

For Immediate Release

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New Equity Profile shows billions lost in Omaha-Council Bluffs regional economy

Updated study to be released on June 6

OMAHA, Neb.-*June 1, 2018*-The Omaha-Council Bluffs metro region missed out on nearly \$5 billion in economic activity in 2015 due to racial disparities in educational attainment, employment, economic development, housing and community development, transportation and health and wellness. That is one of the key findings of the updated Heartland 2050 Equitable Growth Profile, which will be released to the public on Wednesday, June 6.

The report is a joint project by the Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and the University of Southern California's Program on Environmental and Regional Equity.

Together with PolicyLink, Heartland 2050 released the first Equitable Growth Profile in 2014. PolicyLink is a leading national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. The updated profile demonstrates the continued impact of racial disparities in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. It outlines recommendations which can be utilized to close the gaps identified.

"As communities of color continue to drive growth in our region, addressing wide racial inequities and ensuring that people of color are participating fully in our economy is an urgent priority," said Vicki Quaites-Ferris, Chair of the Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee and Director of Operations for the Empowerment Network. "We are making progress in closing these gaps, such as dramatic reductions in youth unemployment, but we need to continue our work to reverse these critical trends."

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau show the demographic shift in the metro area is projected to continue, and by 2044, 38 percent of the region's residents will be people of color.

The updated Equitable Growth Profile will be unveiled at "Everyone Prospers: The Path to Equity." The event is scheduled from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 6 at the University of Nebraska Omaha's Milo Bail Student Center, 6203 University Drive North, Omaha. Dr. Michael McAfee, President of PolicyLink, will begin his presentation at 8:30 a.m.

About Heartland 2050

Heartland 2050 is a regional planning effort for the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Omaha and Council Bluffs, coordinated by the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). In order to compete for economic development opportunities, and attract young professionals, we need to be competitive as a region. Heartland 2050 sets up goals and action steps to meet growing needs brought by an increasing population with shifting demographics and the demands it places on our assets and resources.

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