

# All-In Cincinnati: Equity Is the Path to Inclusive Prosperity

PolicyLink



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## Foreword

The story of Cincinnati is a tale of two cities. The first Cincinnati exemplifies its reputation as the Queen City, a bright light in the dark night run toward freedom. This Cincinnati is considered by many to be “the northernmost southern city.” Home to the Bengals and the Reds, Oktoberfest, and the long-running Cincinnati Music Festival—the largest annual weekend driver of tourism among surrounding states.

And then, there is the other Cincinnati. The city where many of its residents do not benefit from the richness that is here. The place where the voices of those who suffer compounded inequities are often not heard. One of the most segregated communities in the nation. A city where racism far too often prevails.

Produced in 1968, a year after waves of national civil unrest, the Kerner Commission Report warned that unaddressed racial turmoil would result in two nations: one Black and one White. *The State of Black Cincinnati: A Tale of Two Cities* written 47 years later in 2015 confirmed that, for Cincinnati, not much had changed.

For those of us on the All-In Cincinnati Core Team, this latest report shook us to our core. So, at the end of 2015, a group of Cincinnatians attended the PolicyLink Equity Summit in Los Angeles, to learn from other advocates from across the country about how we attack the racial and economic inequities here in Cincinnati. We came home, armed with the focus and drive to use our power to make our city a better place for all. Three years later, we are excited to launch a policy agenda for a more equitable Cincinnati.

The foundation for this agenda was already laid by the work of courageous citizens and policymakers who birthed the Collaborative Agreement, the Citizens Complaint Authority, the Community Police Partnering Center, the Minority Business Accelerator, the Wage Theft Ordinance, and the Pre-School Promise. But we’ve barely scratched the surface of income inequality and the mass incarceration issues facing people of color in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The status quo is simply not working for the majority of our community. We invite you to study this report with an open mind, an open heart, and an eye toward what each of us can do to contribute to this movement. The time for change is now. The force for change is all of us.

**The All-In Cincinnati Core Team**, consisting of representatives from the following organizations:

AMOS Project

Child Poverty Collaborative

Cincinnati Black United Front

Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative

City of Cincinnati Human Relations Commission

City of Cincinnati Economic Inclusion Department

City of Cincinnati Health Department

Collective Empowerment Group

Intersections

LISC of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky

Strive Partnership

Urban League of Southwestern Ohio

The Women’s Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation

## Overview

Cincinnati is an economic powerhouse, yet it struggles with uneven growth, high rates of poverty, and an economy dominated by low-wage jobs and few pathways into the middle class. While communities of color account for only 33 percent of Hamilton County's population—up from 23 percent in 1990<sup>1</sup>—racial inequities persist across all indicators of community health and well-being. To build a stronger Cincinnati, stakeholders must start with equity—just and fair inclusion into a society in which all, including every racial and ethnic group, can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity seeks to counteract the barriers and systemic exclusions (historic and current) that prevent people from realizing their potential. Leaders in the private, public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors must commit to putting all residents on the path to economic security through equity-focused strategies and policies to grow good jobs, invest in human capital, remove barriers, and expand opportunities for communities of color currently being left behind.

## Introduction

Cincinnati is poised for economic renewal. As home to nine Fortune 500 companies, the region is an economic powerhouse.<sup>2</sup> After decades of decline, for six years in a row, the city of Cincinnati's population has inched upward.<sup>3</sup> Several depopulated and disinvested neighborhoods have come back to life with rehabbed apartments, new stores and restaurants, public art, and foot traffic.

Yet across the city and Hamilton County, many residents, and many neighborhoods, remain cut off from this new investment and growth. Within “revitalized” neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine, lower wealth residents—disproportionately people of color—often do not feel that they have been a part of the revitalization process, or that they benefit from new investments. Many more live in neighborhoods that are still distressed, with vacant properties and stagnant home values. And most lower wealth residents have not seen their paychecks grow even as housing costs have increased. These Cincinnatians are still waiting for their opportunity to be a part of the rising tide, and to contribute their energy and talent to building the new Cincinnati.

Our look at the data confirms what others have already described: inequities by race, gender, income, and neighborhood persist across multiple indicators—from economic inclusion to education to access to healthy and affordable homes, transportation, jobs, and more. The greatest inequities are found at the intersection between these demographic and geographic dimensions: women of color in Hamilton County, for example, face particular barriers to accessing quality jobs that pay enough to support a family, and we also know that nationwide women of color with children experience the highest rates of eviction.

Cincinnati's resurgence cannot be complete when these glaring exclusions persist. For the city and county to prosper, everyone must participate and benefit from growth and development. One reason for this inclusion imperative relates to changing demographics: while Hamilton County's population has steadily been growing more diverse over the past several decades, the pace of change is going to pick up. The county's Black, Latino, Asian, and multiracial populations will grow and by 2040 these communities of color as a group will be the majority. Eliminating racial inequities will become more and more important as people of color become the majority of the county's schoolchildren, workers, and residents.

Advancing equity—just and fair inclusion—is both the right thing to do and critical to securing Cincinnati’s economic future. Research proves that inequality and racial segregation hinder growth, prosperity, and economic mobility in regions, while diversity and inclusion fuel innovation and business success.<sup>4</sup> As baby boomers retire and the region’s workforce grows more and more diverse, the costs of racial economic exclusion for Cincinnati—and the value proposition of inclusion—will continue to rise. Already, our analysis finds that Hamilton County’s economic output could be almost \$10 billion higher every year if racial gaps in income were eliminated.

This report, and the accompanying data profile, *Advancing Health Equity and Inclusive Growth in Cincinnati*, underscore the urgency of equity for Cincinnati and outlines an agenda to put the city on the path toward inclusive prosperity. It is based on interviews and conversations with dozens of Cincinnati leaders, in addition to a review of the current data, and research on promising practices and strategies to advance equitable development and growth.

The report is organized in three sections:

- **New Demography** describes the demographic shifts underway in Hamilton County, Ohio.
- **The State of Equity in Hamilton County** examines how the county is doing on measures of inclusive growth and prosperity, looking at the county’s economic inclusion and vitality, the readiness to participate and contribute, and the connectedness of the county’s residents to each other and the county’s assets and opportunities.
- **Toward an All-In Cincinnati** presents policy priorities to achieve inclusive prosperity.

The good news is that leaders across the region have set a foundation for action. Cincinnati’s inequities have been well documented and conversations about inequality are already happening. Policy shifts are underway. But it is time to step it up. Cincinnati’s future depends on changing the odds for its communities of color.

### About the Data Analysis

Unless otherwise noted, all of the data and analyses presented in this report were produced by PolicyLink and the University of Southern California’s Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and are included in the accompanying profile, *Advancing Health Equity and Inclusive Growth in Cincinnati*. Data were drawn from the National Equity Atlas longitudinal database which includes deeply disaggregated indicators covering the 1979 – 2015 time period as well as more recent population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau for 2016. The focus of the analysis was on Hamilton County but we also examined the city of Cincinnati and neighborhoods across the county. Throughout the text in this report, we use “Cincinnati” and “Hamilton County” interchangeably to describe the county but say the “city of Cincinnati” when we are specifically describing the city. The appendix of the profile includes additional information about methods and data sources.

## New Demography: A Growing and Much More Diverse Hamilton County

Like the city of Cincinnati, Hamilton County is again experiencing population growth after decades of decline. Hamilton County counts about 813,800 residents as of 2017, up from 802,000 in 2010.<sup>5</sup> This is down from 925,000 in 1970—but represents an important recent upward trend.

This population increase is entirely due to the growth of communities of color. Since 2000, the county has lost over 72,000 White residents while communities of color (defined as all groups other than those who self-identify as non-Hispanic and White) grew by 31,000.<sup>6</sup> Over the same time, the county's Black, mixed-race, Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander populations all grew in absolute numbers as well as their population shares. The county's small Latino population is also its fastest-growing group.

Demographic projections reveal that these changes are expected to continue and accelerate. Hamilton County—which was 80 percent White in 1980—is projected to become majority people of color by 2040, four years before the tipping point for the nation as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Between 2010 and 2050, the White

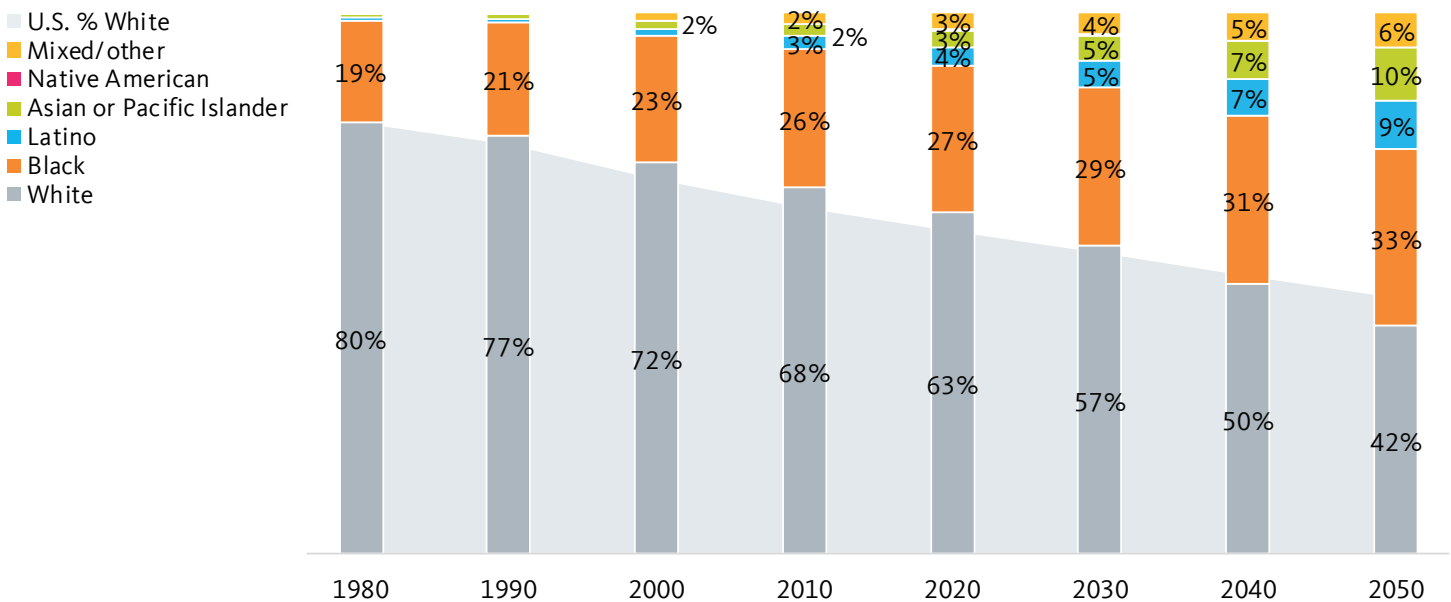
population is expected to decrease from 68 percent to 42 percent of the population while the Black population will increase from 26 to 33 percent, the Asian population will increase from 2 to 10 percent, and the Latino population will increase from 3 to 9 percent.

Hamilton County's fastest-growing racial/ethnic demographic groups also tend to skew very young, which bodes well for the area's workforce vitality. The median age of White residents is 41, compared to 25 for Latino residents and 33 for Black residents.<sup>8</sup>

These demographic changes also mean that the county's young residents are much more diverse than its seniors. Today, 43 percent of young people under age 18 are people of color, compared with only 21 percent of seniors ages 65 and over.<sup>9</sup> This 22-percentage point racial generation gap between young and old has risen very quickly, more than doubling since 1980. This large racial generation gap can have significant consequences when it comes to investing in services and programming for youth, since researchers have consistently found that White seniors are less likely to support spending on youth when they are from different racial groups.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly relevant to Cincinnati as the city develops a concerted effort to combat child poverty, which disproportionately affects children of color.<sup>11</sup>

### Hamilton County is projected to become majority people of color in 2040, four years before the nation.

Racial/Ethnic Composition, 1980 to 2050



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

Note: Much of the increase in the mixed/other population between 1990 and 2000 is due to a change in the survey question on race.

## The State of Equity in Hamilton County

Given the county's rapidly changing demographics, ensuring that the Black, Latino, Asian, and mixed-race communities that represent a growing share of workers and residents are able to participate and thrive is critical to the city of Cincinnati's and Hamilton County's success. To better understand the current state of equity, we examined how the county is doing across three major dimensions of equitable growth.

- Economic vitality: How is the county doing on measures of economic growth and well-being?
- Readiness: How prepared are the county's residents for the 21st century economy?
- Connectedness: Are the county's residents and neighborhoods connected to one another and to the county's assets and opportunities?

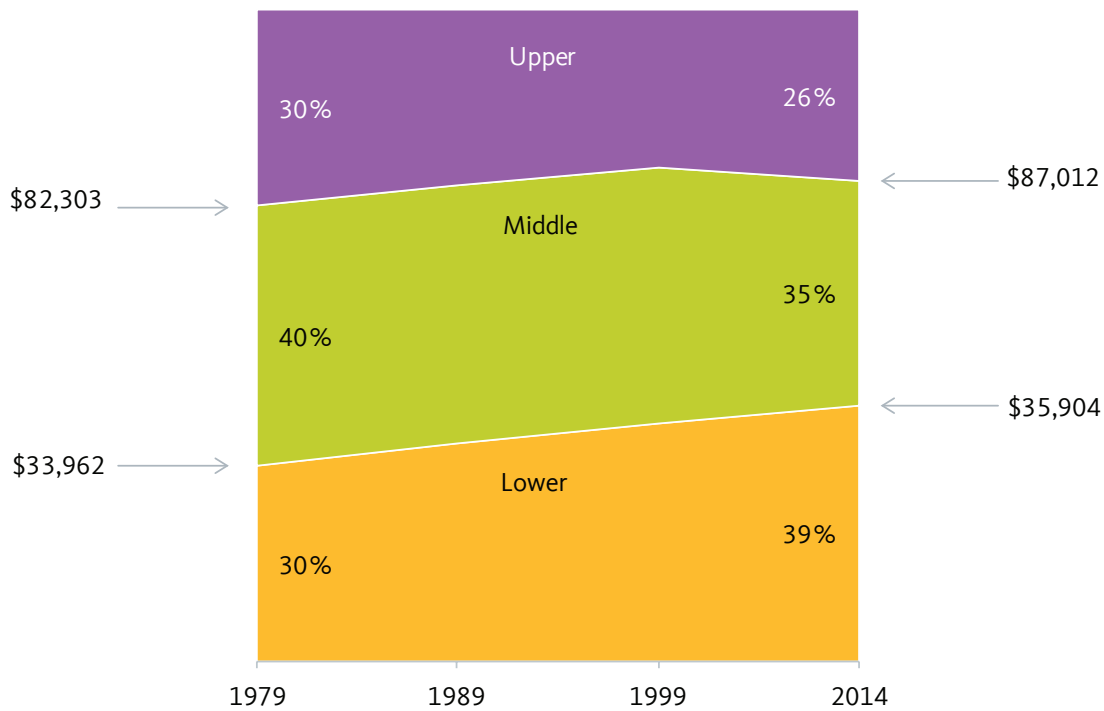
## Economic Vitality: Inequitable Growth Is Deepening Racial Economic Divides

Hamilton County is experiencing economic growth—as measured by traditional measures including growth in jobs and economic output—but its economic growth is slower than the national average.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, economic opportunities are diminishing in the county as the number of “middle-wage” jobs that have typically provided stepping stones into middle-class economic security for workers with fewer means has decreased. Since 1979, the share of middle-class households decreased from 40 percent to 35 percent of all households, while the share of lower income households grew from 30 percent to 39 percent.<sup>13</sup> The share of higher income households also declined from 30 to 26 percent, but has increased over the past decade.

While the regional economy has recovered from the Great Recession, many of the racial and gender inequities in education, employment, and income have not improved and, in fact, have in some cases worsened. To ensure a strong economy and improved growth, the county will need to address the following challenges.

### The county's middle class has declined.

Households by Income Level, 1979 and 2014



**Source:** Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Universe includes all households (no group quarters).

**Note:** Data for 2014 represent a 2010 through 2014 average. Dollar values are in 2014 dollars.

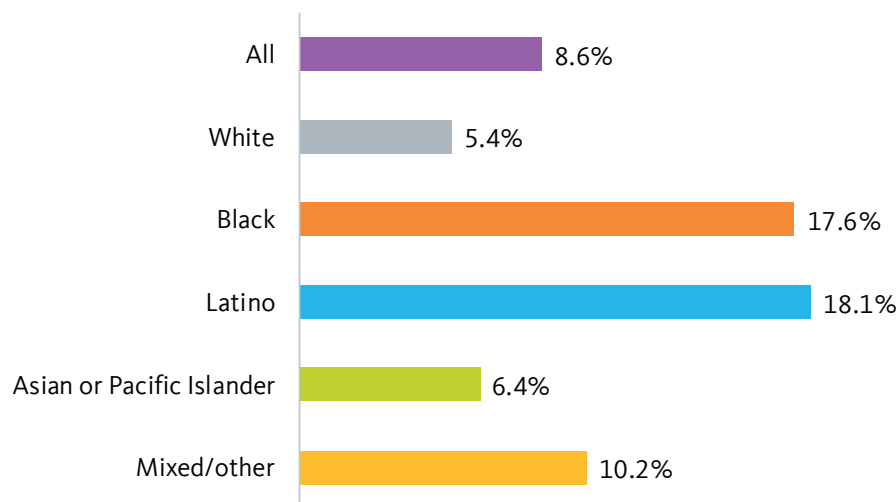
- **Racial barriers to good jobs and fair pay.** While the overall unemployment rate in Hamilton County is lower than the national average, workers who are Black, Latino, or with multiracial backgrounds face much higher rates of unemployment than White workers. The unemployment rate for Black workers in Hamilton County (17 percent), is almost three times that for White workers (5.6 percent).<sup>14</sup> In addition, although unemployment declines as education levels increase, African Americans face the highest rates of unemployment at all education levels, signaling that employment discrimination continues to play a role.<sup>15</sup> For example, among those with a bachelor's degree or higher, Black workers are still more than twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed.<sup>16</sup> Black workers also earn lower wages than their White counterparts at every education level. Among college-educated workers, Black workers earn \$6/hour less than their White counterparts (\$23 compared with \$29).<sup>17</sup>

- **Working poverty, particularly for women of color.** The share of workers who are considered working poor (defined here as working full-time for an income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) is both on the rise in the county and is higher among communities of color. Working poverty is particularly a problem for Latinos, with more than one in five Latino workers working full-time with family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Women, particularly women of color, are also disproportionately represented among the working poor.

Nationally, women are nearly two-thirds of minimum-wage workers, and 40 percent of all households with children under age 18 include mothers as the sole or primary source of income.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, nearly half of low-wage women workers are women of color.<sup>19</sup> In Ohio, 19 percent of working Black women and 19 percent of working Latina women between ages 25 and 64 are classified as working poor, compared to only 8 percent of White women in the same age group.<sup>20</sup>

**In Hamilton County, Black and Latina women are the most likely to be working full-time and still economically insecure.**

Female Working-Poor Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2014



**Source:** Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Universe includes the female civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 through 64 who worked during the year prior to the survey (excludes group quarters).

**Note:** Data represent a 2010 through 2014 average. Data for some racial/ethnic groups in some years are excluded due to small sample size.

## Readiness: Educational and Health Barriers Are Holding People of Color Back

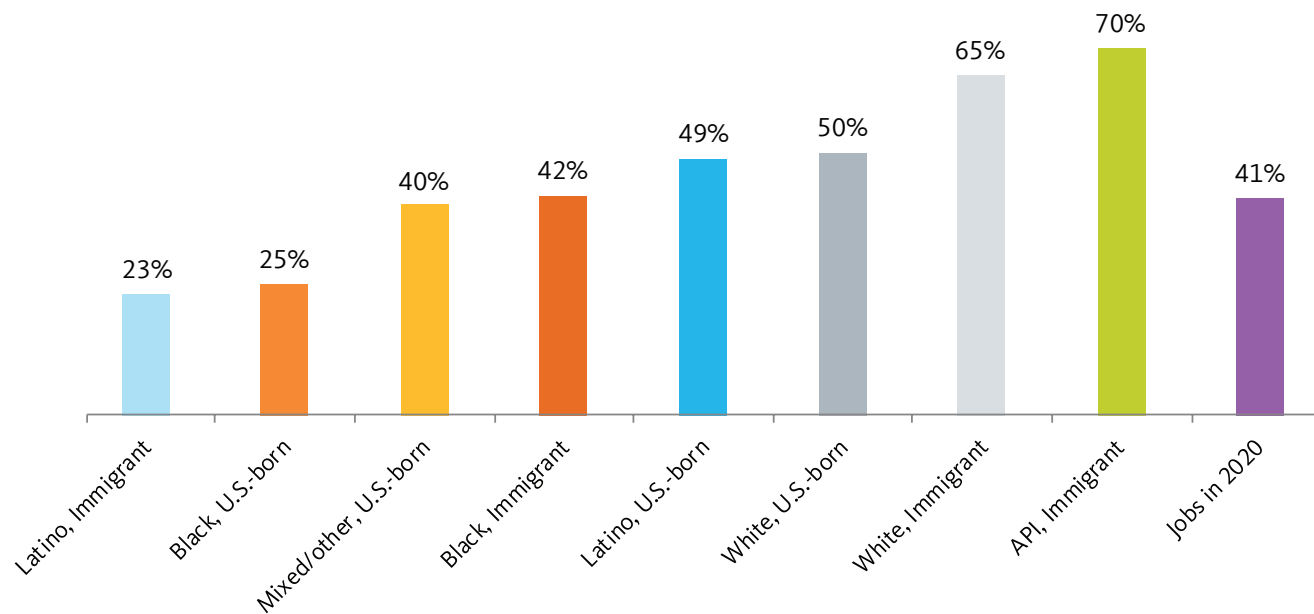
In addition to being able to access good jobs and rising incomes, Cincinnati’s current and future workers must be adequately prepared to participate in—and build—the next economy. Given today’s knowledge- and technology-driven economy, this means gaining a college education or another postsecondary certificate or credential. Several community leaders in the education and health sectors interviewed for this analysis spoke specifically about the need to increase the number of students engaged in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. Hamilton County is showing some signs of progress: more of the county’s youth are getting high school diplomas and the number of 16-to-24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and lack a high school diploma fell by 40 percent from roughly 7,000 in 2000 to 3,000 in 2014. While the number of “disconnected youth” who are neither in school nor working dropped slightly from

approximately 13,000 in 2000 to 12,400 in 2014, there is still racial inequality. Only 37 percent of all youth are people of color, but are 56 percent of disconnected youth.<sup>21</sup>

The future of Cincinnati and Hamilton County is contingent upon the ability of its youth to power its economy in the years to come. Unfortunately, a significant segment of Hamilton County’s workforce lacks access to the education needed to take advantage of the technological and information-based jobs of the future. According to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, 41 percent of all jobs in Ohio will require an associate’s degree or higher by 2020.<sup>22</sup> Currently, only 23 percent of Latino immigrants, and 25 percent of U.S.-born Black working-age residents in Hamilton County have that level of education.<sup>23</sup> If the Cincinnati region is to remain a competitive site for Fortune 500 companies, the region’s education and workforce training systems must support and increase the ability of people of color to succeed in jobs of the future.

### Hamilton County could face a skills gap if it does not increase educational attainment among growing segments of the workforce.

Share of Working-Age Population with an Associate’s Degree or Higher by Race/Ethnicity, 2014, and Projected Share of Jobs that Require an Associate’s Degree or Higher, 2020



**Source:** Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce; Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Universe for education levels of workers includes all persons ages 25 through 64.

**Note:** Data for 2014 by race/ethnicity and nativity represent a 2010 through 2014 average for Hamilton County; data on jobs in 2020 represents a state-level projection for Ohio.



## Connectedness: A Shortage of Healthy, Affordable Housing Options

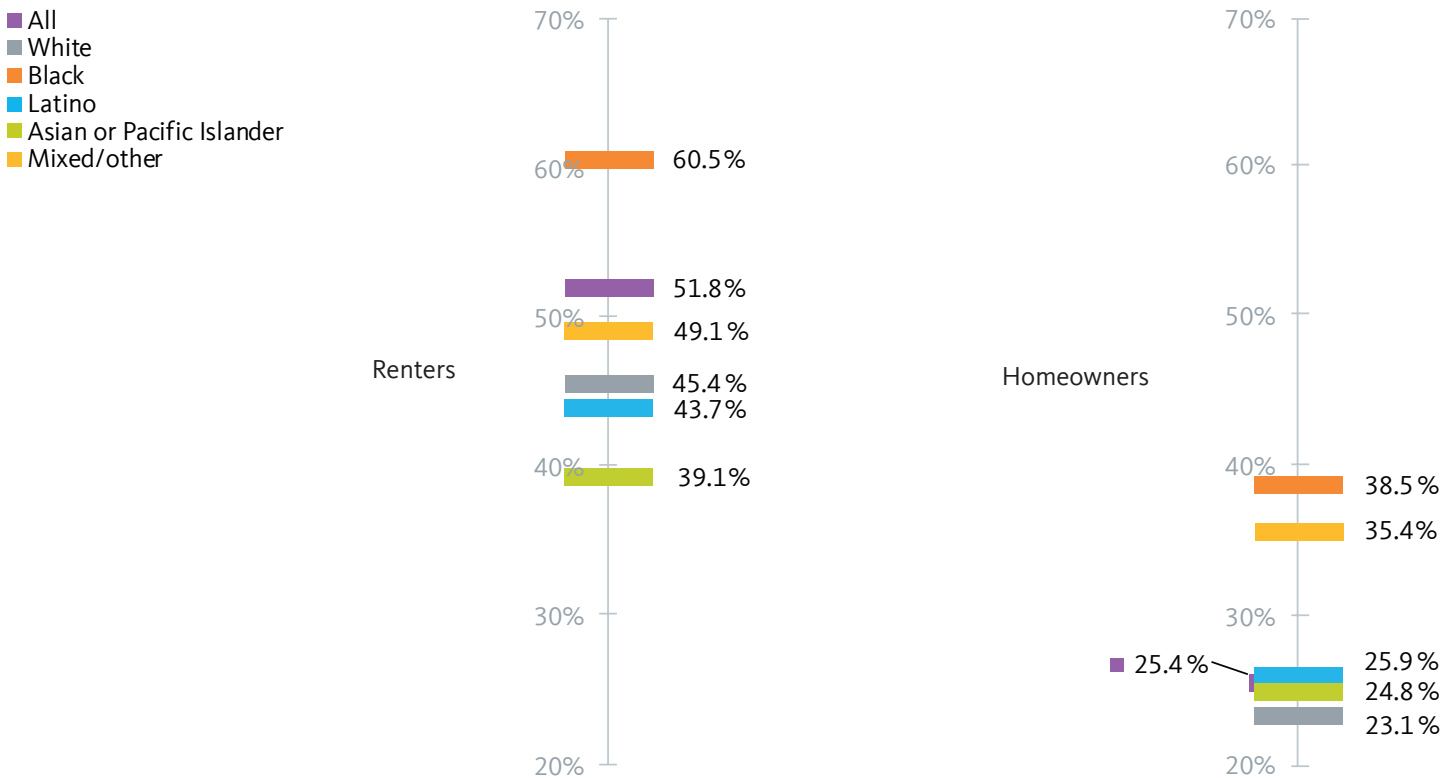
Housing is the foundation for opportunity. The location and quality of a home that one can afford affects not only the living space, but also determines the quality of schools for children, health and safety for families, the length of commute for workers, and more. Unfortunately, the number of housing units affordable to low-income households in Hamilton County has not kept pace with the number of households in poverty, which has increased by 40 percent since 2000.<sup>24</sup> More than half of all renter households in the region are housing cost-burdened, meaning that they are spending more than 30 percent of income on housing costs. The high housing burden also impacts homeowners, with 25 percent of homeowner households cost-burdened. This lack of affordable housing in Hamilton County disproportionately impacts Black residents. Sixty-one percent of Black renter households are housing cost-burdened, as are 39 percent of Black homeowner households. A major reason for the sizeable share of housing cost-burdened households is that housing costs in the region

have increased, while wages have remained stagnant. Rents in Cincinnati are rising at a faster pace than any other major metropolitan area in the Midwest.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the eviction rate in Cincinnati ranks among the 10 highest eviction rates for metropolitan areas across the country.<sup>26</sup>

Limited access to safe and affordable housing options forces many residents to move further away from high-opportunity neighborhoods and commute to work. As one elected Hamilton County official interviewed for this analysis noted, job centers have shifted away from downtown Cincinnati and the public transit system hasn't reacted to that reality. Unfortunately, very low-income African Americans are the most likely to need to use public transit. Sixteen percent of Black workers who earn less than \$15,000 per year rely on public transit, compared to 4 percent of White workers in the same income bracket. This disparity has significant implications given the number of jobs in the region that are inaccessible via public transportation. A recent study confirmed that some 75,000 jobs in Cincinnati are unreachable by public transit.<sup>27</sup>

### More than half of renter households and a quarter of homeowner households in the county are housing cost-burdened.

Renter Housing Burden and Homeowner Housing Burden by Race/Ethnicity, 2014



Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Universe includes all renter-occupied households with cash rent.

Note: Data represent a 2010 through 2014 average.

Disinvestment and flawed planning have created Cincinnati neighborhoods that are not conducive to the well-being of residents. For example, a growing body of research shows that the long-term success of children is hindered when they are raised in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage—characterized by poor housing, inadequate public infrastructure, and high rates of unemployment.<sup>28</sup> In fact, poverty has been shown to genetically age children compared with their peers living above the federal poverty line.<sup>29</sup> People of color in Hamilton County face greater health challenges, including higher rates of both obesity and diabetes, compared with their White counterparts.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the average Black resident of Hamilton County has more exposure to air pollution than residents of 83 percent of census tracts in the United States.<sup>31</sup> This contributes to the fact that Black residents are more likely than White residents to have asthma.<sup>32</sup> In addition, data show that Black residents are more likely than White residents to have a heart attack.<sup>33</sup> The county's limited supermarket access (LSA) areas—or communities where residents must travel significantly farther to reach a supermarket compared to residents in well-served areas—are also home to higher shares of people of color compared with other neighborhoods.<sup>34</sup> This is a contributing factor in the 71 percent of Black Hamilton County residents who are overweight or obese.<sup>35</sup>

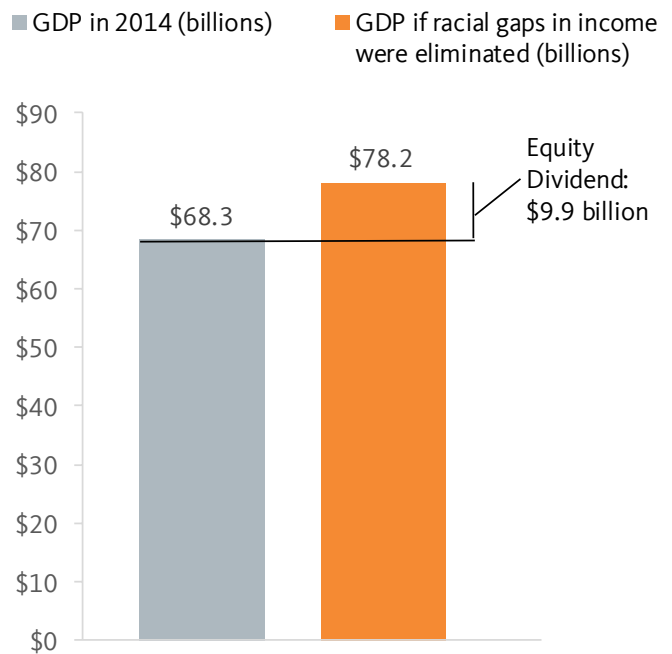
## Toward an All-In Cincinnati: Policy Implications

Hamilton County's growing, diverse population is a major economic asset that will help the county compete in a global economy, but this will only occur if the county's leaders invest resources equitably to ensure that all of its residents can connect to good jobs and contribute their talents and creativity. Hamilton County's rising inequity and racial gaps not only hinder communities of color—they impede the whole region's economic growth and prosperity. According to our analysis, if there were no racial disparities in income, GDP would have been \$9.9 billion higher in 2014. Unless racial gaps are closed, the costs of inequity will grow as Hamilton County becomes more diverse.

Our analysis suggests focusing on the following goals to promote more equitable growth in the county.

### The Cincinnati metro area's GDP would have been \$9.9 billion higher in 2014 if racial gaps in income were closed.

Actual GDP and Estimated GDP without Racial Gaps in Income, 2014



Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series; Bureau of Economic Analysis.

## Grow good, accessible jobs that provide pathways to the middle class

Developing on-ramps to good, family-sustaining careers is essential to building an “all-in” economy.

- **Ensure public investments in community infrastructure such as roads, transit, sewers, and construction projects create training and job opportunities for the underemployed and unemployed, with emphasis on women of color.** This can be done by geographically targeting investments in neighborhoods where unemployment and poverty are high, by promoting the negotiation of community benefits agreements on large, publicly subsidized development projects, and by implementing local and targeted hiring and training strategies. For example, in 2014, the Revive Oakland coalition was able to ensure that the \$800 million revitalization of a shuttered army base would also create economic opportunities for local residents. As a result, half of the 3,000 jobs created through the project (1,500 construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs) will go to Oakland residents. In Cincinnati, the concerted mobilization of residents resulted in a \$6 million community benefits agreement to address the impact that the impending FC Cincinnati soccer stadium will have on the city’s West End neighborhood.<sup>36</sup> The soccer stadium community benefits agreement will establish a youth soccer program, build local capacity for affordable housing development, and support entrepreneurship training for West End residents.<sup>37</sup> In addition to exploring community benefits agreements, advocates should also ensure that developers are conforming to their HUD Section 3 hiring requirements as housing development and construction in Hamilton County continues.

- **Support the expansion of businesses owned by people of color, especially women of color.** A well-crafted, race-conscious targeted city and county contracting program can create employment opportunities for people who are jobless because people-of-color-owned firms tend to hire more employees of color and people living in the community. However, the 2015 City of Cincinnati Disparity Study confirmed that African American business enterprises were not used proportionately on all prime construction contracts, prime professional services contracts, or prime supplies and services contracts.<sup>38</sup> The Minority Business Accelerator (MBA) launched by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, and the Cincinnati Minority Business Collaborative are encouraging examples of positive steps that Cincinnati has taken to address this concern. Community leaders should ensure that these groups are adequately funded and that city and county procurement strategies take advantage of their expertise.
- **Leverage the economic power of large anchor institutions, such as hospitals and universities, for equitable community economic development.** These anchors can develop intentional strategies to hire jobseekers facing barriers to employment, create on-the-job training opportunities, and purchase more goods and services from local and people-of-color-owned businesses that provide local jobs. For example, the Uptown Consortium is a coalition of anchor institutions in the Cincinnati region with an intentional focus on the inclusive development of the interchange at the intersection of Martin Luther King Drive and Interstate 71.<sup>39</sup> Thus far, the Consortium has successfully been able to get developers to commit to hiring 25 percent of women and minority contractors, suppliers, and construction workers.<sup>40</sup>

## Increase the economic security and mobility of vulnerable families and workers, especially women of color facing barriers to employment

Neighborhoods and cities thrive when their residents have sufficient incomes to buy goods and services from local businesses, and invest in their homes and neighborhoods.

- **Increase the availability of apprenticeships, career academies, and other education and training supports** that provide work experience and connections to keep more youth on the track to graduation, college, and family-sustaining careers. For example, Cincinnati Arts and Technology Studios uses arts education to engage at-risk youth and provide them with skills, credentials, and pathways to employment. Apprenticeship opportunities can also be tied to construction projects or companies that receive public subsidies. Iowa, for example, established the Apprenticeship and Training Act in 2014, allocating \$3 million to expand apprenticeship programs throughout the state. Since then, Iowa has been among the top states to register new apprenticeship programs with the federal government.<sup>41</sup>
- **Raise the floor on low-wage jobs.** Ohio recently raised the minimum wage to \$8.15, and \$4.08 for tipped employees. Tipped workers face poverty at twice the rate of the rest of the workforce.<sup>42</sup> Given that about three-quarters of tipped workers in Ohio are women, increasing the minimum wage would immediately help a significant number of women and their families get closer to economic security. Currently, seven states (Alaska, California, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington) require employers to pay their tipped workers at least the regular minimum wage, regardless of how much is earned in tips.<sup>43</sup> In these states, the poverty rate for all women is 13 percent lower than in states that perpetuate the current federally mandated tipped minimum wage.<sup>44</sup> Advocates and policymakers should also consider passing living-wage ordinances to set wage standards for city employees, government contractors, and companies receiving public subsidies, to ensure that public spending creates good family-supporting jobs. For example, Dallas passed a living-wage ordinance for city sanitation workers in 2015. The wage is based on geographically specific data related to the cost of childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and estimated family spending on food.<sup>45</sup>

- **Prohibit employers from asking about salary history as part of the job application process.** An employer's reliance on salary history will effectively perpetuate historical patterns of bias and discrimination. Eliminating inquiries into salary history seeks to level the playing field and empower women to be able to negotiate higher pay. New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and the state of Massachusetts have already successfully passed such legislation.<sup>46</sup>
- **Implement sectoral workforce strategies that connect workers with lower education levels to high-quality training programs that lead to gainful employment in growing sectors of the economy.** Such approaches are a win-win for employers who need access to skilled workers as well as workers seeking employment. One notable example is the job-training program that the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) has developed to help women gain access to higher wage employment opportunities. MLICCI has employed an innovative approach to layering existing subsidy programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to be able to provide childcare for mothers participating in job-training programs leading to higher wage employment opportunities. By addressing the potential barrier presented by the need for childcare, MLICCI has been able to achieve higher program retention rates and better position participants for success.<sup>47</sup>

## Cultivate homegrown talent through a strong cradle-to-career pipeline

Ensuring that all young people in the county, including African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and immigrants, can access a good education that leads to a career is critical for developing the human capital to power the Cincinnati region's economy in the future.

- **Eliminate overly harsh “zero-tolerance” school discipline policies** and replace them with strategies focused on positive behavior support and restorative justice in order to lower suspension and expulsion rates and reduce the number of disconnected youth. Los Angeles Unified School District eliminated zero-tolerance policies in 2013, because of, in part, the disproportionate impact on students of color.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the district has seen a 53 percent decrease in the number of students suspended.<sup>49</sup>

- **Strengthen the K-12 public school system** by ensuring sufficient and equitable funding for schools attended by lower income students. For example, bilingual education and other language access strategies can help youth who are English-language learners excel in school. However, it is not enough to only address in-school time; high-quality afterschool and youth development activities that provide learning opportunities outside of the school day are also critical ingredients for academic success. The Cincinnati Public School System is already on the right path with the passage of the District Equity Policy (Board Policy No. 2255 – Equity and Excellence in Education).<sup>50</sup> This equity policy provides a useful framework for helping the school district create a robust education pipeline that equips low-income children with the skills they need to succeed in a 21st century economy.

## Create healthy, opportunity-rich neighborhoods for all

All neighborhoods throughout the county should provide their residents with the resources they need to thrive and access to healthy homes. Housing hazards including lead paint, pests, and mold can affect the health of families. Advocates should work to better understand the types and extent of health issues impacting communities of color, and expand the resources available to address them.

- **Expand use of community health worker model.** An important mechanism for advancing health equity for residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods across the county has been the community health worker model. Community health workers (CHW) are residents trained to assist other community members in accessing health and supportive services through the provision of education, role modeling, outreach, home visits, and referral services. Research has documented that integrating CHWs into multidisciplinary health teams is an effective strategy for improving the control of hypertension among high-risk populations.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, CHWs have also played an integral role in Cradle Cincinnati's ability to reduce infant mortality in Hamilton County to the lowest rate on record.<sup>52</sup>
- **Facilitate active engagement by all racial and ethnic communities in local planning processes** by implementing best practices for multicultural engagement (e.g., translation services, provision of childcare during meetings, etc.). This approach has already been implemented successfully in redevelopment efforts in Austin, Chicago, and San Jose.<sup>53</sup>

## Increase access to high-quality, healthy affordable homes and prevent displacement

The city and advocates should explore strategies that promote affordable housing options for low-income residents in a tight housing market. Resolving any lingering racially discriminatory housing and lending practices such as those outlined in the 2014 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing is critical to expanding opportunity for all. In addition, efforts should be considered to protect affordable housing that is threatened by mismanagement and disrepair such as the units in the Alms Hill Apartments.<sup>54</sup>

- **Identify and support the creation of new sources of municipal funding for affordable housing maintenance and development.** The Ohio Housing Trust Fund was created 25 years ago and has provided approximately \$700 million for affordable housing development, homeless assistance, and other essential programs. Unfortunately, this resource has not been able to support the development of an adequate number of affordable housing units to meet the current demand. There are at least four counties in Ohio (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Montgomery, and Lucas counties) that have created separate local housing trust funds to meet the growing demand for affordable housing options. Policymakers should consider the Cincinnati Affordable Housing Trust Fund operational framework developed by Affordable Housing Advocates.<sup>55</sup>
- **Incentivize affordable housing by instituting regulatory waivers.** Several jurisdictions such as Oakland, California, have explored ways to expedite permitting and waive certain regulations (e.g., parking requirements associated with infill housing) to create a more hospitable landscape for developers seeking to create affordable housing.<sup>56</sup>
- **Expand and streamline collaboration.** Stakeholders should consider facilitating a collaboration between financial institutions, local philanthropy, and other intermediaries in order to create new financing tools for affordable housing development. Community development financial institutions could also play a critical role in supporting the development of affordable housing through predevelopment loans and grants, construction loans, and permanent financing. This same collaboration could also help create products that make low-interest home purchase and home-improvement loans available in targeted neighborhoods, specifically those that have been underserved by financial institutions.

- **Expand the use of inclusionary zoning.** Housing developments located downtown as well as those along transit and streetcar lines should be prioritized in order to maximize construction of new affordable units. Montgomery County, Maryland, is the oldest example of inclusionary zoning in the country. Since launching the program in 1974, more than 12,500 units have been produced.<sup>57</sup> While transit-oriented development and inclusionary zoning present opportunities to benefit low-income residents, any affordable housing development in downtown should not be prioritized over other neighborhoods in dire need, or in high-opportunity neighborhoods lacking in housing opportunity. In addition, anti-displacement strategies should be incorporated into development plans (both residential and commercial) in areas targeted for revitalization.
- **Just cause eviction protections and rent control,** along with other measures to protect tenants from retaliation, should be considered to help prevent displacement. For example, New York City guarantees an attorney to all residents with housing court cases. While this resource required an initial outlay of city funds for legal services, there are cost savings in the long run by keeping families out of shelters and preserving affordable housing units.
- **Housing advocates should consider a rent escrow account program** similar to the REAP15 in Los Angeles that directs rents to cover maintenance and repairs when property owners repeatedly fail to do so.
- **Support the expansion of existing equitable leadership development programs.** Increased funding for programs such as Public Allies has the potential to grow the pipeline of leadership for people of color, especially women of color in the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Public Allies Cincinnati prepares young leaders from underrepresented backgrounds to advance social justice and equity. The program engages and activates the leadership capacities of young people through a 10-month apprenticeship and training program, and the completion of a team service project.<sup>58</sup>
- **Expand efforts to reconcile racial injustice.** As the city explores ways to advance racial equity, leaders should consider strategies to address past racial injustices. Prior to the 2001 civil unrest stemming from the police shooting of an unarmed Black man, the City of Cincinnati and the Fraternal Order of Police entered into a Collaborative Agreement with the Black United Front to improve relations between the community and police. While progress has been made since the Collaborative Agreement was signed, there is still much room for improvement. It is critical that all parties remain committed to understanding and addressing implicit bias and racial profiling.

## Expand democracy and justice

Given the county's rapid demographic shifts that are being driven by the growing diversity of the youth population and increase in the number of immigrants of color, it is important for local leaders in every sector to proactively take steps to ensure that there are opportunities for communities of color to participate in decision making and leadership. Strategies to build diverse leadership include the following.

- **Create a durable countywide equity network** of leaders across race, age, gender, issue areas, and geography to advance equitable growth strategies and policies. This effort could build on successful local efforts such as the racial inclusion curriculum of the Undivided program at Crossroads Church, or the group of individuals engaged through the Collaborative Agreement to improve public safety and community-police relations.

## Conclusion

Community leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are already taking steps to connect its more vulnerable communities to educational, economic, and healthy housing opportunities, and these efforts must continue. To secure a prosperous future, the Cincinnati region needs to implement a growth model that is driven by commitment to equity. Concerted investments and policies for, and developed from within, communities of color will also be essential to ensure the region's fastest-growing populations are ready to lead it into the next economy.

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