

# Addressing anti-Black racism: Black and African diaspora community recommendations

## *Executive summary*

### INTRODUCTION

Anti-Black racism is pervasive and persistent in our society and governments, including the City of Vancouver. The City recognizes that our system has historic and ongoing roots in colonialism, white supremacy and systemic racism, including the specific ways that anti-Black racism is embedded in our policies, practices, and decision-making processes. In order to affect change, we have to acknowledge our role in the historic oppression of Black communities, our inaction on recommendations to date, and commit to change. This document offers a high-level summary of the extensive recommendations offered by Black and African diasporic communities to address systemic anti-Black racism.

For centuries, Black people and people of the African diaspora have worked to secure their rights and combat anti-Black racism and violence. For decades, local organizers and members of Black Canadian and African diasporic communities have provided comprehensive analysis and recommendations to identify and address the local instances of anti-Black racism and inequities in the City of Vancouver's policies and practices. Today and since its inception, the Black Lives Matter movement has galvanized a global awakening to the injustices and inequities faced by Black people and people of African descent. The City of Vancouver recognizes this is a moment to acknowledge our inaction and recommit to resource, elevate, and coordinate this work across our institution, as well as to advocate for alignment with the work of our agency and governmental partners.

### OBJECTIVES

**Acknowledge how anti-Black racism operates** in Vancouver broadly, in the City of Vancouver's policies and practices, and the City's inaction on recommendations to date.

**Honour and advance recommendations** provided by Black Canadians and people of African descent to the City of Vancouver through resourced actions and work programs.

**Share existing priorities as a basis for dialogue** to invite discussion on your ideas, priorities, concerns, and aspirations today.

**Clarify the scope of the City administration** and that of agencies and partners.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**The City as a learner, not a leader:** as an institution and individuals, we work to unlearn how anti-Black racism shapes our processes, investments, and choices with curiosity and humility. We recognize that the lack of action to date points to deficits of capacity within the system, not deficits of capacity within communities, that have compromised advancement of Black community interests and elevation of Black excellence.

**Less defensive, more receptive:** we commit to listen receptively and participate actively in the work to advance change rather than defending or justifying inaction.

**Amplify, connect and prioritize:** we will work to amplify the expertise that Black and African diasporic communities have already offered to the City and undertake in their own work, connect work where appropriate, and prioritize efforts to address anti-Black racism.

**Committing to resources + action:** we will seek ongoing funding to support the necessary financial resources, dedicated staff, and integration across workplans.

**Transparency + consistency:** we commit to regular updates on progress and engagement with communities in the form of regular updates to

- 1) A new City of Vancouver equity and anti-racism actions web page
- 2) A new public partner and anti-racism working group which is currently being established
- 3) The Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee and Black History Month Advisory Committee
- 4) Ongoing public dialogue to be outlined through the work program to address anti-Black racism of a new dedicated staff person

# Executive summary

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Anti-Black racism is real, pervasive, and persistent within City of Vancouver policies, practices, and decision-making processes and negatively impacts Black Canadian and African diasporic communities. Community members have offered countless hours of expertise to identify these practices and actions to address them, but the City of Vancouver has not consistently resourced, coordinated, and advanced these actions. We are at a turning point facilitated by local Black and African diasporic organizing and the global Black Lives Matters movement in returning to and expanding our work with Black Canadian and African diasporic communities.

*“Despite Canada’s reputation for promoting multiculturalism and diversity... Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization, has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent which must be addressed in partnership with communities.”* - UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its Mission to Canada

As outlined in an [Open Letter](#) to the City Manager, the City has benefited from decades of volunteer and unpaid labour by local Black Canadians and people of African descent in Vancouver to daylight oppressive systems, their impacts, and the ways that we can address anti-Black racism within the City of Vancouver’s present day policies, practices, and decision-making processes. Members of Black Canadian communities & communities of the African diaspora have invested extensive time and energy to contribute critical context, analysis, recommendations, and [calls to action](#) to improve social conditions, address policing funding and practices, and redress targeted displacement of Black communities.

The City of Vancouver recognizes we have not yet undertaken the work of addressing recommendations provided through a range of City research and engagement initiatives with the necessary resources, focus, or coordination to advance significant change. This lack of action is a reflection of the anti-Black racism within the City, not the clarity or value of the recommendations offered by Black communities and communities of the African diaspora and supported by research. Our relative inaction and lack of coordination to take up the recommendations is another form of gate-keeping that results in harm.

We also recognize that we have not engaged with the full spectrum of Black communities and communities of the African diaspora. Our hope is that during this moment in the global Black Lives Matters movement, we can accept the challenge offered to us in the prior recommendations by local leaders of Black Canadian and African diasporic communities, the open letter, and the Black Lives Matters calls to action. In parallel, we will build opportunities for Black community members who have yet to participate to join the dialogue.

The recommendations summarized here are offered as a place from which to begin prioritizing actions to address anti-Black racism in meaningful and substantial ways. This executive summary is accompanied by a more detailed summary, the [Addressing anti-Black racism: Black communities and communities of the African diaspora community recommendations - detailed summary](#).

# Community recommendations & work underway

## ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACTION PLAN

Holistic action plans with resources, dedicated staff, connections to leadership, and work programs integrated across departments have been identified as critical to advancing meaningful action to address anti-Black racism in City policies, practices, programs, and investments.

### Anti-Black racism action plan development

In the fall of 2020, hiring processes will begin for a role on anti-racism and cultural redress, as well as a dedicated planner focused on a work program to address anti-Black racism. The action plan will create the opportunity to clarify, prioritize, and resource recommendations, develop a formal apology and adopt the UN Decade for People of African Descent, work with staff to align and resource efforts across the City administration, and work with leadership to advocate and align through the newly established anti-racism partners table.

### Equity framework development

This work will be supported by the City-wide equity framework (underway), which includes an Indigenous-centred, race-forward, intersectional approach to equity to transform City policies, practices and processes in order to have equitable outcomes for Vancouver's diverse communities. An accompanying intersectionality toolkit will help staff identify and address various forms of systemic discrimination, including structural anti-Black racism and resources such as an Equity Reference Guide to guide staff in initial efforts to embed equity across City departments. The framework is supported by ongoing engagement with the external advisory, Council advisories, and staff affinity groups.

## CULTURAL REDRESS

Cultural redress initiatives attempt to repair the harms of systemic anti-Black exclusion, displacement, and discrimination. Communities have recommended that key forms of cultural redress are needed to remedy government-led urban renewal projects that targeted displacement of Black life from Hogan's Alley. Redress should also address how historic and contemporary forms of anti-Black racism shape Vancouver's cultural landscape including a land trust, cultural centre, formal apology, culturally-informed and safe park design, monuments and public art, and heritage program initiatives that uplift black life.

### Hogan's Alley Block

1) During the summer of 2020, meetings resumed between members of Hogan's Alley Society and City staff in the Northeast False Creek (NEFC) team to re-establish trust and a working relationship with regularized meetings to continue to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to advance the future development of the Hogan's Alley Block.

2) Two years of ongoing support for community rebuilding activities at the Hogan's Alley Block.

3) A Cultural Infrastructure Grant was awarded to support a community needs assessment and functional planning for the cultural centre.

### Northeast False Creek (NEFC) park design

1) Imagining Decolonized Parks through Black Lenses - Community-based research led by June Francis will gather, document, analyze and make recommendations on engagement with Black communities and the practices and impacts of anti-Black racism. Findings will contribute to the Vancouver Park Board colonial audit and adjusting park design models.

2) NEFC Park team welcomed a Cultural Landscape Designer to provide ongoing design input from a Black cultural lens alongside ongoing consultation with representatives from Black and African diasporic

communities and in collaboration with a Coast Salish design consultant.

### Black life in public art

As part of accelerated work to review the City's Commemoration Policy, staff will:

1) Review policies and processes that govern the commissioning, donation, contextualization, and removal of monuments, memorials, and namings or renamings of buildings, public spaces, and streets, including ways to address the painful impacts of colonial monuments and street or place names

2) Review examples of best practices to support and promote Black artistic forms and recognize cultural figures and histories, such as the Hogan's Alley mural program.

### Heritage Action Plan

Work is underway to provide support to integrate Black Canadian and African diasporic cultural heritage and cultural redress in the Heritage Action Plan.

### Formal apology

In developing the action plan, staff will work to explore meaningful forms of formal apology.

## CITY SERVICES DELIVERY

Anti-Black racism operates in all facets of city service delivery, burdening Black and African diasporic communities and restricting equitable access to City services. Community recommendations highlighted the importance of addressing anti-Black inequities in urban development, land and land use, housing, homelessness services, amenities, urban design, parks and recreation, infrastructure, economic development, arts and culture, library collections and programs, and the need for public education.

### Urban development & land use - Vancouver Plan (underway)

Work to embed equity will include:

- 1) Review recommendations to date from Black Canadian and African diasporic communities on addressing systemic anti-Black racism to inform the policy development process
- 2) Build mechanisms to amplify the expertise of staff and consultants with lived and technical experience
- 3) Use race-disaggregated data to better assess and address how Black communities will benefit or be burdened by potential policy trade-offs, including in policy work on anti-displacement, housing, access to amenities, and economic development
- 4) Critical examinations of 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' models' negative impacts on Black and African diasporic communities and explorations of alternative design models that uplift Black life.

### Housing & homelessness

In order to improve access to housing for Black and African diasporic communities, the housing departments will explore how to adapt best practices from the Nora Hendrix Temporary Modular Housing community-based partnership model.

### Public Space & transportation

In addition to internal staff work focused on how to integrate equity into the planning, design and delivery of public space and transportation in the city, initial work towards a mobility equity and public space design framework has been undertaken in consultation with Jay Pitter. In partnership with local experts, Jay Pitter has engaged community and staff in explorations of equity-based placemaking practices and principles, and this has included reflections on how anti-Black racism manifests itself in Vancouver.

### Community economic development – Poverty Reduction framework (underway)

Recommendations from engagement sessions hosted by Black communities that prioritized land, housing, and amenities for the Black community will inform the development of the Poverty Reduction plan, as well as upcoming engagement with Black residents with diverse, intersectional experiences to further prioritize action phasing and resourcing.

### Arts & culture

In implementing the culture plans - 'Culture Shift, Making Space for Arts and Culture' and 'The Vancouver Music Strategy' - work is underway to:

- 1) Support community-led spaces projects such as a mentorship for AfroVan Connects with BC Artscape, and a community needs assessment for a cultural centre in Hogan's Alley
- 2) Advance equitable and accessible funding, leadership, and organizational practices in COVID recovery investment in groups supporting Black & African diasporic artists
- 3) Prioritize Black artists and cultural leaders in a newly launched Cultural Learning and Sharing program
- 4) Improve the representation of Black leadership in adjudication and nomination processes
- 5) Integrate Black & African diasporic into equity priority policies.

### Library programs and collections

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL)

- 1) Continues to increase a focus on collections and programming work highlighting Black authors and community groups through a range of collection spotlights, programming events, and exhibit displays, as well as increasing purchasing frequency and copy limits for works by Black authors
- 2) COVID-related financial constraints have delayed the development of a collaborative project Black experience with Hogan's Alley Society that began work in 2019.

### Public education - Black History Month

- 1) Staff and the Black History Month Planning Committee organize annual Black History Month events to recognize African Canadian history, futures and achievements. Staff have received a request to include an annual progress update on an action plan to address anti-Black racism and opportunities for transformative education for general public.
- 2) Vancouver Public Library increases in-person/ online programs and exhibits.
- 3) Communications will scope resources necessary to undertake public education campaigns on anti-Black racism.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Recommendations include work to consistently invest in culturally relevant, socially safe design, engagement, and participatory budgeting processes led by Black and African diasporic leaders, that reflect diverse experiences and the spectrum of complex intersectional identities, as well as mechanisms to catalogue and connect engagement across departments.

### Engagement Resources

In the 2021 planning process, seek resources for culturally relevant engagement.

## DATA

The historic use of race data to oppress Black people should be considered when developing ethically sound ways to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data on race in ways that offer Black people agency, choice, and a transparent explanation of benefits and risks. Disaggregated racial data analysis should inform budget, grants and investment processes, human resources practices and leadership diversity, and the development and delivery of services including urban development, housing access, and economic initiatives.

### Homelessness Count

The Homelessness Count will further refine ethical models for collecting and analysing race-disaggregated data in order to better understand unique Black and African diasporic experiences of homelessness and service needs.

### Workforce Survey

A workforce survey will be conducted in 2021 with disaggregated racial data on our workforce as well as an indication of staff engagement and sense of inclusion.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Community recommendations include reviews of the current employment equity programs compared with leading hiring, retention, promotion, performance evaluation, and workplace culture initiatives on:

- Culturally competent processes that address unconscious bias
- Advancement programs with professional development, networking, and mentor sponsorship
- Tailored supports that account for additional intellectual and emotional labour staff perform to illuminate Black experience and address anti-Black racism in their roles
- Training on anti-Black racism in the workplace, both overt forms of harassment and micro-aggressions.

### Support initiatives for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour City staff

Support initiatives for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour City staff under development include a town hall with Black and African diasporic City staff and improved review and reporting of internal programs to support Indigenous, Black, and racialized staff.

# Agencies & Partners

City of Vancouver agencies such as Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver Civic Theatres receive municipal funds but have independent governance and administrative bodies. Partner organizations do not receive any municipal funds and also have independent governance and administrative bodies.



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

The City is responsible for overseeing the implementation of strategic policies to create a better city. We do this by working day-to-day on projects that help keep Vancouver operating, such as coordinating and planning for the development of housing, funding social and community services, undertaking maintenance and improvements of the city's public works and licensing businesses.



## METRO VANCOUVER

Metro Vancouver is a federation of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation. Their core services are drinking water, wastewater treatment and solid waste management. Metro Vancouver also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system and provides affordable housing. The regional district is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each local authority.



## VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Vancouver Police Board is the employer and governing body of the Vancouver Police Department, and a separate legal entity from the City. City Council provides funding for the VPD through the annual budget, under the BC Police Act which mandates how municipal police departments are funded. The Act is currently undergoing review with the Province.



## VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH

Vancouver Coastal Health is a regional health authority that provides healthcare through hospitals, primary care clinics, community health centres and long-term care and is provincially mandated. The City works closely with VCH on the Healthy City Strategy which includes responding to the opioid crisis, enhancing our collaborative efforts around a healthy environment, and food security.



## VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD

The Vancouver School Board is the school district that Vancouver's K-12 schools and is governed by the Vancouver Board of Education of nine-elected trustees and one student trustee. The VSB curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education.



## VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is separate legal entity from the City and is governed by the provincial Library Act. The VPL Board is made up of 13 trustees appointed by City Council and develops library policy and service strategy, provides financial oversight and works with the Chief Librarian to oversee the provision of services.



## VANCOUVER PARK BOARD

The Vancouver Park Board is the only elected body of its kind in Canada and has jurisdiction, and control over more than 240 public parks in Vancouver and a large public recreation system of community centres, pools, rinks, fitness centres, golf courses, street trees, marinas, playing fields, and more.



## TRANSLINK

Translink delivers and plan the region's transportation system through its subsidiaries: Coast Mountain Bus Company Ltd., BC Rapid Transit Company (SkyTrain) and West Coast Express Limited, and its contractors. Translink is governed by the Board of Directors and Mayor Council, which Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewarts sits on, and they approve transportation plans and strategies - including pricing and routes - for the region.



## BC EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES

BC Emergency Health Services provides emergency services and patient transfers and oversees the BC Ambulance Services and BC Patient Transfer Services. The BCEHS is part of the Provincial Health Authority and works closely with Vancouver's Fire and Rescue Services calls.



## BC HOUSING

BC Housing develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options across BC. They are accountable to the Minister of Municipal Services and Housing and are governed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. The City works to advocate for Vancouver residents, advance housing priorities, and partner with them on the development of affordable housing in Vancouver, but cannot intervene in their decision-making.

# Community recommendations: Advocacy to agencies and partners

Community recommendations regarding delivery of services outside the scope of the City's functions are outlined in this section. The development and implementation of such requests is at the will and discretion of the independent agencies and partners, but the City and its elected Council can only play an advocacy role.

Building on years of organizing, the summer of 2020 has seen renewed calls for changes related to:

**Policing:** Shift police departments' funding and practices, including diverting funds from armed policing towards childcare support, education, comprehensive mental health intervention and social support, local restorative justice services, employment programs, access to recreational facilities, community-directed public investment, peer-based programming, culturally-led policies and more. Also make changes to data collection and reporting, demilitarization and reduction of fire arms, and a ban on street checks. While the supervision of policing is primarily the role of the Vancouver Police Board, Vancouver City Council has passed a motion to ban street checks.

**Schools:** Calls to action asked for acknowledgement of dismissal of several incidents of blatant anti-Black racism including hate speech and systemic practices in Vancouver schools. Communities also called for work by the Vancouver School Board to increase resources, policies, and programs related to anti-racism work to address anti-Black racism in collaboration with Black and Indigenous community organizations. Prior work has outlined the need for protocols to address racist incidents, educational resources and updated curriculum, Black student/ family supports, and human resources, training, and leadership that reflect Black and African diasporic communities.

**Health:** Prior policy work recommended formalizing work with Vancouver Coastal Health to address health disparities for Black and African diasporic communities, with tools that include race-disaggregated data, training, and public engagement to identify barriers and necessary programmatic adjustments.

## Anti-racism interagency & partners working group

The City invited public agencies and partners to join a collaborative working group to co-create and align long-term anti-racism strategies. Invitations have been extended to Vancouver public agencies including Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Park Board, and Vancouver Public Library, and public partners such as the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Coastal Health. Preparation includes:

- 1) Research on partnership model structure, community representation, and resources costing to support the work going forward
- 2) Draft memorandum of understanding(MOU)/terms of reference(TOR); convene in September
- 3) Community recommendations to be considered include: data desegregated by race to support equitable policy decision-making, resources and service provinces; culturally and psychologically safe reporting; and supports for victims/targets of hate crimes and racism, including Black and African diasporic people.

## Housing Data

The City of Vancouver has requested that BC Housing (BCH) update their next Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) upgrade and develop ethical models to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data on race to improve data on Black and African diasporic experiences related to shelters and homelessness services.