

**DRAFT**

# **Resilient Together**

## **Redmond's Human Services Strategic Plan**

February 2022



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A photograph of a woman with dark, braided hair wearing a mustard-colored sweater, tenderly kissing a young child with curly hair on the cheek. The child is wearing a white shirt with black polka dots and is holding a small wooden stick. The background is bright and out of focus.

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# Background

The City of Redmond Human Services Division partnered with Equitable Future, a consulting team, to develop its third Strategic Plan. We engaged local stakeholders, faith-based community leaders, elected officials, service providers, and community members to learn about needs and opportunities. This plan responds to key themes identified by the needs assessment and reflects the community's values and priorities - providing the foundation for actions that the City can implement to support an **inclusive** and **resilient** community.





# What we learned





- Redmond community members are living through and experiencing the impacts of multiple, on-going crises.
- There are two Redmonds. One is visible and celebrated where community members live in abundance and have easier access to the resources they need, and the other is hidden and stigmatized where community members struggle to make ends meet and access the resources they need.
- Redmond community members feel isolated and are disconnected. They desire genuine connection with the rest of the community.
- Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, service providers faced significant barriers to meeting their clients' needs. Today, these barriers are more severe, and providers are struggling even more, all while facing higher demand.
- Too many Redmond community members face barriers to accessing the services they need.



# Redmond community members are living through and experiencing the impacts of multiple, ongoing crises.

**“Multiple, ongoing crises”** refers to the layered impacts people are experiencing due to the **persistent and ever-changing global Covid-19 pandemic, increased racial and ethnic tensions, and more frequently occurring climate change-related disasters.** In addition to these events and their impacts, Redmond community members mention struggling with disinformation and increasing polarization across religious, political, and cultural lines. Simply put, these traumas are complex and unprecedented. And while all community members are impacted, Black, Indigenous, other people of color, low-income community members, and immigrants are facing significantly more challenges. Specifically:

- Stakeholders shared concerns for their peers, the service providers whom they see working tirelessly to respond to evolving and complex community needs.
- Service providers indicated a significantly higher demand for the services they offer.
- And finally, community members expressed challenges due to these multiple, on-going crises. Isolation, depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues among youth were reported across demographic groups represented in the community questionnaire.

**There are two Redmonds. One is visible and celebrated, where community members live in abundance and have easier access to the resources they need, and the other is hidden and stigmatized, where community members struggle to make ends meet and access the resources they need.**

Redmond is a diverse community with high paying jobs - Redmond's area median income is about \$132,000 (\$30,000 higher than the rest of King County). It boasts a sought-after school district and many natural and recreational opportunities. Many are thriving.

**"It's not commonly accepted that there are problems in Redmond."**  
*- Stakeholder*

While most perceive Redmond as affluent and full of opportunities, stakeholders and service providers echoed concern for the "hidden" parts of Redmond - including those who are very low-income, can't make ends meet, and who face significant barriers to accessing the services they need.

Through targeted outreach to hear from those most likely in need or accessing services, we learned that BIPOC and low-income individuals face the greatest challenges. For example, 49% of community members earning the lowest incomes shared they needed help with rent and utility payments, compared to only 6% of the highest earners. And, only 4% percent of White respondents shared they needed help accessing affordable childcare whereas 16% of BIPOC respondents (four times as many) reported this need. These trends persisted across needs, income, and race, showing two different Redmonds.

## **Redmond community members feel isolated and are disconnected. They desire genuine connection with the rest of the community.**

Throughout all engagement results, participants expressed similar experiences of isolation and disconnection as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**“Community is dealing with isolation - when they come to [our programming] it’s hard for people to keep distance or stay a short time. They stay for hours - starved for connection.”**

- Faith-based community leader

- Stakeholders feel disconnected from service providers, other community leaders (like other organizations and City departments), and the community members they serve.
- Service providers feel disconnected from providers at other organizations, stakeholders who fund and support their organizations, community members who serve as donors and volunteers, and the community members whom they serve through their roles.
- Community members (across age, income level, and race) feel isolated from the broader community. They struggle to access the services they need, connect with community leaders, and more.



**Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, service providers faced significant barriers to meeting their clients' needs. Today, these barriers are more severe. Providers are struggling even more, all while facing higher demand.**

When asked to share what barriers service providers faced in trying to successfully do their jobs, we heard a wide range of issues, some new and some longstanding.

- **Staffing and wages.** Three out of four of service providers mentioned their organizations were struggling to hire part-time and full-time staff. In addition, their organizations are unable to pay wages high enough to be competitive with other jobs in and around Redmond, or for said staff to afford the cost of living in Redmond (meaning staff usually have to live outside of Redmond). One focus group participant made it clear when they said they were “overwhelmed with staffing issues”. Providers themselves are feeling burn out, fatigue, and a sense of hopelessness. These challenges are even more present as they are faced with more work to do.
- **Difficulties with the municipal funding process.** A common and long-standing issue service providers face is the nature of the municipal funding cycle. The application process, a two-year funding cycle that sometimes only provides smaller program-specific financial support with robust reporting requirements for grants, make this necessary source of funding a burden for service providers. And while service providers greatly appreciated the availability of emergency funding through the Covid-19 pandemic, they noted it was not a long-term solution to the systemic issues they faced.
- **Service providers talked about systems-based reform and creative solutions.** Service providers were eager to share the ways in which Redmond Human Services can be a better partner in the grantmaking process. Some recommendations were systems-based reforms that may take time and resources. Others were smaller changes that still require effort but would allow service providers to collaborate, connect, and support each other.

## Too many Redmond community members face barriers to accessing the services they need.

Almost half of community members who responded to our questionnaire shared they did not know where to go to access the services they need. Although 32% reported not needing services, fewer than one in four community members who responded to our questionnaire knew where to go to access the services they did need. BIPOC, low-income, and non-English speaking individuals reported significantly more troubles accessing the services they need.

**"Services exist but there are so many barriers to get to them."**

- Service Provider Participant

Those who are most likely to face the impacts of systemic inequities - Black, Indigenous, people of color, low-income people, immigrants, and non-English speakers - are among those in the questionnaire who do not know where to access services. They are also the same population who have the highest needs for services. About 36% of White respondents reported they did not know where to access the services they need. In comparison, about **twice as many (61%) of BIPOC respondents reported not knowing how or where to access the services they need.**

When asked why individuals could not access the services they needed, the highest responses were: **not knowing where to go** for help (66%), **feeling too embarrassed** to ask for help (32%), and **not knowing if they were eligible for services** (27%). A significant portion of respondents also shared they faced long wait-lists from organizations whose capacity could not meet the demand for services.



**The Impact of the Pandemic**

# Individuals, families, service providers, and systems have all been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

**Very Strong Negative Impact.** Three out of four community members who responded to our community questionnaire shared that the Covid-19 pandemic had negatively or very negatively impacted their life. Community members have experienced death of loved ones, isolation, depression, anxiety, loss of income, loss of jobs, and more.

**Need for Basic Services and Well-Being Support.** Respondents indicated that since the onset of COVID-19 the top four most needed services included mental health counseling, rent and utility assistance, medical or dental care, and food access.

**Disproportionate Impacts on BIPOC Community.** BIPOC and lower-income community members reported more negative economic and income-related impacts associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. More BIPOC community members lost their jobs, faced a reduction in hours, faced a decline in income, or had to find a new job in a different field than their white counterparts. BIPOC respondents reported needing to access 3 different types of services whereas white community members reported needing an average of one and half services.

**Persistent Staffing Shortages.** The primary concern service providers shared as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic was a shortage of staff available to help run their organizations. Most service providers report holding the responsibilities of multiple jobs just to keep services available to community members. Additionally, service providers shared they lacked the resources necessary to pay necessary staff high enough wages to have a high quality of life and afford living in Redmond.

**Emergency Funding Helps as a Short-Term Solution.** Service providers shared that emergency funding helped throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. But still, some organizations were forced to close their doors. While emergency funding is useful, service providers noted a high need for long-term, higher-dollar funding awards from municipal partners.

**These impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic: struggling community members, challenges in finding services, high demand for services, persistent staffing shortages, and the instability of emergency funding, shows a breaking social service system in desperate need of a strong foundation of support and commitment from the City of Redmond.**



# City of Redmond Human Services Division's Role



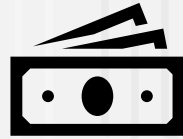


## The City of Redmond Human Service Division's Role

### *Did you know?*

The Human Services Commission is responsible for evaluating program applications and making funding recommendations to the City Council. The Commission is made up of seven volunteer Redmond community members and meets the 2nd Monday of each month.

The City cannot meet the human services needs of the community on its own. Investing in human services and leveraging its resources, partnerships, and influence are just a few of the roles the City plays.



**Funder:** To ensure all its residents receive the services they need, the City funds local agencies for the provision of these services. In 2021-2022, the City funded over 70 programs, ranging from food, counseling, job training, and more.



**Partner and Convener:** The Human Services Division has a long history of convening and collaborating to identify and implement solutions to complex community challenges across the Eastside. The human services network is strengthened through the City's partnerships with service providers, faith communities, schools, nonprofit agencies, and other cities.



**Connector:** Leveraging its partners and knowledge of the breadth of resources, the City can connect community partners toward shared goals and solutions and connect community members with resources.



**Homeless Outreach:** The City supports unhoused and unstably housed community members with resources, coordinating with Police, businesses, non-profits partners, and more.

# Strategic Plan Values





# Strategic Plan Values

The values below will inform **how** Redmond Human Services will focus on its priorities, follow through on actions, and measure progress. These values reflect recommendations we gathered from the Redmond community. Finally, these values connect and respond to the Redmond 2030 Comprehensive Plan and model a future for Redmond.



## **EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

Redmond's diversity is one of its most valuable assets. Redmond Human Services will work to support this diversity by centering those most marginalized and creating a community that is welcoming and gives each community member a sense of belonging.



## **RESILIENCY**

Community members, especially those most marginalized, know where and how to access direct services, service providers have a strong foundation of support on which to provide care for community members, and stakeholders serve as connectors and conveners.



## **INTEGRITY**

Redmond Human Services is a team the community can count on practicing sound, fair, and equitable decision-making.



## **CENTERING RELATIONSHIPS**

A Redmond in which community is engaged, consulted, and participates meaningfully in community driven processes.





# Priorities and Actions

## Priority Areas

*Creating a roadmap for the next five years.*



Key themes from the community engagement process of our needs assessment were the basis for the following priority areas to guide the City's work over the next five years.

1. Help community members navigate daily life through multiple, on-going crises so that our community can move forward together.
2. Foster a connected community where all – particularly BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income community members – have access to all that Redmond has to offer.
3. Serve as a convener and connector so community members feel a sense of welcoming and belonging.
4. Build a stable foundation of support on which to provide high quality, accessible, and culturally relevant services.
5. Create a culture where community members can easily access services without judgement, fear, or stigmatization.

# 1. **HELP** community members navigate daily-life through multiple, on-going crises so that our community can move forward together.

- a. Ensure access to basic needs by continuing to maintain and/or increasing funding for these services.
- b. Plan and prepare for human services response to future unexpected events and crises.
- c. Continue to leverage other resources and funds that support COVID-19 recovery.
- d. Center organizations that provide culturally responsive services, particularly increasing access to services that contribute to individual wellbeing.
- e. Facilitate learning opportunities and resources that build community resilience.



## 2. **FOSTER** a connected community where all – particularly BIPOC and low-income community members – have access to all Redmond has to offer.

- a. Collaborate with the City of Redmond Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager and the Parks and Recreation Department to create opportunities for meaningful connection among community members.
- b. Mobilize accessible topic-based community forums for community partners, service providers, and clients who can engage with decision-making and relationship building.
- c. Pilot a program that supports community navigators: paid community leaders who can help connect their community members to services and programs.
- d. Enhance pathways for youth and adults to access local college, scholarship, training, apprenticeships and additional employment opportunities.
- e. Launch an awareness campaign to amplify the on-going work service providers give to community, how to access services, and how to support community members.





### 3. **SERVE** as a convener and connector so community members feel a sense of welcoming and belonging.

- a. Expand the scope of the Human Services Division to focus on increased community connection, community support, de-stigmatization of accessing services, and enhancing a sense of inclusion, welcoming, and belonging.
- b. Enhance Human Services public communication efforts, including multilingual information and visual infographic resources for clear navigation of available resources.
- c. Coordinate, facilitate, and participate in regular small-scale (i.e., neighborhood specific) community meetings to increase engagement and connection among community members and service providers.
- d. Consider models that foster community well-being, belonging, and civic engagement such as the development of a natural helpers program, civic leadership academy, or becoming a certified welcoming community.



## 4. **BUILD** a stable foundation of support on which to provide high quality, accessible, and culturally relevant services.

- a. Develop a sustainable funding plan that:
  - Prioritizes the need for increased non-profit staffing and more fully covers the cost to provide services (e.g. larger grant awards).
  - Establishes a funding pot that responds to one-time emergent and emerging needs.
  - Evaluates the effectiveness of the City's per capita formula in responding to the growing community needs.
- b. Consider and plan to hire new position(s) within the Human Services Division to address the additional responsibilities and roles outlined by the community in this strategic plan.
- c. Identify funding sources (philanthropy, businesses, etc.) and build connections to increase access to these sources.
- d. Strengthen non-profit capacity infrastructure by:
  - Conducting a study of the types of resources (including physical space) service providers need and develop a plan to support filling these needs.
  - Identifying solutions that support non-profit capacity building (e.g. funding, training, technical assistance, etc.), specifically for small and/or BIPOC led organizations.



## 5. **CREATE** a culture where community members can easily access services without judgement, fear, or stigmatization.

- a. Consider expanding City support of trusted community service navigators who can connect community members to the services they need.
- b. Increase staffing to support effective communication channels and strategies for sharing resources and information.
- c. Launch an annual, multilingual campaign that helps foster a sense of welcoming and belonging and addresses the stigma regarding the use of direct services.
- d. Partner with Redmond-based employers, property managers, homeowners' associations, parent teacher student associations, etc. to publicize community resources.

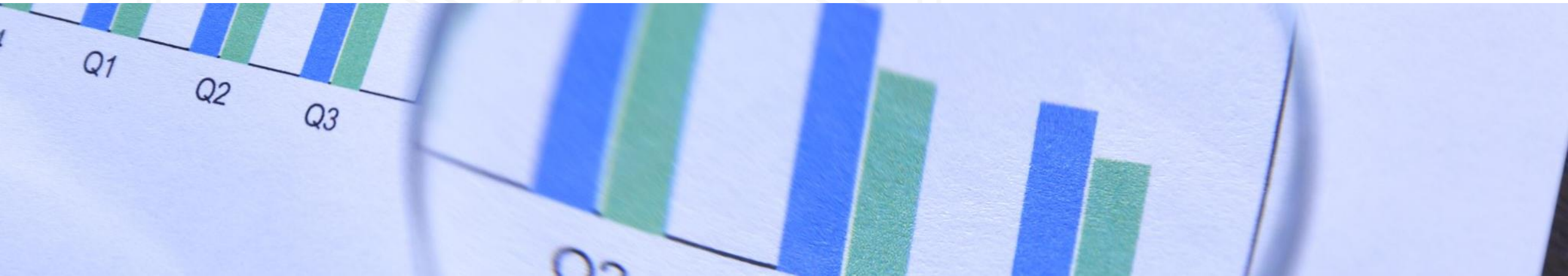




# Measuring Progress



# Measuring Progress



- Metric that tracks impact of funding toward meeting community needs, using an equity framework (e.g. increasing investments in by and for led organizations, data on funding gap between grant asks and grant awards, etc).
- Increasing the number of community-centered meetings and convenings and measuring participants' satisfaction, increased knowledge, and/or sense of belonging.
- Increasing the sense of support community partners feel they receive from the City.
- Progress toward milestones of specific actions identified in this plan.
- Continue to build connections and relationships with new community partners.



**“How fine to have enough, and some to spare for today’s ripe harvest toward tomorrow and set aside abundance and resolve for those who lack, so they might someday thrive.”**

- Excerpt from “What Tender Artistry It Takes to Make a Town” by Rebecca Meredith