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2017 EQUITY PROFILE OF GRAND RAPIDS HIGHLIGHTS THE POTENTIAL FOR EQUITY TO DRIVE SHARED PROSPERITY

Grand Rapids, Michigan. — [An Equity Profile of Grand Rapids](#), released today, highlights inequities in income, employment, education, and opportunity in Grand Rapids. The report was developed by PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at USC, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Since 2011, PolicyLink and PERE have engaged in a formal partnership to amplify the message that equity—just and fair inclusion—is both a moral imperative and the key to our nation’s economic prosperity as America’s demographics shift and communities of color emerge as the new majority. *An Equity Profile of Grand Rapids* underscores while the city demonstrates overall strength and resilience, gaps in income, employment, education, and opportunity by race and geography place its economic future at risk. In 2014, more than 40 percent of residents were people of color, double the share (20 percent) in 1980. Diverse groups are driving growth and change in the region and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

"The City of Grand Rapids believes in equity-informed decision making which is why we are committed to creating and implementing an equity dashboard and scorecard," said Stacy Stout, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Grand Rapids. "We don't want data paralysis, we want action; if you have analysis without the action it often results in managerial racism and that hurts the community. Tools like the PolicyLink Equity Profile help us better visualize that work."

"Robust data about the state of equity in Grand Rapids is essential for crafting strategies to improve outcomes for vulnerable children," said Huilan Krenn, Director of Learning and Impact at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. "Our foundation is committed to enabling communities to take data-driven actions using the powerful data contained in the Equity Profile."

"There has been growing consensus amongst economists that more equitable cities and regions experience more sustainable growth," said Jessica Pizarek, Associate at PolicyLink. "This is also true for Grand Rapids. If racial gaps in income were closed, its economy would be \$4 billion stronger. We call this the 'racial equity dividend.'"

Other key findings in the report include:

- Since 1980, communities of color have driven the city’s population growth. While Grand Rapids’s population has not grown much overall (only a net increase of about 9,000 people), its demographic makeup has changed significantly. All of the city’s population growth since 1980 has come from communities of color, which has countered steady decline in the number of residents who are White.
- Young people are leading this demographic shift. Three in five youth under the age of 18 in the city are non-White. Looking to the future, Grand Rapids will become a majority people-of-color city around 2050, just behind the nation, which will become majority people-of-color in 2044.
- In 2014, 12 percent of all residents who could work and were employed full time but still lived below 200 percent of the poverty line. Latinos have the highest rate of working poverty, at more than 26 percent.

- Median hourly wages have dropped for all residents since 2000, but Black workers saw the largest decrease of nearly \$3 per hour from 2000 to 2014. Latino workers continue to earn the lowest median wage of all groups at \$12.30 an hour.

"I am glad PolicyLink is elevating data about racial inequities, particularly at a time when we are being presented with new studies locally showing disparate interaction with law enforcement in Grand Rapids communities of color," said Faye Richardson-Green, Executive Director of Partners for a Racism-Free Community.

The equity profile and potential solutions included therein will serve as a unique resource for local advocates and residents seeking to address disinvestment in communities of color. To this end, PolicyLink and Partners for a Racism-Free Community are holding a panel discussion and community forum around equity in Grand Rapids this morning at DeVos Place (303 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503). To download a copy of the report, click here:

http://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids_final_profile.pdf

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