

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Advisory Board Consolidation of the Truth Plaque Task Force and Racial Equity Commission

Department: Town Clerk's Office and Town Manager's Office

What are the racial and equity impacts?

The Council is committed to engaging community, hearing from those most impacted and increasing opportunities when possible. Reduction of boards and commissions could be interpreted as a mixed message to some residents. The narrative is inclusive engagement however the reality for some may seem different. Board and commission membership may look different due to a decrease in seats that equates to limited voices. Many of the boards, in particular the Truth Plaque Task Force and Racial Equity Commission contain majority African American residents. By reducing the number of boards, we may also be losing institutional knowledge and expertise from diverse residents. We need to remain mindful of impact and potential impact.

Who is or will experience community burden?

The residents who no longer serve on the commission, board or task force may experience some discomfort because of the reduction in contributing to town governance. The Town may experience limited exposure and voice to those most impacted.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Overall Town government may experience benefit because the membership structure is more streamlined, potentially concise focused recommendations from appointed residents. The Town Council values input from residents and community input especially those impacted by the action.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Advisory boards and committees are an avenue for residents to engagement in the local government process and provide insight. Historically, this process has been limited only to those who hold the power and are the majority. In North Carolina, along with most of the country, this was always White Males who were property owners. As the country evolved and enacted legislation to protect the rights of all persons, mainly the 13th-15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Voting Rights Act of 1965, the process for racial minority local government participation gradually became easier. However, these laws could not, and did not simply erase centuries of suppression and limitations on voting and participation. Advisory boards help local governments make informed decisions that consider the backgrounds and life experiences of diverse persons.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

By reducing the number of advisory boards and commissions, hence the number of voices, it may reduce the amount of people who can participate in local government decision making. With fewer boards and commissions overall, there are less people appointed by Council to serve as a voice. This means that fewer people will have the opportunity to participate in local government, their voices heard and overall feedback in this manner.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

The Town Clerk's Office and Town Manager's Office are committed to making this process open and transparent. Even if the number of board and commissions change, our focus on inclusivity remains constant. We will work diligently to dismantle participation barriers and ensure that with fewer groups, there is still transparency and options for residents to engage and share feedback.