Racial Equity through Resilience Community of Practice

No equity, no resilience.

We are a coalition of urban resilience practitioners with community, corporate, philanthropic, and academic leaders in pursuit of one common goal: effective and efficient racial equity through resilience in cities. Urban challenges are deeply connected, and our solutions must be as well. Resilience provides the framework for the change we need.

Can we transform our city systems without tearing them down?
Should we? As a Community of Practice that is practitioner-led and practice-based, we commit to working together to answer these questions—because the status quo is unacceptable, and recovery alone is never enough.

Introduction
Two epidemics—COVID-19 and systemic racism—have proven that if one community is at risk, the entire city is at risk. The unjust murders of black residents at the hands of vigilantes and law enforcement officers in the United States brings into sharp focus the need to act now. Public support for racial equity and justice is skyrocketing at the same time that trust in government is falling fast. How can city leaders work quickly to dismantle institutional racism within their own municipal systems? How can businesses, philanthropic, nonprofit, and government leaders join together to deliver racial justice? Through resilience.

City resilience is about making a city better, in both good times and bad, for the benefit of all its residents, particularly the poor and vulnerable. It offers a disciplined method of designing policies, programs, and solutions to center the needs of those most vulnerable. As COVID-19 response and relief efforts bring together diverse actors in new ways, we must act together with real humility and inclusiveness to seed innovation and help adapt systems to achieve racially equitable outcomes.

Who are we?
We are city leaders and staff who believe that this unique moment in time must not be wasted. We are advocates and thought leaders who believe that the resilience framework offers a powerful tool to achieve sustainable progress in our cities. We are practitioners who work daily to transform our city systems for greater resilience through racial equity and greater racial equity through resilience.

Racial Equity Community of Practice

Founding City Members

Ron Harris, Chair
Chief Resilience Officer, Minneapolis
Lori Nelson, Co-Chair
Chief Resilience Officer, Boston
Marissa Aho
Chief Resilience Officer, Houston
Krystal Reyes
Chief Resilience Officer, Tulsa
Megan Sparks
Senior Director, One Atlanta
Josh Stanbro
Chief Resilience Officer, Honolulu

This Community of Practice is unique in its unification of practitioners with community, and public/private leaders in pursuit of one common goal: effective and efficient racial equity in cities.

Why This? Why Now?
2020 has offered boundless evidence of what city practitioners have always known—when crises hit, the people who suffer the most are the poorest and most vulnerable. Individuals in these communities are disproportionately harmed by emergencies and all too often, by poorly designed city services. “Despite many warnings, cities have been ill-prepared to manage a pandemic combined with an economic downturn, civil unrest, and the demand for an end to anti-Black racism. If history repeats itself, cities will always be reacting to the needs of its vulnerable populations, struggle with competing interests, and remain unable to recover before the next shock hits. ... Cities who are not equitable will always be in recovery mode.”

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—Ron Harris, Minneapolis and Stewart Sarkozy-Banoczy, Resilient Cities Network

Leaders across sectors often consider racial equity to be an outcome or a goal, and indeed, it is a critical one. Racial equity, though, is also a process and a values system—it’s a way of doing our work. Our daily decisions, actions, and processes must be actively anti-racist in the same way our long-term goals must be. Look around the world, and there is no shining, perfect example of the racially equitable, anti-racist city. But there are promising, inspiring examples of anti-racist actions from our city, business, philanthropic, and community leaders, and by working together as a global Community of Practice we can accelerate and scale that progress.

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