

## **Community Outreach & Engagement Policy Proposal | June 2022**

### **BACKGROUND**

[The Coalition for Neighborhood Self-Determination](#) is a coalition of neighborhood based organizations and grassroots groups advocating for environmental justice, fair housing and self-determination in the City of Dallas. The Coalition formed in response to the dissolution of the neighborhood-led planning policy in April 2021, and has since successfully advocated for the path to policy for neighborhood-led plans to be restored.

[Ethos Equity Consulting](#) is a social impact firm committed to supporting individuals, institutions and initiatives through an intersectional, anti-racist DEI approach. Ethos Equity understands that people aren't one-dimensional and neither are effective strategies. That's why the firm works collaboratively to identify blind spots, address opportunity gaps and guide transformative system changes; embedding equitable solutions throughout all outcomes. Through system audits and strategic planning, interactive trainings, grassroots community engagement, and professional development Ethos Equity helps build capacity to reach desired goals.

Throughout the development and growth of the Coalition, a common concern around the lack of policy related to outreach and engagement from the City of Dallas emerged. In Spring 2022, the Coalition partnered with Ethos Equity Consulting to research and propose pathways for equitable and inclusive community outreach and engagement after learning that Austin and San Antonio both have community outreach and engagement policies instituted.

### **GOALS**

Including, but not limited to:

- Clearly defining the terms “outreach” and “engagement”
- Auditing existing methods for outreach and communication across departments
- Establishing a cross-departmental policy of standardized operations related to communication, outreach and engagement by incorporating audit outcomes
- Maximizing public engagement and participation by improving methods and timing related to outreach and communication
- Ensuring all communications and engagement activities are language accessible – including Spanish interpretation and translation
- Incorporating diverse methods of traditional, digital and grassroots communication and outreach
- Improving and standardizing methods for resident engagement related to specific issues, departments, and subject areas

- Supporting the development of community-based leadership by investing in neighborhood-based programs around civic engagement and public processes

## **PROPOSAL**

1. **Seek funding in the 2023 fiscal year budget to execute an audit of current cross-departmental practices** related to targeting and engaging residents. This will help inform a standardized policy for cross-departmental communication, outreach and engagement by January 2023.
  - a. [The City of Austin](#) assembled a task force of residents and community-based stakeholders across council districts to work with a third-party consultant and examine internal practices to deliver recommendations. [The report is linked here.](#)
  - b. San Antonio’s City Council requested that their Government & Public Affairs department (GPA) lead an effort to assess current public participation techniques being utilized. They convened a cross-departmental working group and established guiding principles, reviewed Citizens to be Heard, and developed a tool that updates the community on specific issues.
2. **By July 2023, establish cross-departmental policy rooted in equity and inclusion** by incorporating audit outcomes and explicitly defining outreach, engagement, and the processes for meaningful public participation.
3. **Consolidate all City of Dallas community outreach and engagement initiatives** under the Office of Communications, Outreach and Marketing by December 2023 **OR hire communication specialists for all departments** that conduct regular outreach and engagement with the public.

## **ACTIONS TO DATE**

Since beginning this initiative, Ethos Equity and the Coalition have:

- **Created and deployed a bilingual survey gathering quantitative and qualitative data** related to resident experiences with City of Dallas community outreach and engagement efforts. This survey allows for a baseline understanding of resident perspectives in order to make recommendations.
- **Connected with the Office of Equity and Inclusion to incorporate these recommendations into the upcoming Racial Equity Plan.** It’s important to note that the proposed items related to auditing cross-departmental practices and implementing cross-departmental policy will be included in the Racial Equity Plan report for consideration by the City Council in August 2022.
- **Discussed how policy related to community outreach and engagement can address equity** related concerns related to public participation and improve relations with



neighborhood leadership **with Councilwoman Jaynie Schultz** (Chair of the Workforce, Education and Equity Committee).

### **NEXT STEPS**

#### **1. Racial Equity Plan**

Ethos Equity Consulting and the Coalition will continue working with the OEI to include proposed measures in the REP, while also advocating at the August council briefing.

#### **2. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget**

Councilwoman Schultz will share this proposal with city staff and other council members to determine how to include it in the FY 23 budget.