TO: Hood River Development Code Update Project Management Team

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RE: Hood River Diversity Equity and Inclusion Assessment

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Introduction

The purpose of the Hood River Development Code Audit (Code Audit) is to identify inconsistencies with State land use law and existing City Comprehensive Plan policies, internal conflicts, as well as to develop a framework to amend development code provisions that need improvement or clarification. A primary goal is to make the development code more workable, clear, and objective. While not focused exclusively on housing, the audit is intended to lead to amendments that help the City ensure consistency with several recent State strategies and requirements to increase housing availability and affordability. In addition to meeting those overall objectives, the code audit and anticipated subsequent code update is expected to identify and help remove potential development code barriers to housing; advance social equity goals; and improve both the usability and outcomes associated with the code for a full range of Hood River community members.

As part of the project, this Diversity Equity and Inclusion Assessment (DEIA) has been developed for the Code Update to help the Project Management Team (PMT) to understand, analyze, and minimize inequities, barriers to opportunities, and disparities among different populations. This framework has been and will continue to be used throughout the project to ensure equity is considered in decision-making processes, code analyses and in making recommendations for code amendments. The same consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion will continue to be considered in the findings and recommendations during the Phase 2 Code Update project.

Framework for Considering Equity

The Hood River City Council adopted Resolution 2020-13, Racial and Social Equity, which "acknowledges that systemic racism and institutional inequities harm black, indigenous and other people of color in our community, and the City supports the goal of systematic change to achieve racial and social equity in our community." Further, the City Council resolves to "identify and eliminate instances of bias and racial/social equity barriers in City programs and services, and will continue making changes to city policies, including land use, housing policy, and zoning...." And, "the City will actively seek input from all community members, especially individuals from communities disproportionately affected by racism and other economic and social disparities."

The following table provides a framework used to assess equity in the Code Update processes and outcomes. Creating equitable processes will help ensure that diverse and underrepresented communities (including traditionally underrepresented and low-income communities) are able to influence and inform the Code Audit and any recommendations that come from it.

Code Audit Process		Audit Report and Recommendations	
Identify Development Code Barriers to traditionally underrepresented Communities	Engagement Process	Audit Report Development	Measurement and Analysis
Identify traditionally underrepresented within Hood River who may face disproportionate barriers to using the code or disproportionate impacts from implementation of the code Identify Development Code Barriers, such as language (English vs. Spanish) but also the type and level of language used and the general familiarity with the land use and building permit process.	Engage Spanish-speaking community members to learn about their use of the development code and the barriers they face in using it. Engage developers who work specifically with affordable housing, economic development and fair housing. Use engagement findings to inform the development and implementation of the project. Build awareness and support through the engagement process.	Identify outcomes within the Code Update Project that respond to community needs and remove barriers to understanding and using the code. Identify types of requirements that may create barriers to housing or other development needed by disadvantaged community members and suggest ways to reduce or eliminate these barriers through updates to the Code.	Develop measurements to understand the equity impact of recommended Code Amendments.

Population Focus

As noted in the Introduction, a primary goal of the Code Update will be to make the development code more workable, clear, and objective. Part of this goal is to make the development code more equitable to traditionally underrepresented within Hood River. The groups that fall into this category include Latinos and other communities of color, farmworkers, seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, people with limited English proficiency, and workers with low pay (such as caregivers, hospitality staff, retail staff, and others).

Given the relatively small size of Hood River, information available about communities of color is limited except for the Latino population which makes up approximately 30% of the City's

population[1]. Additionally, data shows that approximately 27% of the City's population have children living in the home and over 13% of the total population is living with a disability[2].

Framework Application and Promotion of Equity

This section describes how the Project Management Team (PMT), including City of Hood River Staff and the MIG team members have employed the equity framework throughout the Code Audit to date and will continue to use it as the work on the Code Audit proceeds. This section also describes how equity can continue to be a central component during the Phase 2 Code Update process.

Identify where there are existing inequities and disparities:

- During initial meetings, the PMT considered ways to incorporate and promote equity throughout every stage of the project, including gathering and analyzing data, drafting and evaluating recommendations and producing reports.

- The PMT worked to identify traditionally underrepresented within Hood River that could be impacted by barriers within the development code. Communities identified included Spanish-speaking people including Latinos and other communities of color, people who earn less money, people with transportation barriers, people who have differing housing needs, people with disabilities, farmworkers, seniors, and families with children.

- The PMT also worked on identifying who this project seeks to benefit and including the same groups listed above.

Engagement Process:

- The City worked with facilitators from The Next Door, Inc. (TNDI) to organize and conduct a focus group with Spanish-speaking community members to learn about their values, priorities, needs, and challenges in regard to the development code. MIG, City staff, and TNDI worked collaboratively to draft meetings questions and materials, including an educational component of the meeting. TNDI led facilitation of the meeting, with assistance from an MIG staff member who spoke Spanish and presented information to the group about the land use planning and development code process.

- The Consultant Team also conducted focus group meetings with affordable housing developers, fair housing advocates and those working in economic development who could provide feedback on working with the development code and barriers to developing housing for traditionally underrepresented .

- The Consultant Team and City staff emphasized the importance of addressing equity goals and objectives in presenting information about the project process and findings to

[1] U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.) *DP05 ACS Demographics and Housing Estimates*. Retrieved July 30, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/
[2] U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.) *DP02 Selected Social Characteristics in the United States*. Retrieved July 30, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/

members of the Hood River City Council and Planning Commission and solicited their advice in identifying community members and groups to engage in the interested parties' meetings.

- The PMT is preparing a preliminary Community Engagement Plan for the Phase 2 Code Update process. This engagement plan and process also will emphasize the need to engage with traditionally underrepresented and those who help serve them. The Phase 2 Engagement Plan will incorporate recommendations and findings from this DEI Assessment.

Implementation

The PMT has worked to date to identify outcomes from the Code Audit and Focus Group Interviews that respond to community needs and promote equity within the development code. Initial observations that will be addressed further in Code Audit recommendations and the Code Update process include the following:

- Auditing and updating the development Code ultimately will benefit the identified populations by increasing usability, clarity and objectivity for all community members, including traditionally underrepresented .

- The use and understanding of the code should not create disproportionate barriers for traditionally underrepresented . Possible improvements include:

    - Produce or make the Code available in both English and Spanish.

    - Providing "easy to understand" handouts or other informational materials for popular topics including zoning types, development standards, and application processes.

    - Use plain language wherever possible throughout the Development Code to improve its clarity and usability.

    - Consider designating a staff member who is fluent in Spanish as a liaison for Spanish-speaking community members to help them navigate the land use planning and permitting process.

    - Develop simplified processes for improving existing homes and businesses.

    - Consider creating and adopting an affordable housing ordinance consistent with State statutes.

    - Continue to support the availability of multiple housing types for community members across the socio-economic spectrum.

Measurement and Analysis

The City should continue to track progress on equity goals as the Code Audit project is implemented. Some recommendations for measuring and analyzing progress include:

- Use measures and goals developed for the Public Engagement Plan to reflect on project goals and assess progress.

- Communicate progress – The City should develop a plan to clearly communicate project progress to stakeholders and community groups.

- Promote transparency and accountability – The City should be transparent in publishing reports and implementing recommended amendments to allow interested parties to understand how changes are being implemented and it should promote opportunities for feedback on progress.

- Implement the project in a flexible manner. The City should be flexible in project implementation to change course when not on track to meet equity outcomes.