

## Springfield Public Employment Equity Plan | Final Report

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### Introduction

Springfield is the largest economy in Western Massachusetts, and its public sector constitutes an important portion of the local workforce. The City's workforce of approximately 12,000 workers includes City Departments, sworn officers in Public Safety Departments, and the Springfield School District. This group represents 14% of the city's overall workforce. Public sector employment plays a critical role in creating economic opportunity by providing what are referred to as "good jobs," offering stable, family supporting wages, benefits, and wealth building opportunities. For people of color, these jobs have often provided key links into the middle class, with more opportunities for merit-based advancement and higher pay than they would receive in the private sector. Public sector jobs can lay a foundation for workers from marginalized communities to be more resilient and thrive, before, during, and after crisis<sup>1</sup>. Given the crucial impact of these jobs, local governments must work to ensure that their workforces reflect the communities they serve and extend opportunities to the most economically vulnerable.

Many municipalities across the country are examining whether there are disparities in hiring and promotion within public sector workforce for people of color, and how addressing those inequities might create greater economic opportunity for vulnerable communities. With that ambition in mind, this report was commissioned by the City of Springfield's Office of Disaster Recovery and Compliance (ODRC) from HR&A Advisors, and it provides an analysis of existing disparities in the representation of environmental justice populations in City employment, identifies City policies and practices that act as barriers to workforce equity, summarizes best practices and principles in creating workforce equity, and provides prioritized action items for the implementation of policies that can address those barriers.

We found that:

- The City of Springfield's workforce does not reflect the demographics of the city, Black and Latinx women are the most under-represented in the workforce;
- Women in general are also underrepresented in the workforce;
- People of color are under-represented in executive and managerial positions;
- Community-based organizations and other workforce organizations can and should play a greater role in the City's efforts around equity and inclusion.

Springfield must confront the existing racial inequity in its economy and City workforce. The Government Alliance for Racial Equity defines racial equity as a goal of "race not being a predictor of success, and that [government] has successful systems and structure that work for all." Our data analysis, though not complete, describes a Springfield that is now majority people of color, but also poorer and less educated than its neighbors in the Pioneer Valley. Median incomes in Springfield are less than half of the statewide average, its poverty rates are 16 points higher than the statewide average, and rent-burden is 12 points higher. The proportion of the population not graduating high school is twice as high as the state's overall.<sup>2</sup> Inside the city, it means that the city's Environmental Justice ("EJ") Populations – most often occupied by people of color – also reflect this disparity.<sup>3</sup> 92% of Springfield's Latino adults and 21% of its Black adults do not have a

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<sup>1</sup> UCLA Labor Center

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019.

<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

bachelor's degree.<sup>4</sup> 90% of Springfield's residents are part of EJ communities, which are classified as communities with a combination of: high concentrations of people of color, low-English proficiency residents, or low-income residents<sup>5</sup>. These criteria are correlated with disproportionate effects from the impacts of climate change and from negative environmental impacts of energy production, development, infrastructure, pollution, and waste disposal.

The argument for addressing inequity in the public sector of Springfield is two-fold: first, the public sector can serve as a critical ladder for economic opportunity for Springfield residents—especially those who are the most vulnerable. Connecting city jobs to applicants in EJ communities will give them stable employment and greater opportunities for training and advancement than in the private sector. Directing City jobs to these communities can reduce unemployment and raise income for their families. The public sector can, therefore, become a lever through which Springfield can increase equity for these communities in the local economy.

An important second goal of addressing inequity through public sector employment is that the City will be a more effective and representative government. Springfield is roughly 30% white, while its workforce is two-thirds white<sup>6</sup>. Diversity facilitates productivity and contributes to the competitive advantage of organizations and of places. Diversity's positive effects are well-documented. Studies have shown that diverse organizations outperform more homogenous groups of individuals in terms of intelligence in problem solving exercises. They reach conclusions more quickly and more accurately.<sup>7</sup> As such, diverse organizations are proven to more effectively allocate resources and to deliver services.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, organizations with commitments to diversity outperform their peers financially.<sup>9</sup> A more diverse, more equitable City workforce has the potential to benefit Springfield through improved delivery of public services. Diverse public service organizations that reflect the demographics of the communities they serve are seen as more transparent, impartial, and less discriminatory.<sup>10</sup>

## Methodology

This study was conducted through research into national best practices, analysis of limited employee demographic and payroll data, and interviews with select staff, community partners and workforce development organizations. A full list of interviews is in Appendix A.

## Existing Conditions

Data analysis of city demographics and workforce revealed disparities for EJ Communities and Springfield as a whole:

- Springfield accounts for most of the region's jobs, but not most of its workers;
- The City has significantly lower income and educational attainment than the rest of the region;
- The population is growing more diverse, but inequity persists;
- The City workforce does not reflect the diversity in the population, specifically for women of color.

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<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau

<sup>5</sup> Office of Environmental Protection, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau and City Employment Data

<sup>7</sup> Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies*, Princeton University Press, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> M. E. Jayne and R. L. Dipboye, "Leveraging diversity to improve business performance: Research findings and recommendation for organizations," *Human Resource Management*, 43(4), 409-424, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley Slater, Robert A. Weigand, and Thomas J. Zwirlein, "The business case for commitment to diversity," *Business Horizons*, 51 (3): 201-209, May 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service." October 2009

## City Demographics

The City of Springfield is a regional hub for Western Massachusetts. Springfield accounts for 34% of the population and 40% of jobs in Hampden County, while occupying just 5% of its land.<sup>11</sup> With an economy based in education and healthcare, including employers such as Bay State Medical Center and MassMutual, it is a regional employment center. However, 70% of Springfield's workers live outside the city, and much of the wealth generated by this status as an economic hub does not remain within city limits.<sup>12</sup> The areas surrounding Springfield are home to the region's wealthier residents.<sup>13</sup>

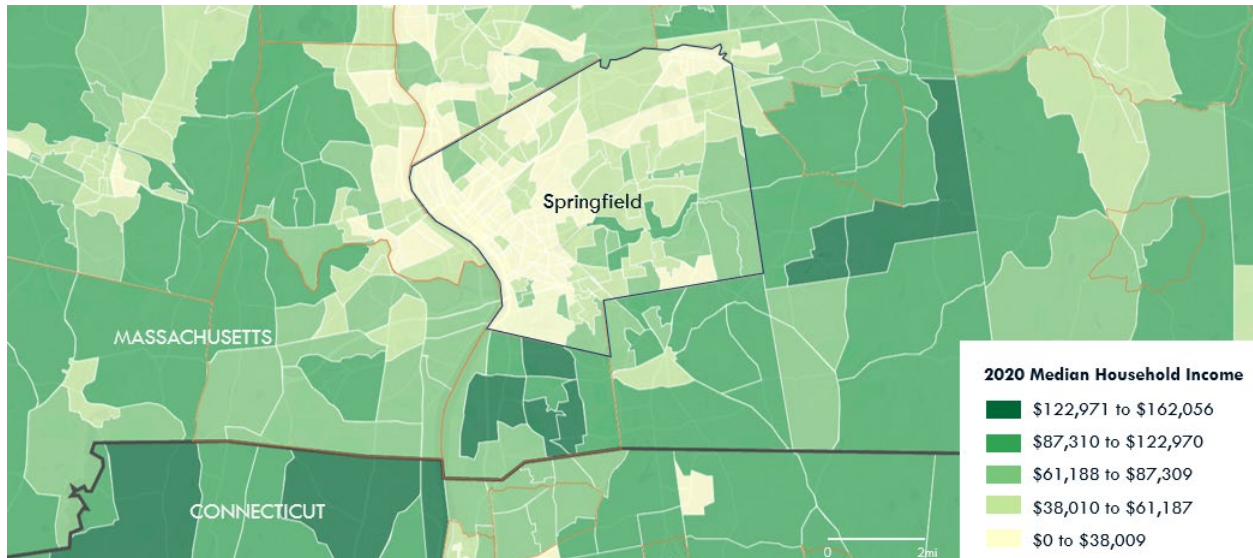


Figure 1. Median Income by Census Block Group. Source: ESRI.

The City's residents are also significantly poorer than the rest of Massachusetts, with median household incomes less than half that of the state level and a poverty rate 16 points higher than the statewide average.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, residents are highly rent-burdened, with 59% of residents paying more than 30% of their income on rent, compared to 47% in the rest of the state.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> US Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2018; ESRI.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

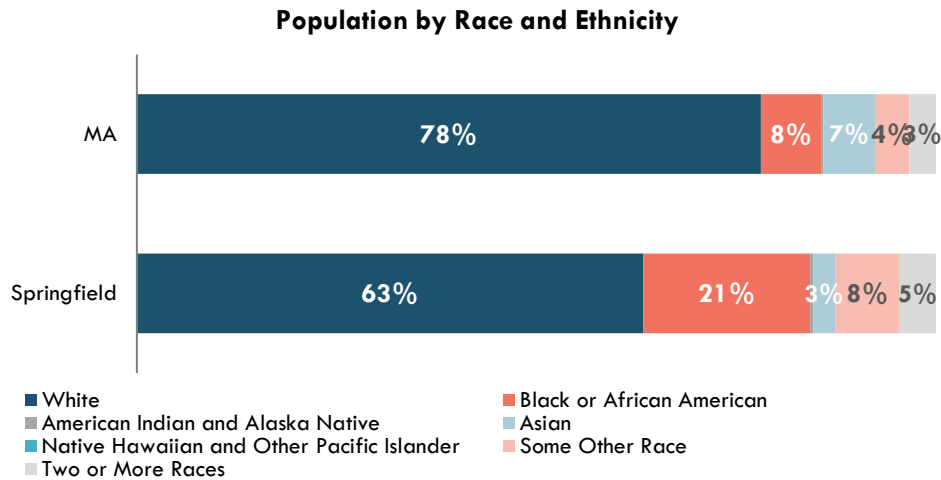


Figure 2. Population by Race and Ethnicity

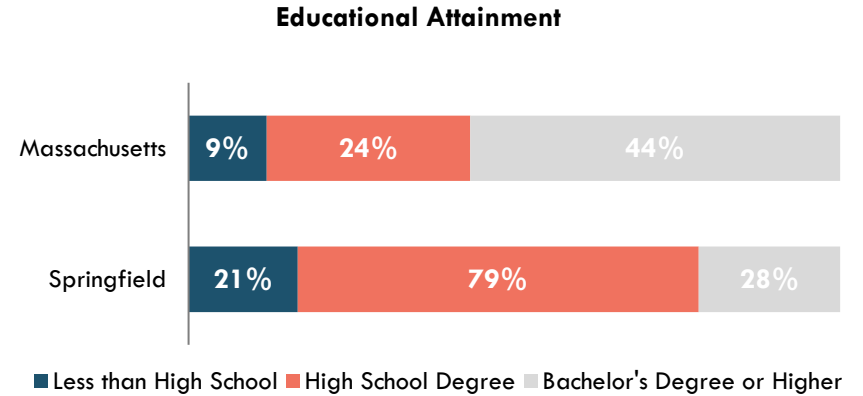


Figure 3. Educational Attainment

### Springfield is growing more diverse, yet inequity persists

Springfield is home to a highly diverse population - 54% of its population is non-white, compared to 22% statewide.<sup>16</sup> Over the last 40 years, the city has grown more diverse. It is home to a significant Puerto Rican community, and has the state's largest share of people with ancestry in the U.S. territory. Between 2017 – 2018 after Hurricane Maria, over 12,000 Puerto Ricans migrated to Massachusetts, and the greatest share of that number, 20%, came to Springfield.<sup>17</sup> Ten percent of its population is foreign-born, with significant immigrant communities from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Vietnam, Mexico, and Guatemala.<sup>18</sup> Springfield's educational attainment lags behind the statewide average. As seen in Figure 2, the proportion of the population not graduating high school is twice as high as the state's overall, and the rate of completion of a bachelor's degree or higher is 16% lower.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Granberry, Phillip and Valentino, Krizia, "Latinos in Massachusetts: Puerto Ricans"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019.

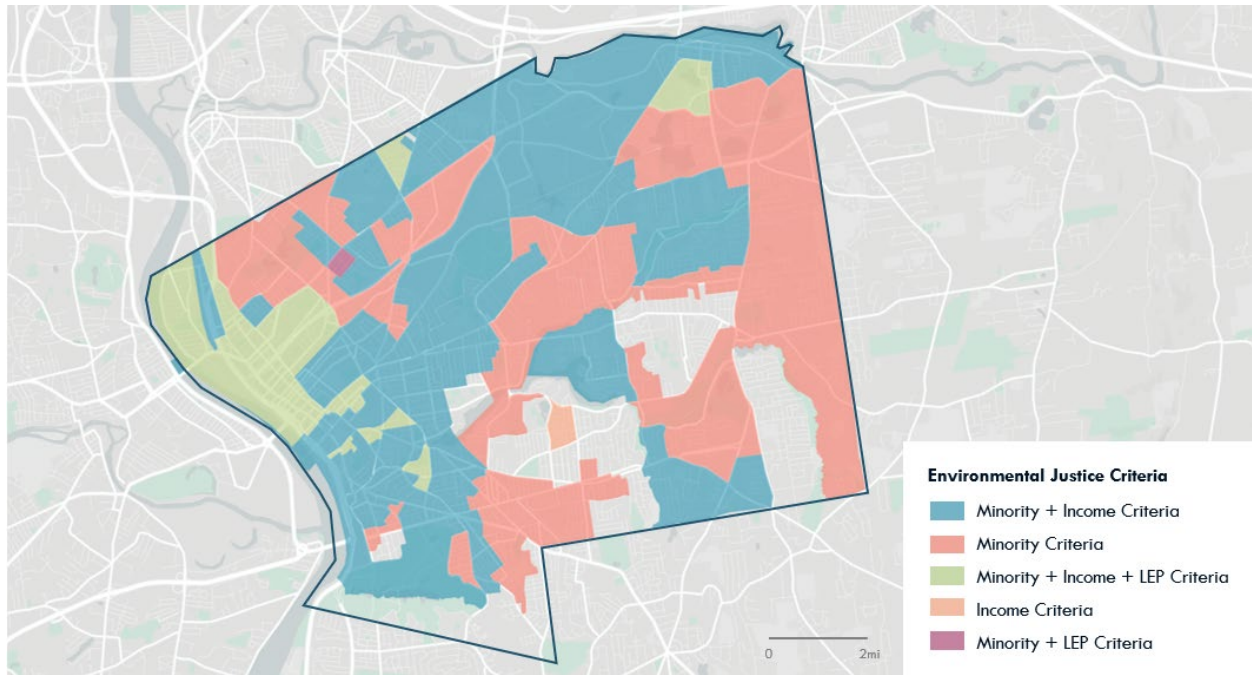


Figure 42. Environmental Justice Populations in Springfield

### Nearly all of Springfield meets EJ Criteria

Springfield’s designed EJ communities are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and by the negative environmental impacts of energy production, development, infrastructure, pollution, and waste disposal. According to the Commonwealth, EJ communities are defined by the following criteria:<sup>20</sup>

- “Block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65 percent of the statewide median; or
- 25% or more of the residents identify as a race other than white; or
- 25% or more of households have no one over the age of 14 who speaks English only or very well - English Isolation.”

In 2010, 90% of Springfield’s population lived in an area that adhered to at least one EJ criterion, among the ten highest concentrations of EJ population of any municipality in the state. Figure 4 shows the distribution of EJ criteria across the city, and the particularly high incidence of neighborhoods with concentrations of minority populations, low-income populations, and limited-English proficiency populations.

### Public Sector Workforce Demographics

The demographics of the City of Springfield’s workforce show that City employees do not reflect the city’s demographic makeup. City employees are disproportionately White and male compared to the city’s population.<sup>21</sup> While males comprise almost half of all City employees, though they are less than a quarter of the city’s population. Latinx females are particularly underrepresented - just 8% of City employees are Latinx females, but they make up 26% of the city’s population.

<sup>20</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

<sup>21</sup> City of Springfield, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019.

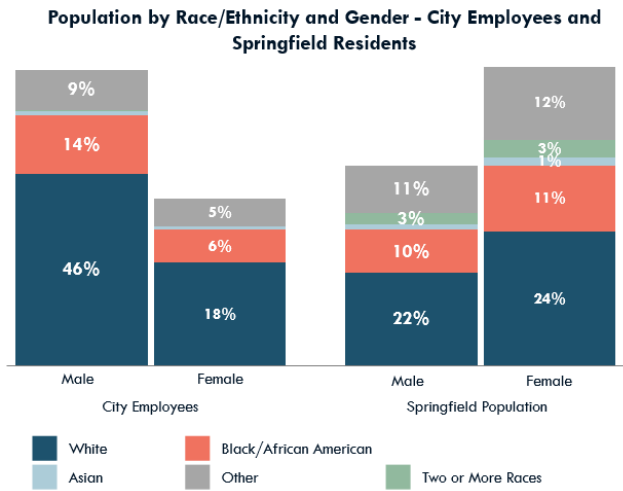


Figure 3. Race and Gender – Springfield Residents vs. City of Springfield Workforce

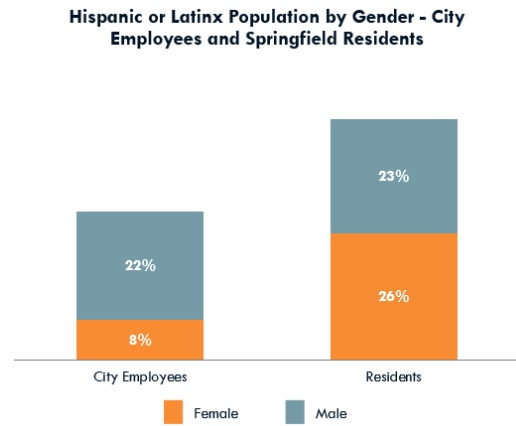


Figure 4. Latinx Population - City Workforce vs. Springfield Residents

Examining the tenure of City employees by race shows that employees hired more recently are more diverse than employees with longer tenures, tracking Springfield’s overall population trends. The city has grown more diverse in the past 40 years. In particular, the Latinx population has grown substantially. In 1980, just 9% of the city’s residents self-reported identifying as Hispanic or Latino, which grew to almost half of residents in 2021.<sup>22</sup> The overall gender breakdown of gender for City employees is consistent for employees with tenures between one and 30 years, while employees with tenures exceeding 40 years are overwhelmingly female.

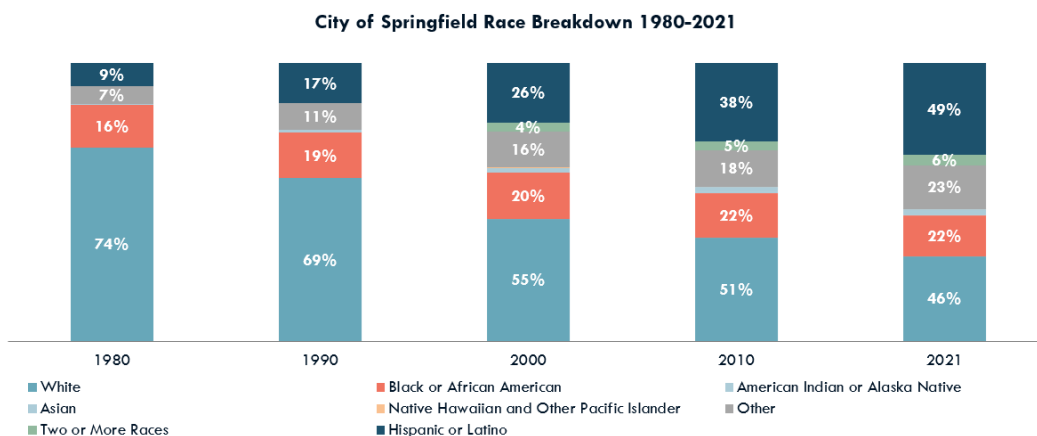


Figure 5. City Workforce - Race Breakdown by Tenure

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The City's patterns of employment by job type reflect the lack of racial and ethnic representation across the overall workforce. Non-white employees are underrepresented in executive and management positions, comprising 36% of executives and managers at the City and 54% of the overall city population.<sup>23</sup>

## Hiring at the City of Springfield Today

The City's hiring process begins with requests from City departments for staff to the Personnel Review Committee (PRC). The PRC process typically relies on a monthly cadence to review and approve potential new positions. PRC decisions are made based on guiding principles that center on a given department's level of need for a position, available budget, and compliance with Human Resources standards.

City of Springfield Public Employment Equity Plan  
Personnel Review Committee Process



Figure 6. Personnel Review Committee Process

Once a position is approved by the PRC, it is posted and recruitment begins. Recruitment for new hires is conducted by both the City's Human Resources Department as well as the Chief Diversity Officer. Recruitment and advertisement efforts include posting online to NEOGOV and Indeed.com, social media promotion, attending job fairs and events, advertisement in industry newsletters as applicable to specific positions, and lawn signs. Key staff, including the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and Chief of Staff, are notified at several points in the hiring process. The CDO is notified when a position is posted, when an advertisement closes, when interviewees are selected, and when candidates are selected. The CDO can also opt to sit in on interviews. Both the CDO and HR conduct recruitment, but with slightly different target audiences, collaborating where needed. The CDO has a specific focus on recruiting underrepresented populations. In the two years since the CDO position has existed the time of the creation of this report, CDO recruitment initiatives have consisted primarily of event and job fair attendance. Other than by industry or sector, HR does not target its recruitment efforts.

<sup>23</sup> City of Springfield.



Beyond departmental need, key factors in the City's hiring, promotion, and job creation decisions are the Civil Service process and the role of unions. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts manages the Civil Service process, administering Civil Service exams and dictating job requirements. Those who pass the exam may sign up for placement on eligibility lists, from which job applicants are selected. Applicants' placement on eligibility lists is based on an exam date, residency status, and veteran status, among others. Potential applicants can stay on eligibility lists for years before a position becomes available, by which time those applicants have often found employment elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> Lists with high turnover, such as those hiring for positions as drivers, have among the shortest awaits, according to interviews from City staff. The lists with the longest waits include those hiring for maintenance positions, which tend to see employees that stay for longer periods of time.<sup>25</sup> The Civil Service process rigidly controls application, eligibility, and advancement of many City employees in Springfield, limiting the potential refinement of hiring processes.

### **Personnel Review Committee Guiding Principles:**

- The position meets a critical need of the department without which the department will not be able to complete its core mission or will jeopardize public health / safety.
- The position has been budgeted for in the current FY and will be a prioritized position for the next FY to maintain core mission operations.
- The position is graded consistently with HR standards and other similar positions across departments.
- The salary adjustments are merit based or based on additional responsibilities outside of the current scope of the position and fall within the salary range of the position.
- Emergencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis and if necessary will be deliberated outside of the regular PRC monthly meeting. Requisitions should be made to Human Resource and Labor Relations Director.

Another key factor in hiring and advancement is the presence of bargaining units that organize City employees. Major unions include the United Public Service Employees Union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the Springfield Organization of Library Employees. Each bargaining unit negotiates its own terms with the City regarding standard City requirements, such as the residency requirement. Human Resources (HR) is the focal point for the interface between bargaining units and the City, while the Chief Diversity Officer has limited involvement with hiring and recruitment for union positions.

At the time of the writing of this report, the City of Springfield is hiring between 50 and 60 positions. Positions are listed on the City's NEOGOV online job application portal, accessible through the City's website. In addition to basic information about each role, each position lists required yes-or-no questions to be answered with application. Questions vary by position, with some pertaining to applicants' educational attainment, experience, or veteran status. All positions include questions on applicants' residency in or willingness to relocate to Springfield. NEOGOV's yes or no questions filter out all applicants who do not adhere to specified criteria. For example, a question in a position for an Administrative Aide to the City Council asks, "Do you have experience with setting up and coordinating virtual meetings via Zoom?" A potential candidate who does not have that experience might truthfully answer no, despite his or her potential capacity to learn the widely used program. However, that candidate's application would be scored below others who indicated a familiarity with Zoom. Conversely, a description for a position as an Assistant Assessor II asks, "Do you have a minimum of six months experience in related work?" The question does not specify what "related work" is. Whereas the position for Administrative Aide asks a specific question that might risk ruling

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<sup>24</sup> Staff Interviews

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



out potential candidates, the Assessor position asks an ambiguous question that may confuse potential job applicants or solicit applications that are not suited to the position. Required questions with binary answers as well as ambiguous language can inhibit a diverse, suitable candidate pool.

The City's job portal itself, NEOGOV, also presents potential challenges for diverse, effective hiring. NEOGOV offers a centralized and user-friendly platform for job applicants, convenient for both digital users and for City staff. However, the City's reliance on NEOGOV presents concerns related to accessibility. Exclusively using an online portal prevents potential applicants without access to a computer or to internet from accessing City jobs. In addition, both the City's website and the NEOGOV portal are available in English only. The City's webpage indicates that if language assistance is needed, applicants should go to City Hall room 005 for assistance.<sup>26</sup> An in-person visit is likely to rule out potential applicants who require language assistance.

### **Findings: Barriers to Equity at the City of Springfield**

The City of Springfield sought to examine its hiring, retention, and promotional practices in service of creating a workforce more reflective of the city's diversity, identifying specific barriers to employment for people of color, and setting clear and measurable goals by which to measure progress. The City has the opportunity to set the standard as an model employer in the Springfield community through hiring standards that reflect the values of fairness, equitable opportunity, and representation. To achieve this, the City of Springfield must recognize the existing barriers that jobseekers from among its most vulnerable communities – environmental justice communities – face in the hiring process.

Our study of the City's hiring and retention practices identified four primary areas in which jobseekers from EJ communities experience challenges:

- Availability of Data and Information;
- Institutional Processes;
- Qualification and Training; and
- External Relations and Perception.

**Availability of Data and Information:** As of the time of this report, the City did not have the following sources of data readily available or shareable:

- Employee demographics, positions, pay/wage information, and limited-English proficiency status;
- Data on the City's historic hiring, including number of applications received, number and profile of candidates interviewed, and profile of candidates selected;
- Interviews with City staff who belong to environmental justice communities;

These data are crucial components of a comprehensive analysis of workforce equity. Although the City does have comprehensive datasets through the EEO data and the publicly available Open Checkbook database, they could not be aligned to validate salary information by race or tenure. Without this information, it is not possible to analyze the relative success of different demographic groups in securing employment, efforts to reduce pay disparity, and opportunities for advancement. Data on retention and promotion are critical to tracking efforts to diversify upper management and executive level positions. Compiling data at this level

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<sup>26</sup> City of Springfield, Human Resources/Employment Opportunities, accessed June 8, 2021.

of detail will be critical to advancing a systematic review and revision of workforce equity practice and policy at the City of Springfield.

**Institutional Processes:** Hiring and promotion for a subsection of City jobs are dictated by the Civil Service process and by union-specific agreements. These processes exist to serve specific goals: the Civil Service system aims to achieve fairness in government hiring by removing opportunities for individual discretion that might lead to favoritism, nepotism, or other corrupt dynamics. Union agreements serve public employees by endowing them with collective bargaining power and the ability to negotiate terms of employment. While these processes serve the goals of transparency and workers' rights, they also create highly rigid institutional structures that inhibit alternative approaches to hiring that may serve new goals for public employment.

The Civil Service system is confusing and difficult to navigate for new users. City staff reported several key issues surrounding the system:

- **State websites and information sources lack clarity in communicating the steps of the Civil Service process** – from signing up to take the Civil Service exam, to the timing and considerations for the exam itself, to signing up for Eligibility Lists. Jobseekers are often confused about their application status after they have taken a Civil Service exam – many conflate signing up on an Eligibility List with a job application.
- **Eligibility List waits can be very long, in some cases years-long** – after which time candidates may have found other employment.
- **There is little support available for jobseekers to learn about the Civil Service process** – City staff reported that workforce development organizations do not have programming or services geared toward public sector employment that incorporate technical assistance or guidance related to Civil Service.
- **City job descriptions do not adequately explain the Civil Service process** – Job advertisements note whether a position falls under the Civil Service process, but do not provide information on the exam, timeline and dates for exam and city hiring, and may even state that the position is not currently open.

For many jobseekers, lack of clear information on process and timing might discourage them from applying. This level of ambiguity makes the process inaccessible to EJ communities, who may have less flexibility in ability to wait to learn about whether a potential opportunity will pan out, or who may have limited-English proficiency and find an already confusing process more incomprehensible, among other reasons.

Union agreements govern groups of employees separately according to the City's negotiations with each union, including terms such as pay, hours, and job responsibilities. However, because each union negotiates its own terms, the effect is one in which otherwise standard City policies around hiring and promotion are applied differently among City employees. An example of this is the City's residency requirement. All City employees are required to reside within Springfield city limits, with rare exceptions determined on a case-by-case basis, except for workers in the Police and Firefighters' unions who are given flexibility around this requirement. While most City employees are expected to reside in the community they serve, certain employees are exempt, creating an unbalanced set of rules and expectations for City employees.

**Qualifications and Specialized Training:** City positions that require highly specialized training or certifications, such as those that require a commercial drivers' license or a hoisting license, are in high demand. In interviews with City staff, these skills were highlighted among jobs that remain unfilled due to difficulty in finding qualified candidates.

In Springfield, 13% of people of color have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 27% of White people. Jobseekers in environmental justice communities often have lower levels of educational attainment, without the time or resources to access specialized training programs.

**Communication and Perception:** A critical barrier to increasing the racial and socioeconomic equity of Springfield's City employees is clear communication with jobseekers about City employment opportunities and in turn, the perception of public employment among the Springfield community. Opportunities for employment at the City lack clarity in several ways.

*Job descriptions can be written to be more accessible.* As noted previously, a job as driver of commercial vehicles is called a "Motor Equipment Operator." The descriptions also use the traditional minimum qualifications approach, which filters out potential candidates and prioritizes education and experience over skills. Furthermore, the online application process is accessible in English only, and excludes people with limited-English proficiency.

*The City has a missed opportunity to more closely collaborate with community-based and workforce development organizations in the recruitment process.* Our discussions with community-based organizations indicated tenuous networks of acquaintances and a lack of open lines of communication with City staff. One notable example of this was the challenge expressed by City staff of filling jobs that require certifications, specifically a hoisting license. When this demand for workers with a hoisting license was communicated to community partners, our interviews revealed an organization with a training and certification program specifically dedicated to hoisting licenses. This organization was unaware of the level of demand at the City. This specific instance is an anecdote, but it is one that illustrates a lack of strong networks of public and private stakeholders that are working towards the same mission of workforce development and equity.

*The City is perceived as a closed-off and biased employer.* Our conversations with City staff and with community organizations revealed ambivalence in how residents view City employment. Either residents are completely unaware of job opportunities at the City, or if they are, residents see these jobs as exclusive and open only to those who "know someone." Community-based organizations report that their members do not see public sector employment as open to them. Any policy and programmatic reforms that the City implements must incorporate measures to rebuild transparency, communication, clarity, and trust among constituents regarding its employment practices.

## **Best Practices in Public Sector Hiring**

To understand how Springfield's existing hiring practices can more effectively align with established principles, a qualitative review of best practices in public sector workforce equity was conducted. Six major best practices were identified.

### **Organizational Commitment**

- Organizations must create an established definition of workforce equity that includes specific categories of diversity and inclusion.
- In service of transparency and accountability, this commitment to equity statement should be published publicly on the city's website and in city communications, such as social media.
- The commitment language should clearly link several ideas - the stated commitment, the employee experience, and the success of the entity in achieving its mission. For example, Toronto's commitment

reads, “The City of Toronto is committed to a policy of fairness and full equity in employment and services in recognition of its obligations and responsibilities as an employer and of its leadership role in the community. The citizens of Toronto are best served by a public service which reflects the diversity of the community which it serves. This will be achieved through employment equity programs that remove barriers and monitor outcomes rather than by establishing requirements to precisely reflect the percentage of designated groups in the community.”<sup>27</sup>

- Leadership is essential to drive this commitment. City leaders can institute policies and set expectations that DEI efforts will be implemented at all levels. The City of Seattle’s benchmarking of major regional employers and leaders in workforce equity found that the King County and other public sector agencies were the best examples of workforce equity, where each had their chief executives directly responsible and accountable for the initiative. (City of Seattle)
- Equity should be elevated as a value essential to the City mission across all city functions. The City of Tacoma, Washington designated equity as a consistent principle across all city departments and agencies stating that equity aims to “change how business is done.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Transparency and Accountability**

It is crucial to create an articulated vision and plan for quantitative and qualitative metrics to communicate goals, track progress, and achieve meaningful results.

- A senior leader should be responsible for the success of workforce equity efforts as measured by those established metrics.
- Data on progress made in diversity and inclusion efforts should be publicly available and updated at established, regular intervals.
- An example of strong accountability measures is Sacramento’s Race & Gender Equity Action Plan<sup>29</sup>, which included the creation of a Gender and Ethnic Diversity Dashboard that provides a clear, user-friendly way of viewing a wide range of up-to-date statistics relating to City employees, as well as trends over time.

### **Focus on Employee Experience**

In cities where there are race and gender disparities in managerial and executive positions, dedicate resources to training and to support employee professional development.

- Create employee affinity groups and diversity councils that facilitate support networks among employees and foster networking and mentorship opportunities to support employee advancement.
- Implement regular diversity education and training that focuses on skill building and toolkits for both employees and supervisors. Austin, Philadelphia, and Montgomery, AL are among the cities that have initiated regular diversity training for all elected officials and city staff.<sup>30</sup>
- Create leadership opportunities for underrepresented populations through leadership development programs. These can include either in-house programs or those provided by external vendors. Best practices also include tuition support and mentorship programs. Decatur, Georgia’s leadership development program, Decatur E5 (Engaged, Effective, Excellent, and Evolved Employees), was conceived and designed by city employees to increase employee retention.<sup>31</sup>

### **Facilitating Opportunity**

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<sup>27</sup> City of Toronto, People & Equity Policies, Employment Equity Policy, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> National League of Cities, *Municipal Action Guide: Advancing Racial Equity in Your City*, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Gender and Ethnic Diversity Dashboard. City of Sacramento, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> National League of Cities, Repository of City Racial Equity Policies and Decisions, nlc.org, accessed June 9, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> International City/County Management Association, *Beyond Compliance*, January 2019.

To connect those in need of opportunity with jobs that need to be filled, create employment pathway programs that facilitate opportunities among specific communities.

- Create job training programs such as internships, apprenticeships to provide exposure to potential employees within the bounds of Civil Service processes.
- Partner with regional organizations. Initiatives that have stemmed from those partnerships include educators that accelerate and customize training programs to fit specific employer needs and community organizations that connect community members with training programs or provide supplementary programs. An example is Hennepin County, Minnesota's regional consortium of institutions and public and private-sector employers, the Workforce Leadership Council. The Council collectively established a common vision for workforce development in the region and resulted in tuition-free courses at seven institutions in career pathways designated as in-demand by regional employers.<sup>32</sup>

### **Unbiased, Intentional, and Creative Hiring and Recruitment**

Move beyond traditional recruitment methods to emphasize clear communication about opportunities in government work and to seek out a diverse range of qualified applicants.

- Create active, intentional, targeted recruitment strategies across all city departments. Tacoma, Washington created a handbook on tangible ways to incorporate an equity lens in hiring and recruitment, such as reviewing job descriptions, removing unnecessary requirements, and emphasizing statements on diversity.
- Design job descriptions to be as inclusive as possible by clearly identifying the responsibilities of the job, setting expectations for performance, and avoiding coded language that could signal an invitation for a certain group to apply over others. Studies have shown that women tend to apply to jobs only when they meet 100% of the job requirements, and men apply if they meet 60%, similar gaps exist for candidates of color as compared to White candidates.<sup>33</sup> Job descriptions that use gender-neutral language, on the other hand, receive an average of 42% more responses and have an overall faster recruitment process than those that use more masculine language.<sup>34</sup> Multnomah County, Oregon, established these practices, along with the practice of avoiding strict adherence to minimum qualifications requirements, instead treating those requirements as guidelines.
- Employ skills-based hiring rather than education-based hiring. Skills-based hiring focuses on candidates' skills and competencies rather than degrees. In addition to expanding opportunity to a more diverse range of applicants, this approach has been found to predict job success for entry-level employees 5x better than education requirements.<sup>35</sup>
- Implement initiatives to remove bias such as removing names from applications and ensuring diverse interview panels. Tacoma's handbook also highlighted the elimination of implicit bias, particularly through training and by instituting guidelines for the diversity of interview panels.
- Allow city employees themselves to facilitate recruitment. An example of this is cited in ICMA's 2019 report, "Beyond Compliance," in which public works crew members in an unspecified city were frequently asked how they got a city job. As a result, public works crews were given business cards with job application information to hand out to inquiring passersby.

### **Foster Pathways to Civil Service**

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, "The Confidence Gap," *The Atlantic*, May 2014.

<sup>34</sup> ZipRecruiter, "Removing These Gendered Keywords Gets You More Applicants," [Ziprecruiter.com](https://www.ziprecruiter.com).

<sup>35</sup> J.E. Hunter and R.F. Hunter, "Validity and utility of alternative predictors of job performance," *Psychological Bulletin*, 96(1), 72-98, 1984.

Although Civil Service systems are highly structured, there are creative best practices for facilitating exposure to government work, greater understanding of Civil Service process, and pathways to Civil Service positions.

- Create internship or trainee programs to provide opportunities without going through the Civil Service process. The city of Madison, Wisconsin created a Trainee System that designates applicants with potential that do not meet key qualifications and experience needs for positions as potential “Trainees.” This temporary position can provide the benefits of an internship – exposure, connections, and experience – for a wider range of people than hiring a single employee from the Civil Service list.

## Roadmap to Increasing Public Sector Employment Equity

The City of Springfield invites an opportunity to look at its own hiring practices to see how it can create a workforce that is more reflective of its diversity, identify specific barriers to employment for EJ communities, and set clear and measurable goals to act on. The City can set the standard as an employer through equitable hiring standards that reflect its values in promoting fairness and representation.

We grounded our recommendations in the following principles:

1. Representation – The City of Springfield’s workforce should reflect of the community that it serves.
2. Recognition of the Value of Equity – The City should create a workplace in which the value of equity is understood and recognized on par with other key City values.
3. Transparency and Accessibility – Information about employment opportunity, hiring processes, and decision-making should be clearly communicated with the public through multiple channels and in multiple languages.

We offer the following roadmap working from the vision that an equitable City of Springfield is one where the local workforce accurately represents the city’s demographics, strong partnerships and outreach programs target hiring and training in EJ communities, and staff of color are engaged in a healthy and supportive workforce culture with opportunities to enter management and executive positions.

### 1. Take action to build trust and accountability

The City should establish an advisory committee made up of community-based and workforce development organizations, local universities and trade schools, union representatives, and existing staff from EJ committees to work with the City around a recruitment program for jobseekers from EJ communities. The advisory committee can work with the city to review the aforementioned best practices and determine which fit the equity needs and goals for the City workforce. The advisory committee will provide insights around new outreach strategies, matching jobseekers to GED, college, and specialized training programs, and a public campaign highlighting the benefits of working for Springfield and testimonials from existing staff from EJ communities. The CDO and Human Resources can provide regular reports to the committee data collection and analysis around equity goals.

### 2. Make the hiring process more accessible

The City should make critical changes to hiring through better communication of the process and revisions to job descriptions. Simple re-branding of recruitment materials to diagram the hiring process, persuasively advertise for the “hardest to hire” positions, and flyers and ads to connect jobseekers from EJ communities to appropriate training programs. These materials should include images of all genders,



racess, and ethnicities to show jobseekers that the City values diversity. The City should also revise job descriptions to clearly distinguish Civil Service positions and provide direct links and dates for exam schedules, as well as estimates of when the city will hire for the position. The City should also revise language in job descriptions so as to remain gender neutral, and highlight benefits important to those with families. Specific provisions for LEP applicants should include direct outreach and recruitment with bilingual organizations, translation of job descriptions, and planning for interviews in applicant's native language.

### **3. Create a role for unions in the recruitment process.**

As a key stakeholder in shaping the City's workforce, unions must play a direct role in helping the City meet its equity goals. City officials charged with meeting equity goals should be involved in union negotiations and push for them to meet recruitment goals in EJ communities. The City can also commit to outreach and recruitment drives with unions to recruit and train jobseekers from EJ communities, and both sides should set clear and measurable to equity goals in the negotiations process.

### **4. Create a Targeted Local Hire Program**

The City should institute a targeted local hire program aimed at creating a workforce development pipeline for jobseekers from EJ communities. This program would have two tracks targeted at EJ communities: an interim trainee program around Civil Service jobs and a apprenticeship program for specialized licensing. The trainee position would focus around general job categories, such as Tradesperson, or Program Analyst, and allow applicants to rotate through different departments and receive work experience and a salary. Trainees could use this as an interim position as they move through the Civil Service process and await an official hire. The apprenticeship program will allow jobseekers to attend school part time and work part time under existing city staff, providing an opportunity to learn skills for in-demand positions and earn a salary. The City would report on the progress of this program to the advisory committee, and set goals around hiring from EJ communities based on the skills needed in open positions, as well as staffing requests from different agencies.

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## **Appendix: Interview Sources**

- Tanisha Arena, Executive Director, ARISE
- David Gaby, Project Coordinator, McKnight CDC
- Charlie Holmes, President New England Cause, McKnight CDC Board
- Linda Patton, Treasurer, Hill Homes Housing Cooperative and McKnight Board and CHC McCarren Health Board
- Candejah Pink, VP Chess (?) Angels Promotion
- Rose Webster-Smith, Springfield No One Leaves
- David Cruise, President and CEO, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board
- Melissa Scibelli, Director of Workforce Programs, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board