



GLEN ELLYN DEI PROJECT
DIVERSITY • EQUITY • INCLUSION

DEI Initiative Overview of Findings

In January 2021, a number of organizations and individuals from Glen Ellyn launched a DEI Initiative to help begin a conversation in the Village about ways in which we are and hope to be a welcoming community. Participants from a variety of groups engaged in a series of conversations focusing on diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion. Representatives came from several groups, including B.R. Ryall YMCA, College of DuPage, DuPage United, Glen Ellyn Allies for Racial Justice, Glen Ellyn Children’s Resource Center, Glen Ellyn Public Library, Glen Ellyn Park District, Glen Ellyn Police Department, Glen Ellyn Youth and Family Counseling Services, Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative, One Community, and School Districts 41, 87, and 89. Fifteen panels, discussions, and affinity group conversations were led by RGW Consulting, LLC’s Rasheeda Graham Washington and her team. More than 180 members of the community participated in these events over the course of 25 hours. Presented here is an executive summary of RGW’s *Discovery Report*.

The DEI Initiative began with the following premise:

The Village of Glen Ellyn (VGE) believes that working together and listening as a community causes the collective to flourish when it sees itself reflected in what it values, how it functions, and how it uses the community as a window for discovery. The Village strives to demonstrate its commitment to DEI through listening to the community and developing synergistic strategy across agencies that is rooted in the feedback of its collective stakeholdership.

The DEI Initiative focused on the following objectives:

- Participants have given an account of the equity journey the village and its entities has taken to date, both from an ideal and an actual perspective
- Participants will be instrumental in the shaping and forming of the objective impressions that will develop over the course of intersectional listening sessions and the reporting recommendations
- Participants are informed by what they hear and share over the course of the discovery process as it unfolds intersectionally
- Participants are empowered toward implementation of the recommendations that emerge from the discovery process as a result of their participation in the development of the resulting findings

Some common themes became apparent during the various sessions and among various participants. These include:

- Concerns regarding equal accessibility to boards and commissions, food security, healthcare, housing, schools, services (e.g., library, parks), volunteer opportunities, etc., that would allow for all residents, regardless of background or group, to engage in village decision-making, events, policy-making, etc.
- Concerns that the village's residents, businesses, and leaders are failing to change with the times and to recognize shifts in politics and demographics
- Concerns that representation in the village is homogenous, monolithic, and patriarchal, thereby excluding people of color as well as people of different ethnicities and other backgrounds
- Concerns that NIMBYism will prevent the village from moving forward on key DEI issues such as affordable housing and food security

In light of these goals and concerns, and taking into account feedback from all participants, RGW Consulting prepared the *Discovery Report*, an after-action summary that identified some strengths shared by various village entities, summarized here:

- Willingness among Village entities and individuals to acknowledge and address various inequities (e.g., cultural, individual, operational, systemic) throughout the Village
- Awareness of blind spots regarding DEI practices and of the need to integrate diverse populations on boards and commissions, among administrative staffs, in school districts and community organizations, etc., in light of the fact that most consist of middle- to upperclass Whites
- Intention among leadership teams and governing bodies to become better community partners by recognizing shortcomings and biases and by working to develop partnerships that are committed to DEI

The *Discovery Report* also identified some challenges (as summarized below), including:

- Hierarchical power dynamics lead some within the village to marginalize others as unequal based on culture, education level, gender, race, socioeconomics, etc., and this is manifested in the fact that the preponderance of boards, commissions, and other organizations are led primarily by White males
- Pushback from some community members perpetuates the notion that DEI is anti-White and anti-American and argues that taxpayers who are predominately White and middleclass, as is the community as a whole, should have more say in various matters than residents from other groups in the village
- Whiteness and tokenism are deeply ingrained in Glen Ellyn, leading to a fear of making mistakes when it comes to DEI and making it difficult to encourage diverse community representatives to step forward for leadership positions and thereby creating challenging obstacles on the DEI journey

In addition to these strengths and challenges, several action items can be derived from the *Discovery Report*. These include:

- Continuing DEI efforts in order to create a sense of belonging among all residents and to increase community engagement overall
- Creating an equity advisory team with diverse representatives from the village's various governing bodies and community organizations to share input on processes and protocols
- Defining a shared language among governing bodies, administrations and staffs, and community organizations in order to create a set of common terms referring to DEI
- Encouraging representation of marginalized groups in order to create definitions, policies, programs, and approaches to DEI efforts and initiatives without assuming what those groups need and want
- Ensuring that communications from the village's taxing bodies reach into all corners of the village and are written for all residents regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, or socioeconomic status
- Establishing methods and deadlines for auditing and analyzing DEI efforts and effects
- Identifying ideals, intentions, and impacts related to DEI efforts and goals for individuals, discrete organizations, and all taxing bodies and community groups
- Incorporating DEI goals and objectives into the Village's Comprehensive Plan, organizations' strategic plans, policies, and procedures
- Reviewing, revising, and rewriting processes, protocols, and procedures in order to incorporate DEI in all aspects of life in our community

DEI by the Numbers

- \$15,000 = total cost of the village's DEI Initiative (\$10,000 funded by VGE; \$5,000 funded by GEPL)
 - 25+ hours of programming
 - 180 participants
 - 15 sessions/panels/conversations
 - Affinity group participants:
 - Seniors: 5
 - POC: 8
 - Black: 6
 - Black/POC: 5
 - Youth under 17: 2
 - Disability: 7
 - LGBTQIA: 8
 - Women: 12
 - 6 sessions uploaded to YouTube
 - 200+ views
 - 2 translated into Spanish