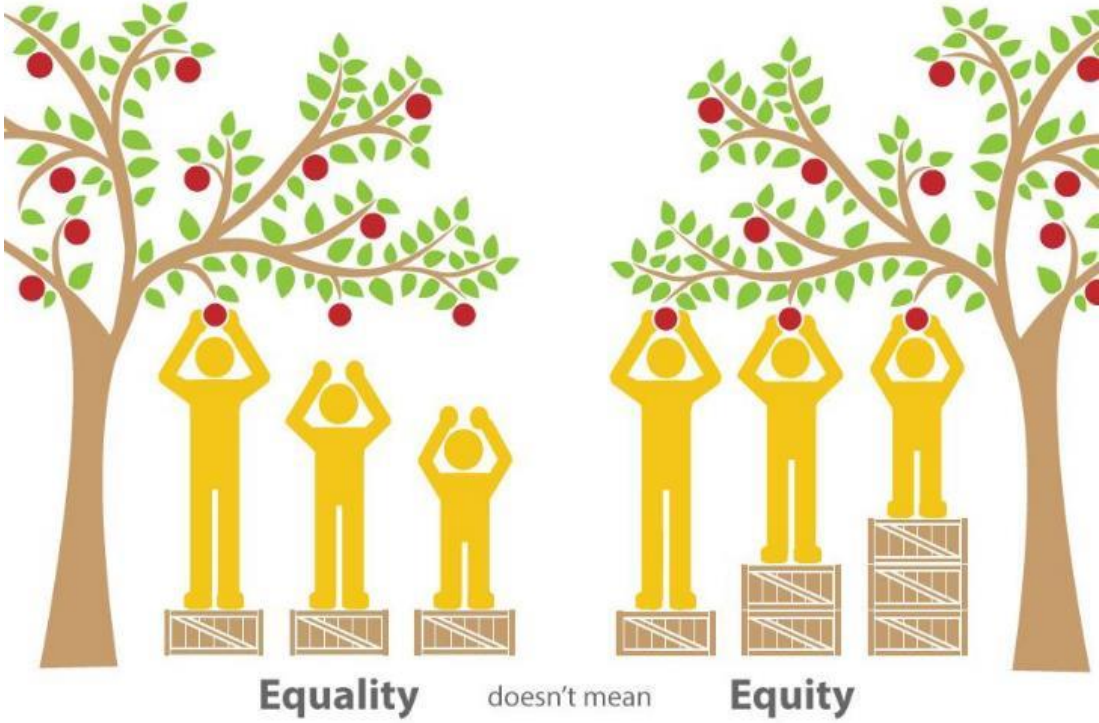
What Does Equity Look Like to You?

COA Equity Statement

Racial equity is the condition when race no longer predicts a person's quality of life outcomes in our community.

The City recognizes that race is the primary determinant of social equity and therefore we begin the journey toward social equity with this definition.

The City of Austin recognizes historical and structural disparities and a need for alleviation of these wrongs by critically transforming its institutions and creating a culture of equity.



Acknowledging How We Got Here

Inheriting inequality
"As greater Austin booms, the poisonous legacy of segregation continues to cut off the African-American population from economic opportunities and its own cultural anchors, threatening the whole region's potential. American-Statesman three-part series."

http://projects.statesman.com/news/economic-mobility/

Caption: Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery.

Caption: A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans.

Bias

- The evaluation of one group and its members relative to another.

- We all carry bias, or prejudgment. Acting on biases can be discriminatory and can create negative outcomes for particular groups.

Source: Unconscious (Implicit) Bias and Health Disparities: Where Do We Go from Here?

Culture Impacts “Unbiased” Tech

- **Algorithms**
  - COMPAS, a nationwide score to determine ‘danger’ upon bail release, was rating Blacks who did not reoffend as risky twice as often as Whites
  - *Source: Machine Bias*

- **Machine Learning**
  - Amazon recently tested the use of an AI learning system to make hires
  - Analysis of the AI found it had taught itself to prefer white, male candidates
  - *Source: Amazon scraps AI tool*

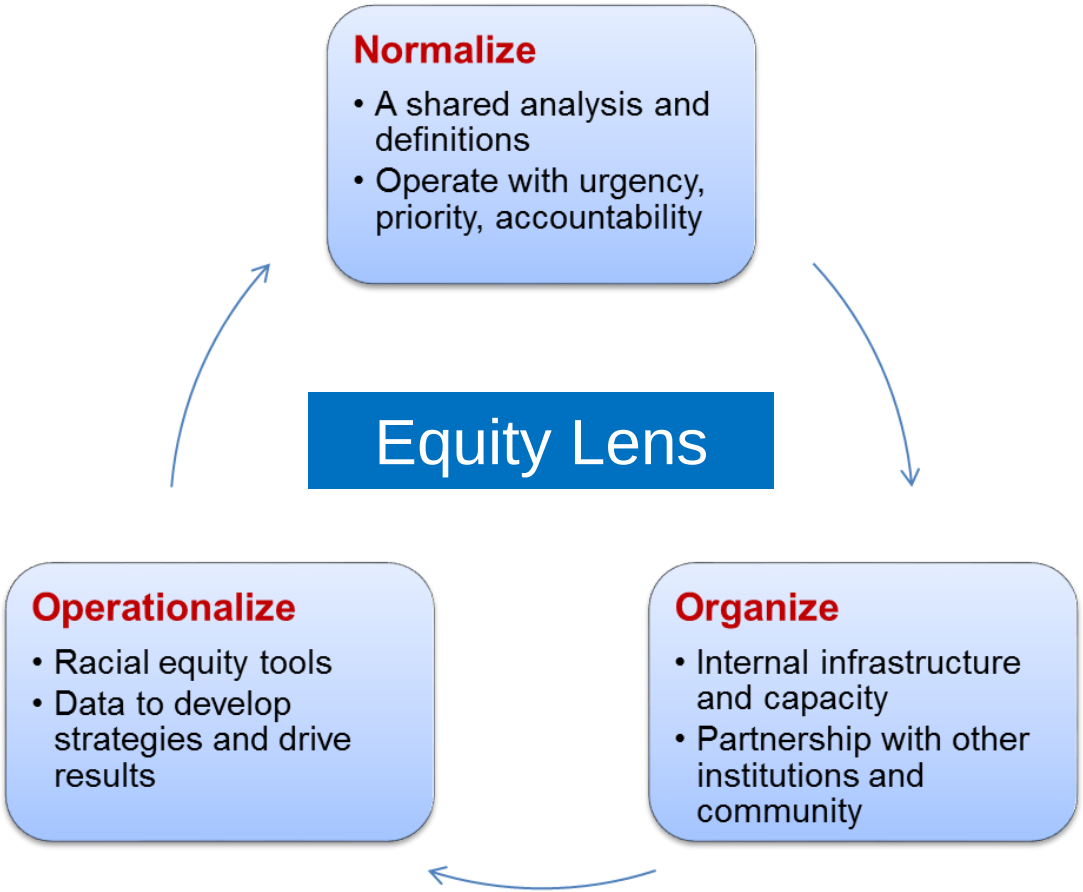
Austin's Opportunity to Drive Equity

Key Areas of Departmental CHOICE

- **Planning:** What to change and prioritize in programs?
- **Budgeting:** what items do we add or cut and what initiatives get the funding?
- **Personnel:** who to hire, retain, promote, or develop as leaders
- **Policy** Development: what to propose or modify?
- **Practices:** routines/habits and or expectations to set

The cumulative impacts of small choices can lead to BIG influence on outcomes and equity

Building a Framework for Equity



Methodology

How was the equity tool developed?

- Equity Action team members logging nearly 900 hours of volunteer time
- 6 Steps for Building Racial Equity- Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
- Council's Six Strategic Priority Outcomes

Equity Assesment Analysis Areas

What does an equity tool cover?

1. Department Culture
2. Community Engagement
3. Budgeting
4. Alignment with Advancing Equity
5. Unintended Outcomes

Equity Assessment Core Elements

Lead with Race/Ethnicity

Focus on human centered design and institutional empathy

Engage residents, especially those adversely affected, in decision making

Bring conscious attention to racial inequities and disparities *before* decisions are made

Avoid or minimize adverse impacts and unintended consequences

Affirm our commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity

Equity Assessment Pilot

- Austin Water
- Economic Development
- Human Resources
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Health
- Library
- Public Works
- Transportation

Outcome Evaluation

Strengths	Weaknesses

• Hiring and Training
  o Use of community orgs, boards and commissions, and chambers of commerce to ID candidates
• Information Sharing
  o Standards for document translation and evaluation of cultural appropriateness
	• Data Collection and Measurement
	  o Lack of disaggregated client, contractor and consultant data
	• Community Engagement
	  o Lack of definitive processes or use of passive processes in gathering input

Opportunities	**Threats**

• Programming
  o Programs across city are natural touchpoints for engagement and input
• Cross-Department Collaboration
  o Individual department strengths can address city-wide issues
	• Funding
	  o Lack of tracking or ability to connect budget line items directly to equity initiatives and goals.
	• Disproportional Effects
	  o Well-intentioned policies disadvantaging marginalized groups

Next Steps

- Recognized internationally by the Open Governments Partnership as a **STAR** level intervention
- Launched the second cohort of 13 departments
- Working with 1st cohort of departments to implement Equity Action Plans for FY 19
- Working to build an Equity Academy to expand training opportuities
- Adopting a vision of having 100% of departments participating by 2020
- Introducing a cycle of continuous improvement around equity

Questions and Discussion

THANKS!

Any
questions?