

**Macalester-Groveland Community Council  
Inclusivity and Equity Strategic Action Plan  
Adopted November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**Introduction/About Us**

The Macalester-Groveland Community Council (MGCC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to fostering community participation in local government decisions and initiatives that make our neighborhood a great place to live, work, learn and play. Our board and committees are comprised of dedicated volunteers who serve our community with integrity through a broad range of activities. We host community conversations on issues of importance, lead community-building projects, organize community events and serve as a hub of information and resources for the community.

The Macalester-Groveland community is primarily residential with nodes of mixed business and institutional uses scattered throughout. Our population of 18,730 is 13% people of color and 33% renters. Additionally, 34% of our residents earn less than \$50,000 and 39% earn more than \$100,000.

**Background/What we have done so far**

The MGCC recognizes that equitable community engagement is a critical component of our work. We are dedicated to ensuring that we reach into every part of our community and that our work benefits all our residents. We value the diverse perspectives that additional voices can bring to our conversations and the meaningful outcomes that we can achieve with more authentic engagement. A diversity of perspectives is an essential component of accountable and representative decision-making.

In recognition that the MGCC could do more in pursuit of equitable engagement, the Board of Directors created the Inclusivity Task Force (ITF).

**Inclusivity Task Force**

In January 2016, at an annual retreat for all Board and committee members, we dedicated several hours to further defining the work of the ITF. We framed our discussion of equity and inclusivity around four specific questions:

- What voices are missing?
- What are the barriers to participation?
- Why do people become involved?
- What would happen if our work included these missing voices?

*Resolution passed Nov 12, 2015*

**Be it resolved:**

MGCC will convene a task force of Board and community members charged with not only determining a solution for increasing board representation for currently underrepresented groups in our community, including but not limited to renters, students and minorities, but also ensuring that membership to all MGCC committees is open to all members of the community and that no committee or subcommittee shall exist that includes only membership to a particular subset of community members, nor shall any committee or subcommittee exclude membership to any subset of community members.

The MGCC Executive Committee will convene this task force, which will include a member from each committee. The task force will report to the full Board of Directors.

The summary from the retreat (Appendix A) reveals a robust discussion around these questions. This discussion revealed an optimism that greater inclusion will lead to a richer, more authentic MGCC with more meaningful outcomes and deeper roots in the community. We also acknowledged that greater equity and inclusion will sometimes be difficult. It might mean changing how we operate or participating in difficult conversations or confronting uncomfortable truths. We recognized that sustaining this work will require nurturing a supportive and respectful environment for everyone involved, as well as the dedication of resources over time.

Informed by the discussion at the retreat, the ITF began its work in March 2016 by identifying three potential levels of inequity at play in our work:

- Our Board and committee membership (are we representative of the neighborhood?)
- The reach of our engagement and programming (do we provide opportunities for all to participate?)
- Macalester-Groveland as a whole (who has the opportunity to live, work, learn or play in the community?)

In recognition that we have the most influence over the first level - our Board and committee membership - the ITF began there. We researched the demographics of the neighborhood to develop a baseline for comparison. Using the MN Compass dataset to create questions that would generate results that could be compared to the demographics of Macalester-Groveland and the City, we conducted a survey of all active Board and committee members. We identified six areas in which our 2016 Board and committee membership was not representative of the neighborhood (see Appendix B):

- Age (overrepresented in some categories, underrepresented in others)
- Gender (women were underrepresented)
- Race/ethnicity (people of color were underrepresented)
- Educational attainment (those without a college/graduate degree were underrepresented)
- Housing type (renters were underrepresented)
- Household income (those earning less than \$100,000 were underrepresented)

### **Bylaw changes**

After identifying these six characteristics that were underrepresented in our membership, the Inclusivity Task Force began an examination of MGCC's policies and procedures, beginning with the bylaws. The ITF specifically looked for potential barriers to participation as well as opportunities to be more inclusive. Several barriers to be removed and opportunities to be added were identified in the MGCC bylaws.

After a thorough year-long process, the ITF recommended several changes to the MGCC bylaws. The ITF proposed adding dedicated seats on the Board for students, renters and residential landlords. However, the 2016 MGCC Board was already large with twenty-five members so simply adding additional seats wasn't feasible. The ITF proposed merging the existing seventeen residential grids down to five grids with two representatives each. This reduced the number of available seats on the Board and allowed for the creation of the three additional seats dedicated to missing voices – a student seat, a renter seat and a residential landlord seat – while still bringing the total number down to a manageable twenty-one board seats.

Among other changes, the ITF recommended that we discontinue operating by the complex Robert's Rules of Order and instead operate using the simpler Democratic Rules of Order. This would make it more likely that newcomers would feel more comfortable participating. The ITF also recommended revisions of text to better define and confirm our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

The bylaw changes were presented and approved at the MGCC's annual community meeting in April 2017.

### **Implementation: The First Year**

In July 2018, fifteen months after the bylaw changes were adopted, we conducted the same demographic survey of the 2018 MGCC Board and committee members to ascertain any progress in the first year of implementation of the bylaw changes. Survey results (Appendix C) showed, yes, progress had been made in ALL SIX categories towards creating a Board and committee membership that is more representative of our neighborhood!

For the second half of 2018, the Inclusivity Task Force committed to the creation of a Strategic Action Plan to continue to guide MGCC's progress toward becoming more equitable and inclusive. At our July 2018 retreat, the full MGCC Board and Committee membership participated in a facilitated discussion around equity goals and action steps. The ITF used the results of this discussion to create the following Inclusivity and Strategic Action Plan.

**Macalester-Groveland Community Council (MGCC)**  
**Inclusivity and Equity Strategic Action Plan**  
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**Goal 1:**

Increase the active participation by underrepresented groups in MGCC's internal structures so that we better reflect the demographics of the neighborhood.

- **Action step 1:** Examine alternative methods of participation to the traditional meeting model.  
✓ **Milestone:** Report to Board on alternative methods by June 2019.
- **Action step 2:** Explore, research and collect additional sources of information/data other than Wilder, particularly data on LGBTQ, religious affiliation and ability groups.  
✓ **Milestone:** Report to Board on alternative sources of data by June 2019.
- **Action step 3:** Commit to redoing the demographic survey on a regular basis for annual (year-to-year) comparison.  
✓ **Milestone:** Complete the survey annually.

**Goal 2:**

Increase the active participation by underrepresented groups in MGCC's programming, projects and events so that we better reflect the demographics of the neighborhood.

- **Action step 1:** Review existing events to identify content that is meaningful to underrepresented groups. Identify potential gaps in our programming and examine how existing events could be more welcoming.  
✓ **Milestone:** Incorporate review into the 2019 work plan for the Community Building Committee.