

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy

Purpose

Equality and inclusion are fundamental human rights for every individual, as prescribed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre is dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace by providing an atmosphere free from barriers where no one is denied opportunities for reasons unrelated to their abilities. We celebrate and welcome the diversity of all employees, stakeholders, and external personnel.

We demonstrate our commitment to this by providing a supportive work environment and a culture that welcomes and encourages equal opportunities for all employees. The company will comply with all applicable legislation in pursuit of these endeavours.

Inclusion and diversity are a shared responsibility. Achieving diversity requires a commitment to human dignity, equity and inclusion that must find full expression in our organizational culture, values, norms and behaviours.

This policy outlines the principles and actions Middlesex Centre will take towards building an open, accessible, diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace and community.

Rationale

Middlesex Centre's 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan Middlesex Centre sets out how we as a municipality will achieve our shared vision for a “thriving, progressive and welcoming community that honours our rural roots and embraces our natural spaces.” As an organization, we are committed to our mission “to deliver the highest standard in municipal services in a sustainable, professional and innovative manner,” which we accomplish by staying true to our corporate values of respect, cooperation, innovation and integrity.

This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy is closely linked to these values, particularly the value of Respect: “We are an open, courteous and inclusive workplace that values and celebrates the varied backgrounds and experiences of our community. We ensure every resident can participate in our community and engage with our municipal government.”

Further, this policy supports our strategic priorities of Engaged Community and Responsive Municipal Government. We want to support our community and bring all residents together so

that they feel part of Middlesex Centre while ensuring that the customer service we provide is of the highest quality to all our residents.

Scope

This policy applies to Members of Council, municipal appointees to local boards and commissions, volunteers on municipal committees, and all employees of Middlesex Centre including Paid-on-Call Firefighters.

Definitions

Discrimination – Treating people unequally or making a distinction based on legally protected grounds that results in a burden, obligation, or disadvantage that is not imposed on others or which limits access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages available to other members of society.

Diversity – The variety of unique dimensions and characteristics that we all possess. The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing the differences along the various dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender expression and gender identity, socio- economic status, sexual orientation, physical and invisible disabilities, age, creed amongst many other dimensions. It is exploring these differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment. It is about moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Equity – Fair access to opportunities. The rights of the individual to an equitable share of the goods and services in society. Equity recognizes that each person is unique and as such may require different resources and opportunities to succeed. Equity focuses on outcomes and results, and recognizes that creating equal results sometimes requires treating people differently from each other.

Inclusion – Creating a culture that embraces, values, and respects differences. Acknowledging and valuing people's differences so as to enrich social planning, decision-making, and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive municipality we each have a sense of belonging, acceptance, and are recognized as valued and contributing members of the society. Real inclusion takes place when those already included in the mainstream learn from those that are historically and currently excluded and then work together to initiate change.

Microaggressions – Everyday slights, insults, or insensitive actions that may be intentionally or unintentionally offensive and are directed at people who belong to marginalized groups.

Protected grounds – The characteristics that an employer must not use as reasons to discriminate against an individual or group under human rights legislation. Sometimes called prohibited grounds, these often include race, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, age, and disability, but protected grounds may differ by jurisdiction.

Unconscious bias – The inclinations or assumptions that we all have that operate without our awareness and can include stereotypes and prejudices towards certain individuals or groups.

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Members of Council and Local Boards** – Members of Council and/or Local Boards are expected to demonstrate inclusivity through their behaviours and actions, in alignment with the Council Code of Conduct, the Municipal Act, and relevant municipal policies.
- **Management** – Municipal leaders are expected to build inclusive practices into their teams and to demonstrate, through their behaviours and actions, a commitment to fostering a workplace culture where people feel included, valued and able to contribute their best.
- **All Employees** – In accordance with our values and policies/procedures including this policy, Respect in the Workplace and Code of Conduct among others, all employees are expected to uphold the values and principles for their colleagues, residents, and all other stakeholders.
- Within this policy, specific tasks are assigned to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Director of Corporate Services, the Human Resources and Health & Safety Coordinator, and the Municipal Clerk.

Policy

Principles

This policy will be implemented according to the following principles.

- All employees, customers and volunteers of the Municipality of Middlesex Centre will be treated with dignity and respect.
- The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will identify, prevent and remove barriers to services, programs and opportunities.
- Discrimination is prohibited in the workplace, in the provision of goods, services, and facilities to the public and in the administration of contracts as defined by human rights legislation.
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre facilities will strive to be safe, welcoming and inclusive for diverse staff and members of the community.
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre will create an inclusive organizational culture where diverse employees feel valued for their knowledge and skills.

- Municipality of Middlesex Centre will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate employees in the workplace as stipulated under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and any other applicable legislation.
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre will strive to create an environment where personal accountability and self-awareness are expected and harassment and discrimination are not tolerated.
- Principles of equity and inclusion will be embedded in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre's education, training and professional development for staff, local board volunteers and Members of Council.
- Public feedback processes will identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation to ensure that diverse communities and individuals have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged.
- The Municipality of Middlesex Centre will report on progress annually.

What does diversity, equity and inclusion mean for the Municipality of Middlesex Centre?

- **Embracing workforce diversity and inclusion.** We will strive to ensure that Middlesex Centre is a welcoming and inclusive environment for employees of all ages, gender, gender identity, race, national or ethnic origin, religion/creed, language, political beliefs, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, and marital and family status, among others.
- **Including and valuing diversity of perspective.** We will strive to leverage the diverse thinking, skills, experience and working styles of our employees and other stakeholders.
- **Building a flexible organization.** We will strive to provide opportunities for work arrangements that accommodate the diverse needs of individuals at different career and life stages.
- **Respecting stakeholder diversity.** We will develop strong and sustainable relationships with diverse members of the public, employees, volunteers, customers and suppliers.

Hiring and Employee Retention

- Our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion starts with staff.
- We are committed to developing productive, mutually beneficial and long-term relationships with our team members. We work to accommodate the different cultures, lifestyles, heritage and preferences of our local community.
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre is dedicated to recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce. By valuing a diverse workforce, Municipality of Middlesex Centre is committed

to hiring practices that are fair and equitable. Municipality of Middlesex Centre will always hire the most qualified candidate for a position. A protected ground will not be used against an individual during the hiring process. The company will ensure that the search and hiring processes are fair and equitable so that each candidate has a fair opportunity throughout the process regardless of any protected ground they may have.

- Our recruitment, deployment, reward and development practices, and our approach to working arrangements, are designed to attract and retain diverse talent and to accommodate individual needs at different career development and life stages.

Strategies to Support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Beyond what is required by legislation such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act among others, Middlesex Centre is committed to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion both in the workplace and in our dealings with residents and others in the community.
- Related to this policy, a series of strategic initiatives to support diversity, equity and inclusion will be prepared each year. The success of these initiatives will be included in the Director of Corporate Services' annual report to Council.

Training

- Education and training are key to understanding how and why diversity, equity and inclusion are important in our dealings with each other, residents and the broader community.
- As such, in consultation with the leadership team, the Human Resource and Health & Safety Coordinator will arrange for annual training on diversity and inclusion topic(s) that are timely and relevant in the workplace.

Continuous Improvement

- As part of our commitment to innovation and continuous improvement, staff and are encouraged to share their ideas for enhancing our policies, procedures and practices to support diversity, equity and inclusion.

Dealing with Questions

- Employees are encouraged to first speak with management if they are unsure of what this policy requires and/or how it is to be implemented in the workplace.
- If management is unable to answer, questions should be escalated to their director and/or Human Resources.

- Questions from Council should be directed to the Municipal Clerk, who will follow-up to get the answer(s).

Dealing with Complaints

In the Workplace:

- As with most issues, employees are encouraged to speak with management first.
- If that is not appropriate, employees should contact Human Resources about concerns or questions related to this policy. Upon receipt of a concern or question, and with thought to confidentiality as appropriate, Human Resources will meet with the staff member(s) responsible, management, and, if appropriate, their director and/or the CAO to review the concern and determine follow-up actions that may be required.
- If the concern relates to a Member of Council, the issue will be raised with the Mayor and the CAO.

Outside of the Workplace:

- If a concern comes from a resident or someone else outside of the workplace, the staff, management, and Human Resources will meet to review the concern and determine follow-up actions that may be required.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Each year, the Director of Corporate Services will prepare a brief report to Council outlining:
 - training provided to staff under this policy,
 - high-level accomplishments towards initiatives in support of this policy,
 - any concerns raised under this policy, and
 - any new legislation, programs or initiatives related to diversity, equity and inclusion of which Council should be aware.

Associated Policies

Aspects of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy are related to a number of Middlesex Centre policies, notably the Council and Employee Codes of Conduct, the Respect in the Workplace Policy, Accessibility Policy and RZone Policy, among others. In addition, this plan supports broader regional plans, such as the County of Middlesex Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

Middlesex Centre would like to acknowledge the Region of Waterloo, City of Oshawa, City of London, City of Stratford and Town of Georgina. Policies, strategies and other documentation from these municipalities have been incorporated into this policy and associated documents.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed once every four (4) years, or as necessary.