City of Akron's
RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TASKFORCE

City of Akron's
Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce

Subcommittee Reports
Quarter 1 | 2021

Table of Contents

ROETZEL

I.   Introduction

In June of 2020, Akron City Council, with support from Mayor Dan Horrigan, declared racism a public health crisis. Within Akron City Council's declaration was a call for the establishment of a Taskforce assembled for the purposes of developing a pro-equity strategic plan responsive to this crisis.

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce ("the Taskforce") began its work on November 10, 2020 and will continue through December 2021. **The Taskforce's mission is to build public trust in the community by formulating meaningful recommendations of policy change** to create a more racially equitable, socially just community, and to bridge the racial wealth divide in the City of Akron. Recommendations of such policy change will be outlined in a five-year Strategic Plan, which will be delivered to the Mayor, City Council, and the community by December 2021.

The Executive Committee is ultimately responsible for the five-year Strategic Plan, which will be delivered to the Mayor and City Council in December 2021. The Strategic Plan will include specific policy recommendations**,** timelines, and funding allocations required to achieve the recommendations.

The Taskforce's six Subcommittees are responsible for advising the Executive Committee as it prepares to make recommendations. Subcommittees are to focus on their subject area, identifying problems, examining potential responses, researching best practices and ultimately recommending policy solutions to the Executive Committee.

In his capacity as the Chair of the Taskforce, Presiding Bishop F. Josephus Johnson, II, better known as Bishop Joey Johnson, has asked Subcommittee Chairs to involve grassroots organizers and community members in their work, to interact with and interview City officials involved in the topic their Subcommittee examines, and to both discuss and research possible changes in practice.

The Purpose of This Report

 Subcommittees are required to advise the Executive Committee of their findings and progress via quarterly reports. This document contains the first reports from the Subcommittees, summarizing their work during the first quarter of 2021.

This document was prepared for the review of the Taskforce Executive Committee and is NOT a final recommendation of the Taskforce – it is an explanation of work still being done, and a tool to facilitate two-way communication between the Subcommittees and Executive Committee.

Executive Committee members are expected to review the information contained in this report and provide feedback to the Subcommittees. As the Executive Committee is expected to utilize the research of the Subcommittees in their final report, members should consider whether, as decisionmakers, they need more or different information than is being provided by the Subcommittees.

It should be kept in mind that this is the first of three reports which will be provided to the Taskforce Executive Committee during 2021. Each successive report is meant to build on the report before it. Subcommittee chairpersons will attend the April meeting of the Taskforce to present the content herein and update the public on their progress.

ROETZEL

On the next page, members of the Executive Committee will find a reading guide for consideration while reviewing the content herein.

Executive Committee Member Instructions

During 2021, Subcommittees will provide the Executive Committee of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce with a total of three reports containing their research and recommendations. Ultimate Subcommittee success means providing the Executive Committee with substantive, helpful recommendations by the end of Quarter 3.

Executive Committee members are asked to review all of the information enclosed in this report and to keep in mind, while reading, the following questions. These questions can be answered utilizing the digital survey found here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JLN2MJ8

1. Does the Subcommittee appear to have made appropriate progress toward their ultimate goal? In other words, are they where they should be?

2. Do the Subcommittee appear to have sufficient data to support their claims or concerns?

3. Can you think of a resource which would support any of the Subcommittees' efforts to better inform their recommendations and reports? Resources could include people, documents, processes, etc.

4. Does the Subcommittee appear to need to "dig deeper" into content or "take a wider view" of the challenges they're considering?

5. Do you have any other observations?

Each Subcommittee leader will present their research during the Taskforce Executive Committee Meeting, to be held April 13, 2021 at 6:30 PM. If you have additional feedback after that meeting, please email Bishop Johnson using these links:

Feedback for Criminal Justice, Equitable Workforce Development, and Health Subcommittees

Feedback for Communications, Education, and Housing Subcommittees

Feedback is requested on the information enclosed by April 19, 2021. Bishop Johnson will distribute Executive Committee feedback to the Chairperson to whom it applies. Chairs will review the feedback, discuss it with Subcommittee members, and take it in to consideration as they continue their work.

ROETZEL

II.   References Guide

Introduction

The following document serves as the style guide for all communications published by the City of Akron's Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce ("The Taskforce"). This Guide contains a list of the shorthand which will be utilized, and specific guidance regarding the standardized way to reference people and groups.

In creating these guidelines, the Taskforce Chair primarily consulted the AP Stylebook Guidelines Related to Race References in Press Coverage, as well as other style guides and common usage. For more on the AP guidelines, consult the copy hosted here.

***The Guide has been created to promote precision of language, clarity of meaning, respect, and uniformity in Taskforce communications**.*

Shorthand

The below will be listed for the first time thus: Full name ("Abbreviation")

- Akron Police Department ("APD")

- Akron Public Schools ("APS")

- The City of Akron's Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce ("the Taskforce")

- The City of Akron ("The City")

- Chartered Non-Public Schools and Non-Chartered, Non-Tax Supported Schools ("Non-Public Schools")

    - If referring to Catholic schools, say Catholic schools.

    - If referring to charter schools and community schools (which are considered by the state to be included in the moniker, "public schools"), explicitly state that.

- Professional staff members employed by the City of Akron ("City Staff") – specify if referring to a specific department

- Summit County ("The County")

ROETZEL

Terms Relating to People

The Taskforce will use the following terms (the "to use" term is *italicized*):

- *Akronites* or *City Residents* – people living in the City of Akron. Capitalize "City"

- *Black people* – Acceptable for an American Black person of African descent. Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: *Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges*. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. **See additional note below.**

  - If specifically referring to only U.S.: "*African Americans*" (do NOT use a hyphen).

- COMPOUND PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: No hyphen in designating dual heritage: *Italian American, Mexican American*

- *Latino, Latina* – Latino is often the preferred noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America. Latina is the feminine form. The gender-neutral term Latinx, should be confined to quotations, utilized only when requested by the person(s) to whom the word refers in the text, and be accompanied by a short explanation, i.e. "Hernandez prefers the gender-neutral term Latinx." For groups of females, use the plural Latinas; for groups of males or of mixed gender, use the plural Latinos.

- *Enslaved people* – The term slaves denotes an inherent identity of a person or people treated as chattel or property. The term "enslaved people" underlines that the slave status has been imposed on individuals.

  immigrants – Use this to refer to people who have traveled to the United States from outside U.S. borders and who now consider the U.S. to be their place of residence in this way. Use without a qualifier.

- *people of color* –The term is acceptable when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than White: We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script. **Do not use "person of color" for an individual.**

- *police violence* – Use this to refer to aggression from a member or members of any police force intended for, or resulting in, the physical harm of other person(s). (referenced the [Ask the Editor]() question section of the Stylebook)

- *systemic racism* – Use this term to refer to social, political and institutional systems and cultures that contribute to racial inequality in areas such as employment, health care, housing, the criminal justice system and education. Avoid shortening this use to simply "racism," to avoid confusion with the other definition.

- *White people* – Use when referring to "persons who are part of any of various population groups considered as having light pigmentation of the skin."

  Note: "The meaning of White as it relates to population groups has historically been fluid…The category has also often functioned as a grouping into which people who are not designated as belonging in some other category are placed. Specific parameters are, however, sometimes set, as in the U.S. 2020 Census, which stipulates that "the category of

ROETZEL

'White' includes all individuals who identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa." (Merriam-Webster)

- Communications will <u>not</u> be written in a way that assumes White is default.

Special Note on Using the Singular While Discussing Race

Generally, do not use Black(s) OR White(s) as a singular noun. *Black* and *White* are acceptable as adjectives when relevant. For plurals, phrasing such as *Black people, White people, Black teachers, White students* is often preferable when clearly relevant.

Examples:

- At present, White patrons account for 60% of season-ticketholders, Black patrons 30% and Latino patrons 10%.

- The public service announcement was intended to reach the City's Black families.

The plural nouns *Blacks* and *Whites* are generally acceptable when clearly relevant and needed for reasons of space or sentence construction. *He helped integrate dance halls among Blacks, Whites, Latinos and Asian Americans.*

ROETZEL

III. Taskforce Membership & Structure

About the Chair

Presiding Bishop F. Josephus Johnson, II, better known as Bishop Joey Johnson, is the Organizer and Senior Pastor of The House of the Lord in Akron, Ohio.

Bishop Johnson is a renowned scholar, counselor, educator, speaker and workshop facilitator. His experience in leading one of the city's largest churches for 47 years has equipped him to impart wisdom related to growth and development, business management, leadership and team building.

Executive Committee Members

Pastor Bishop F.J. (Joey) Johnson II – Chair
Curtis Minter, Jr. – Co-Chair
Bruce Alexander
Tonya Block
Kemp Boyd
Tracy Carter
DaMareo Cooper
Dr. Raymond W. Cox III
Vince Curry
Carla Davis
Robert DeJournett
Jose Delgado
Bina Gurung
Judi Hill
Dr. Michael Hughes
Pastor Stacey Jenkins
Mark Krohn, Esq.
Sue Lacy
Dr. Dana Lawless-Andric
Teresa LeGrair
The Honorable Elinor Marsh-Stormer
Minister Stephen Muhammad
Jim Mullen
Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval
Rev. Roderick Pounds
Bill Rich
Kevin Rushing
Brandon Scarborough
President of Council Margo Sommerville
Pastor Mark Ward
Bernett Williams
Laurie Zuckerman

Taskforce Composition

The Executive Committee is ultimately responsible for the five-year Strategic Plan, which will be delivered to the Mayor and City Council in December 2021.

Subject matter-specific work is done by **six topic-based Subcommittees**. The Subcommittees are required to advise the Executive Committee of their findings and progress via quarterly reports.

Executive Committee members are expected to review the data and provide feedback to the Subcommittees. The Executive Committee is expected to utilize the research of the Subcommittees.

Criminal Justice Subcommittee

Communications Subcommittee

Education Subcommittee

Taskforce Executive Committee

Equitable Workforce Subcommittee

Housing Subcommittee

Health Subcommittee

ROETZEL

IV.   Quarter One Subcommittee Reports

A. Subcommittee on Communications

Introduction

The Communications Subcommittee is comprised of nine RESJ Taskforce members. The regular meetings of the Subcommittee are held at 6:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month.

The Communications Subcommittee has convened four meetings during the First Quarter of 2021: January 5, February 1 and 10, and March 4. The inaugural January 5 meeting was an introductory session. The February 1 meeting centered on clarification of the Subcommittee's purpose and a discussion of the question, "What makes racial equity important to you?"

RESULTS: A heartfelt discussion of Subcommittee members' motivations for participating in this important work.

The second half of the February 1 meeting involved a full Subcommittee review of the Racial Equity Statement (also referred to as a "sentence stem"); three Subcommittee members previously revised the statement in order to take into account two-way communication.

A sub-subcommittee composed of Laurie Zuckerman, Kathy Romito, and Mary Brooks was formed to draft the sentence stem, which was then presented to the overall subcommittee. The sub-subcommittee "work group" met twice outside of the subcommittee meetings. Laurie, Kathy and Mary forwarded the sentence stem to the subcommittee, which reviewed and approved the sentence stem at its March 4 meeting.

A second Subcommittee meeting on February 10 was convened solely to discuss the City of Akron's Communications efforts with Annie McFadden (Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Administration). Our Subcommittee is researching the historical information about communication practices, methods and channels in the City of Akron.

Communications History

Information from a Presentation by City of Akron External Communications – Annie McFadden, Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Administration

- Main Communications Mediums: Press conferences (at least weekly), press releases, direct one-on-ones with trusted media sources. Social Media was not leveraged or highly used at the time. Weekly newsletters were done for a time, as were larger printed City magazines and calendars. Mailed to residents.
- Communications Team: 1 Communications Director and 1 Community Engagement Liaison
- Community Engagement: Mayor Plusquellic attended community events constantly, both large in scale and small/personal in nature. He liked to attend both the good and bad,

ROETZEL

weddings, funerals, celebrations/parades, hospital visits, etc. Made a point to go right to the community in challenging moments. Developed Akron Peacemakers.

Transitions

- Major shifts in City budget beginning in 2008 into 2011 (Recession and LGF)
- Reduction in employees and budget
- Printing and mailing communications became the exception, not the norm
- Advent of social media also shifted the landscape
- Trust in media and government institutions began to decline
- Expectations of conversation, not one-way communication; Major shifts in City budget beginning in 2008 into 2011 (Recession and LGF)

Present Communications

- Main Communications Mediums: Social media, Press Releases, Press Conferences, Annual City Magazine (has been both printed/mailed and digital)
- Communications Team
- Chief of Staff/ Communications Director, Press Secretary, Communications and Media Supervisor, and Multimedia Coordinator all work in Mayor's Office
- Proactively taking steps to embed communications experts in key departments as well
- Community Engagement:
  - Digital: Social Media conversations, virtual town halls, emails/press releases to key constituencies, digital surveys
  - New commissions/community groups: Mayor's Citizen's Institute, Akron Ambassadors, Mayor's Youth Leadership Council, Blue Ribbon Task Force, Akron Civil Rights Commission, Akron Commission on Aging Adults, RESJ Task Force, Akron Public Arts Commission
  - Events: High school senior town halls, neighborhood town halls, business ribbon cuttings, parades, festivals, community group events/fundraisers, annual meetings, ward meetings, etc.

Digital Media & Resources

- Facebook: Facebook.com/AkronOhio
- Twitter: Twitter.com/AkronOhioMayor
- Instagram: Instagram.com/mayordanhorrigan
- YouTube: youtube.com/cityofakron
- Websites:
  - akronohio.gov
  - akronwaterwaysrenewed.com
  - greatstreetsakron.org
  - lock3live.com
  - akronparks.org
- Press Releases: https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/press_releases/index.html
- Email: mayor@akronohio.gov
- Blog: https://cityofakron.medium.com/
- 311 Online Portal: akronohio.gov/311

ROETZEL

RESULTS:

- Increased understanding of the progression that the Office of the Mayor has made in the past decade. This can be largely summarized by Annie's statement that "People don't just want to be spoken to, they want to be spoken with now."
- Past: print media focus (both direct mail and interaction with newspapers) and only one staff person handling professional communications on behalf of the Mayor.
- Present: interactive media focus (social media, tele-town halls) and four professionals responsible for aspects of communication on behalf of the Mayor.

Areas of Concern

We are concerned with the City's ability and capacity to create opportunities and avenues for two-way communication. We are aware of a communication problem; we need to be able to identify *where* that communication breakdown is happening.

The City's current capacity to establish creative channels that reach the public effectively. Categorically, criminal justice, health care & communications would benefit from initial focus as an opportunity to improve the public awareness & acumen.

We are concerned the COVID-19 pandemic will hamper our committee's ability to connect with diverse groups of Akron residents in order to identify specific communication needs. We are missing opportunities to attend in-person meetings at recreation centers and community gatherings due to restrictions related to the pandemic.

Methodology and Initial Research Efforts

Our Subcommittee is researching the historical information about communication practices, methods, and channels in the City of Akron. So far, we've sought answer to our questions and concerns by meeting with Annie McFadden, who consulted with former (Plusquellic Administration) Communications Director Stephanie York.

We formed another sub-subcommittee work group composed of Jose Delgado and Linda Ray to assess and further delve into data gathering and metrics. On February 18, Jose and Linda engaged with Annie McFadden to hone in on the data/information that would glean the most value with regard to how practices could evolve.

Jose and Linda framed their research "in the spirit of contributing to creating those 'built-in channels'." The goal was to gather some granularity on the efforts of communication (i.e. the Akron Recreation Department) for two purposes: 1) to better enable Subcommittee members to educate the public and 2) to create an awareness of existing opportunities for improvement. (In those instances where the City has already identified improvement opportunities, committee members may help to provide a potential catalyst for change in the next phase of the City's communication efforts.)

(Excerpt from email communication to Annie McFadden):

ROETZEL

Within the context of communication tools and initiatives, questions can be directed to you or someone you recommend:

- What has worked well or has been most impactful and how do you measure impact?
- Which tool or initiative has not had the intended impact?
- Of the RESJ Subcommittees categories, which do you feel the public is most informed about/least informed about?
- How can our Subcommittee be utilized as a catalyst on a project you are currently working on to progress it to the next phase?

Policy options/responsive actions currently being considered

Increasing communication with English Language Learners (ELLs) – addressing the misconception that people for whom English is not their first language lack intelligence;

Coordinating a survey on behalf of the Taskforce to solicit ideas for the City to improve communication with non-White residents;

Engaging other subcommittees on potential questions to include in a citywide survey

(Optional addition taken from group discussion notes) Should we consider a niche communication with survivors and victims of domestic violence? Is there a mechanism to facilitate two-way communication especially between POC survivors and victims of domestic violence and the City of Akron?

Conclusion

In addition to the continued pursuit of identifying potential two-way modalities of communication channels for Akron residents, the Communications Subcommittee would like to engage its peer subcommittees on the Taskforce to gain a better understanding of their work (with the goal of communicating that to the public). Engagement with the Chair of the Housing Subcommittee is already underway, with the goal of helping the group meet one of its housing initiatives.

Addendum

Research articles reviewed by Communications Subcommittee members in Q1

1) Summary of Communication Processes from ABJ Article – Laurie Zuckerman 1.2.2021
https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/2021/01/21/black-leaders-residents-call-culturally-competent-messaging-benefits-covid-19-vaccine-among-communit/6585845002/
Communication processes to consider (based on the article):
Implement targeted and culturally competent messaging based on the different information needs of the community; When possible, have messages come from people who look like those they're talking with; Meet people where they are psychologically and emotionally, and show empathy; and Build relationships with trusted leaders and community organizations to develop and share effective messaging.

ROETZEL

2) Interesting Information on Strategic Structural Exclusion and VPSA. Research for ideas on communication in support of improving racial inequality – Linda Ray 3.9.2021

Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization

https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/implicit-bias-structural-racialization

This article argues that the failure to effectively communicate information to minorities can be intentional with the objective of continued and systemic exclusion. The term given in most of the articles is Strategic Structural Exclusion.

The other is a pretty candid discussion on addressing racial inequality. It provides examples and methods. Of particular interest is the Value, Problem, Solution and Act section. This could be a tool we use and offer to other Subcommittees.

Ten Lessons for Talking About Race, Racism, and Racial Justice | The Opportunity Agenda

Committee Members:

Chair Carla Davis
Co-Chair Brandon Scarborough
Jose Delgado
Cathy Baer
Mary Brooks
Megan Delong
Linda Ray
Kathy Romito
Kelly Urbano
Laurie Zuckerman

ROETZEL

B. Subcommittee on Criminal Justice

Introduction

The criminal justice system comprises policing, prosecution and defense, adjudication, and corrections. To date, the Criminal Justice Subcommittee has focused almost exclusively on policing because that, in the Subcommittee's view, is the component of the system that most urgently requires reform in order to redress racial inequity and social injustice. The Subcommittee may later expand its focus to include other aspects of the criminal justice system.

The Subcommittee has focused on the following subjects, for each of which a working group has been formed:

- Police accountability mechanisms: police auditor, citizen review board
- Body-worn camera legislation and policy
- Police hiring and promotion practices
- Police training
- Community policing

Criminal Justice History
[Committee did not include this section]

Policy Options and Responsive Actions

Police Accountability Mechanisms

Although the Subcommittee has begun considering whether the City of Akron should have a citizen review board, it quickly concluded that the most immediate need is for the existing Police Auditor to have the resources and access to information necessary for him to perform his assigned functions and that, currently, he lacks those resources and that access to information. Accordingly, after hearing from the Police Auditor and both the City Council Member who co-chaired the Accountability and Transparency Working Group of the Council's Special Committee on Reimagining Public Safety and the City Council President, the Subcommittee formulated the following recommendations, which it submitted to the Mayor and the Council President:

1. Resources.

    a. The police auditor's position should be made full time.

    b. There should also be

        1. a full-time deputy police auditor and

        2. a full-time administrative assistant.

2. Access to information.

ROETZEL

a. The police auditor should, within 72 hours of making a request, have access to all documents, photographs, audio recordings, electronic files, and other tangible evidence in the possession of the Akron Police Department ("APD") or any other city office relating to any of the following:

  1. any duty-related incident involving APD personnel during which, or as a result of which, anyone dies or suffers serious bodily injury;

  2. any allegation of improper use of force by APD personnel; or

  3. any allegation of bias, discourtesy, retaliation, or other misconduct by APD personnel.

b. If the police auditor requests body-worn camera footage relating to any of the above, The City should complete its review of such footage, redact any information that federal or state law prohibits the police auditor from receiving, and provide it to the police auditor within 72 hours of the request.

c. The police auditor should have convenient access to any professional standards software applications used by APD. If such access cannot be provided in the police auditor's office, the police auditor should be provided with such access at a workstation in the headquarters of the APD.

d. Within 72 hours of any of the following, the police chief or the chief's designee should inform the police auditor of the following:

  1. The commencement of an internal investigation into an APD employee;

  2. The receipt of a citizen complaint;

  3. An incident involving a reportable use of force as defined by APD policies and procedures;

  4. An incident involving an in-custody death or serious injury; and

  5. Becoming aware of the filing of a lawsuit against the APD or an APD employee acting in their official capacity.

Recommendations 1.a. and 1.b.2. were well received and are being adopted by the Mayor and the Council. The Mayor has requested data to support Recommendation 1.b.1. Further discussions of the recommendations about the police auditor's access to information are taking place. The Subcommittee is in the process of ascertaining whether there are legal impediments to the police auditor's timely access to body-worn camera video recordings and professional standards software applications used by APD.

Meanwhile, the Subcommittee is proceeding to consider whether there should be a citizen review board and, if so, how it should be constituted and on which model it should be based: investigative, review, or auditor monitoring.

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ROETZEL

Body-worn Camera Legislation and Policy

The Subcommittee's initial focus on this subject has been on the police auditor's prompt access to body-worn camera video footage. (See above.) Next, the Subcommittee will formulate recommendations concerning City Council legislation to implement the recent Akron Charter amendment regarding public access to body-worn camera video footage.

Police Hiring and Promotion Practices

The Subcommittee plans to examine police hiring and promotion practices to identify barriers to diversity and inclusion in the ranks of the APD and to develop strategies to lower those barriers. In doing so, the Subcommittee will consult national standards for police training.

Police Training

The Subcommittee plans to examine the way police officers are trained and consider national standards and best practices. It is expected that the Subcommittee's recommendations will focus in large part on implicit bias and de-escalation training.

Community Policing

The Subcommittee plans to study APD's implementation of community policing to date, to compare it to national standards and best practices for community policing, and to formulate recommendations for a fuller implementation of community policing strategies.

Committee Members:

Chair Bill Rich
Co-Chair Kemp Boyd
Kim Brown
Theron Brown
DaMareo Cooper
Jan Davis
Pastor Lorenzo Glenn
Pastor Gregory Harrison
Tyesha Hercegovac
Judi Hill
Tony Ingram
Pastor Stacey Jenkins
Honorable Elinor Marsh-Stormer
Rob Minster
Nannette Mitchell

Stephen Muhammad
Gene Nixon
Imokhai Okolo
Rev. Roderick Pounds
Shalaunda Reese
Kandee Robinson
Kevin Rushing
Bethanne Scruggs
Ron Smith
Cazzell Smith
Aimee Wade
Oscar Williams
John Williams

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C. Subcommittee on Education

Introduction

Racial Equity and Social Justice have for generations had a complicated relationship with education, dating back to the very beginnings of public education. Public education was created so that students would learn to read, write and compute, to understand history and to develop the social skills they would eventually need to succeed as adults. Beyond the essentials of reading, writing and math, schools were intended to reinforce the core values of society. The clamor for free and compulsory school for every child in the nation resulted in the first school laws in 1852 and by 1918 all American children were required to attend at least elementary school.

While early schools were a theoretical resource for "every" child, meanwhile many states in the American South continued to legally restrict Black people from being taught to read and write. The bifurcation of access to education continued with legal measures that have extended into the 21st Century. Eventually separate schools were established for Black children, and this occurred in tandem with missionary schools for Native children. The 1896 Supreme Court ruling, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, upheld the legality of segregated schools, espousing the "separate but equal" doctrine that lasted for nearly six more decades. The allegations of equality were never true nor realized, and this doctrine was finally overturned in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark Supreme Court decision that declared that all public schools would be open to people of all races. Further inequities within the educational landscape pointed out the imperative for education reform in the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, and yet again, these inequities were reinforced in the 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act*, a controversial measure designed to increase public school accountability.

The issues are legion. Funding for public schools left schools in neighborhoods with high poverty rates under-resourced, and this disproportionately affected Black and Brown children. Public education was failing many, and overwhelmingly failing children of color. The early systems that introduced inequity in schools became enculturated and society has been entrenched in a centuries-long battle to reframe many of the prevailing cultural elements on which the pillars of these systems are based.

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce Education Subcommittee has taken on the task to research information in the following areas impacting education and make recommendations for policy implications: **Student Access, Student-Centered Learning and Closing the Achievement Gap, Pandemic Recovery as it Relates to Student Achievement, Cultural Responsiveness**, and **Fiscal Transparency**. The Education Subcommittee has been divided into two Research Teams, or Subgroups, to accomplish these goals.

Historical Context (Education in the City of Akron)

The City of Akron is served by many institutions of learning. Primary and secondary options available in the City include public schools (to include both Akron Public Schools and various "community schools" commonly referred to as charter schools) as well as non-public schools (to include both religious and non-religious private schools).

ROETZEL

87.9 percent of the school-age children in Akron attend public schools, while 12.1 percent are enrolled in non-public schools. In Ohio, the median rate of enrollment in non-public schools is 11 percent.[1] For the purposes of this Q1 report, we will focus on Akron Public Schools (APS).

APS educates more than 21,000 students and has one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the state of Ohio. APS employs 3,000 teaching and non-teaching professionals, and the district covers all of Akron's 61.9 square miles.[2]

APS educates students who are Black, White, Asian or Pacific Islander, Latino, American Indian/Native American, and students of multiple races. Numerically speaking, the district is primarily composed of Black students and White students.
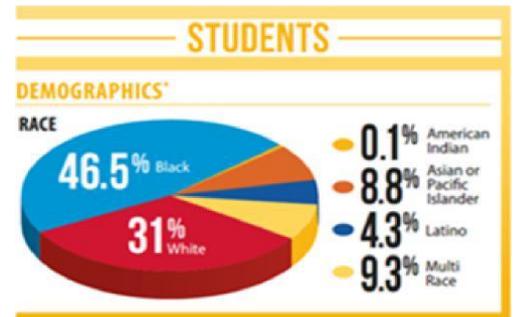
In the 2019-2020 school year, 46.5 percent of APS students identified as Black, and 31 percent identified as White. By comparison, in the 2019 U.S. Census of Akron residents between ages five and 19 (inclusive) 37 percent identified as Black and 48.7 percent identified as White.

APS student demographics do not reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the city's school-age population. Even larger gaps exist between APS demographics and those of the City's population at large. This will be explored further in the Education Subcommittee's Quarter 2 ("Q2") Report.

We will provide historical context regarding the founding of APS, as it has direct bearing on present day realities.

Founding Years

Passed by Congress in 1787, the Northwest Ordinance established a legal mechanism for areas within the Northwest Territory to become states. Territories wishing to become states were required to, among other things, provide for the funding of a system of education within state law. Ohio became the seventeenth state of the United States of America on March 1, 1803, complying with this and other conditions of the Northwest Ordinance.

Student Race/Ethnicity Data, Akron Public Schools	
Black	9,929
White	6,612
Asian	1,844
Latino	902
Native American	11
Native Hawaiian	18
Multiple	1,974
TOTAL	**21,290**

(Ohio Dept. of Education, APS Enrollment Data for 2019-2020 school year)

It is perhaps notable that Akron's formal system of public education was neither concurrent with the state's founding in 1803, nor the City of Akron's founding in 1825. An educational curriculum was developed after Akron was incorporated as a village in 1836, and Akron's public school system was officially established in 1847.

In 1846, a group of community members, led by Rev. Isaac Jennings of Akron's Second Congregational Church, composed the "Akron Plan" to address the inequity and disorganization

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau. "American Community Survey: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables" 2019. Link.

[2] Akron Public Schools. "APS Website: About" Link.

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which characterized education available to residents at the time. The "Akron Plan" established the Akron school district, prescribed structures for grades, provided for the organization of an elected school board, and created a local funding system "by general taxation."[3]

A detailed analysis of the history of Akron schools was compiled by Petra C. Knapp, in her work *The Architecture of Education: Public Schools in Akron, 1890-1920*. Knapp describes "the ways in which educational architecture was an illustration of cultural and educational changes" in Akron. For instance, the needs of immigrants influenced the composition of Akron schools' instructional content in APS' first century of operation. In that time, concerns related to fire safety and infectious disease greatly affected the physical plants erected by APS.

Our Subcommittee is still working to assemble a strong historical reference point regarding the past century of Akron Public Schools' history. There appears to be a need for formal documentation focused exclusively on APS' 1920-2020 history. We will continue to do this work and include additional documentation in our Q2 report.

Funding History and Funding Futures

Contentious debates about how best to fund public education in Ohio have plagued the state of Ohio for two centuries. In the 19th century, Akron led the state in establishing the first formalized system of taxation in support of public schools, and Akron Public Schools officials now lead 21st century conversations about school funding.

In short, local and state governments share the bulk of public school funding in the United States. At the local level, funding comes from property taxes, and in some cases, income taxes. Ohio's governor and legislature determine a basic per-pupil funding amount for each school year.

Ohio's school funding formula has been repeatedly found by the courts to be unconstitutional (see: *DeRolph v. State of Ohio*). The current funding formula is highly dependent on property values, and critics of school funding in Ohio remain active in calling for a complete overhaul of the system and an end to the heavy reliance upon property taxes.

The Ohio House of Representatives' "Fair School Funding Plan" is the result of work which officially began in November 2017 when then-State Representative John Patterson and State Representative Bob Cupp convened a group of school professionals to determine the true cost of educating a student. It should be noted that the present school funding formula is seen to be primarily punitive on districts with high student need in the State of Ohio, which are also the districts which educate the highest proportions of students of color.

Ryan Pendleton, Chief Financial Officer of Akron Public Schools, has been a leader of the educators involved in this plan since that time and remains an advocate today. The newest iterations of the funding plan are pending in the Statehouse today.

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[3] Edward A Miller. "This History of Educational Legislation in Ohio" Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, vol XXVII (1919):68

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Present-Day District Features [4]

- Nine high schools (including three high school Community Learning Centers ("CLCs")
- Nine middle schools (including seven middle school CLCs)
- Twenty-seven elementary schools (including 24 elementary school CLCs)
- Two dedicated preschool buildings and nine preschool programs at various elementary schools
- Specialty schools (including two dedicated STEM schools)
- Free all-day kindergarten
- Preschools in several elementary schools
- International Baccalaureate
- Pre-engineering
- College and Career programs
- College & Career Academies of Akron
- Dual degree programs – Students can earn a high school diploma and college credit at the same time; for example, Akron Early College, nationally recognized and ranked, allows for dual degrees from APS and The University of Akron (Associate's Degree) upon high school graduation.

Areas of Concern

The RESJ Education Subcommittee has two research teams that have taken on the main topics of concern. Through several meetings, we met and determined the most salient concerns that firstly, are within the purview of the City of Akron. Secondly, once recommendations are given, we want to certify that there is the appropriate authority and influence for the Mayor's Office to take leadership.

The impact of inequality can rise to the surface with striking influence. The first research team has outlined the following areas of concern, and these topics are being reviewed and addressed:

Student Access
Programs are in place to improve student learning and achievement. The availability of programs and access by all is an ethical concern and we wish to work to ensure that all ethnically underrepresented students are afforded the opportunities to enroll in Dual Enrollment (College Credit Plus), Honors and AP Courses without imposed barriers.

Student-Centered Learning and Closing the Achievement Gap
Educational institutions at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels must engage to enable all students to achieve and aspire to the highest level of education commensurate with whatever career they might choose. Both K-12 and higher education institutions must develop goals and programmatic strategies to close the equity achievement gap among underrepresented groups.

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[4] Akron Public Schools. "APS Website: About" Link.

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Pandemic Recovery as it relates to Student Achievement

Research has shown that many students have fallen further behind due to the quarantine, remote learning, and other COVID-19 related changes in the delivery of education. Interventions should be implemented during the summer and other designated school breaks to support students who may need additional remediation, as a result of the pandemic. Inequities can become exacerbated by a paucity of resources and the school environment can seem unwelcoming, which in turn will impact achievement, if the educators are not culturally competent. The second research team has outlined the following areas of concern, and these topics are being reviewed and addressed:

Cultural Responsiveness

Work to hire a diverse staff of highly qualified educators through enhanced hiring practices and strive to maintain high standards for high performing staff. All educators — classroom teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and school leaders — should be culturally competent educators. Talent recruitment, retention, development and promotion of diverse staff, faculty and administration are core values. Provide access to professional development and training for teachers and administrators. Aspire to the goal that the teacher demographics will have parity with the student demographics.

The curriculum must be based on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Accountability should be determined through assessment and evaluation. School leaders should discuss and create an accountability mechanism or tool to determine the effectiveness of the current programs, as well as creating an effective tool to determine metrics and assessment of the concerns related to cultural responsiveness.

Fiscal Transparency

Operations must ensure equitable resource and financial allocations. This includes spending, program decisions, district boundaries and other decisions. Business, procurement, and supplier diversity are cogent goals within the realm of seeking equity and inclusion. Assessment and Evaluation of the fiscal responsibilities are crucial as well. This goal can be achieved by discussing and creating an accountability mechanism or tool to determine the effectiveness of the current programs and creating an effective tool to determine metrics and assessment of the concerns related to fiscal transparency.

Methodology

Analysts who research racial disparities often understand how and why school opportunities and environments differ along racial lines. Answering these questions requires research to collect data needed about students' race and ethnicity that allows disaggregation by demographic groups. It will be the task of the RESJ

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Education Subcommittee to continue to research and answer these questions and others, and then come up with ways to address the inequities found.

The Education Subcommittee has the intellectual capital of several professionals with expertise in all aspects of education. We leverage that knowledge and meet monthly in small groups to brainstorm and determine areas of concern for the Research Teams to address. The committees will continue to meet monthly and in small groups to continue the research and develop plans to address these concerns. The Education Subcommittee will be consolidating information on research and views on policies, practices and strategies we feel need to be addressed and submitted in our report.

To break down the methodology of the Subcommittee, we are collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. We will conduct a data review that will consist of multiple stages including a literature and document review as the research is conducted. The following stage will consist of the analysis of data - seeing what themes emerge, coding the data, and conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the findings. Finally, once the primary themes are solidified, we will consider complementing our findings with surveys and focus groups, in order to incorporate maximum knowledge prior to policy analysis and making recommendations.

Policy Options

Below is a draft outline of the Policy Options that the Education Subcommittee will address. The primary focus of the strategies we will employ are outlined. Our actions steps within each strategy will be continuously developed as we move forward with our research.

Strategy 1: Make a public declaration expressing the need for equity in education.

Strategy 2: Forge strategic partnerships with the following sectors:

- Philanthropy
- Non-profit Organizations
- Government
- The Business Community
- Collaborations within the different levels of education

Strategy 3: Invest in the necessary leadership to lead equity-based work

- Policies, procedures and practices
- Engaging and understanding academic institutions
- Community engagement
- Policy analysts
- Social justice advocacy

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Strategy 4: Data Analysis (measuring and promoting what works programmatically)

Strategy 5: Create Sustainability within the programmatic recommendations

- Using data to tell a complete story
- Implementation of the school system's equity policy and efforts to help the district better initiate and align efforts to educate students of color and students who are experiencing poverty

Conclusion

There are many programmatic solutions that have been enlisted over many years and across the levels of education from elementary to post-secondary education. The positive achievement-oriented programs often have gatekeepers. The programs that are meant to cure some of the ills of public education — violence, tracking, high dropout rates, low graduation rates, overcrowding, and poor teacher retention — are disproportionately targeted toward students of color and take the place of the achievement-oriented programs mentioned previously. Many of these programs have the right idea and therefore the potential to be successful in ensuring equity and inclusion in public education, striving to guarantee equal access, closing the achievement and opportunity gaps, helping to remediate the impact of the pandemic, working for equal distribution of resources and making the schools welcoming and supportive institutions staffed with culturally competent educators.

Although we find ourselves in a new and changing generation, we must not allow the societal mores that we strive to overcome to send us right back to an educational system based on the fallacy of a separate but equal doctrine. The chasm that separates equity in schools is now based on distribution of resources — economic inequality that has continued and unfortunately overlaps with racial inequality. Embracing racial equity and policies and practices in school districts will be the first steps toward remaking the American dream, making it a reality, making the dream accessible and available for all students — especially those for whom this dream has not been within reach, such as students of color and/or economically disadvantaged students — and for closing the achievement and opportunity gaps.

Committee Members:

Chair Bruce Alexander
Co-Chair Jolene Lane
Dr. N.J. Akbar
Rev. Dr. William Blake
Bree Chambers
Carla Chapman
Christina Hodgkinson
Francie Lambert
Jim Mullen
Denisha Newby
Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval

Dr. Jennifer Ross
Vanessa Sampsel
Star Saulsberry
Allyson Strickland
Rev. Curtis Walker
Linda Owens
Mary Kate Waggoner
Lauren Brenza

D. Subcommittee on Equitable Workforce Development

Introduction

Racial equity and social justice in the Workforce Development and Equitable Job Creation Subcommittee means all current and future residents of the City of Akron, regardless of race, should have equitable employment outcomes. The Workforce Development and Equitable Jobs Subcommittee Chair and Co-Chair are Janae Bragg and Torey Tolson respectively. Our Subcommittee meets at 6:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month. This committee has approximately 23 team members. Subcommittee members have experience ranging from workforce development, small business ownership, human resources, public service, diversity and inclusion, and government relations.

Workforce History

Our Subcommittee is reviewing public information that addresses workforce development and the inclusion of minorities in the practice of job creation. Our area of focus is Akron, Ohio and more specifically the City of Akron as an employer. We used the Elevate Greater Akron report as a historical prospective and established commitment for change. The Elevate Akron report included several significant findings that continue to shape and impact the work of our subcommittee, including:

- Much of Akron, particularly its Black population, is excluded from economic opportunity
- Middle class jobs are increasingly rare
- Akron lacks the workforce skills to fulfill demand for digitized and mid-tech occupations

In addition to the findings above, our Subcommittee was presented with additional information that shows a lack of minority presence in managerial positions within the City.

In addition to the Elevate Greater Akron report, the Subcommittee has recently reviewed information concerning the City's efforts on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion including the recruiting and hiring practices for APD and AFD.

Areas of Concern

We are concerned about a lack of minority access to jobs that pay prevailing wages and upward mobility opportunities within the City; additionally, there appears to be a lack of strategic outreach programs/tactics to attract, retain, and develop employees within the City. While regulatory processes are in place (EEO reporting), and initial training has been initiated (IDI), gaps still exist.

Methodology

To date, we have sought answers to our questions by reviewing data from Conxus NEO and the Greater Akron Chamber. The City has made the following available:

- James Hardy, from the Department for Integrated Development,

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- Shelley Goodrich and Sean Vollman with the Department of Procurement
- Donald Rice, Director of Human Resources

In addition to local data, and to ensure that our recommendations are evidence based, sustainable, practiced, and implemented by other government agencies, we are researching programs and tactics from:

- King County, Washington's 2016-2022 Equity and Social Justice Strategic plan and how they are leveraging their role as an employer and hiring contractors in the region. Initiatives include:
  - "Ensure that private and government employment opportunities are accessible to all groups"
  - "Leverage the County's role as an employer and contractor to promote the development of jobs that pay family-support wages and support upward mobility"
  - "Support entrepreneurship to help small businesses grow"
- Initial research found the City of Cleveland's Department of Economic Development, Workforce Development has established a program focused on three areas to help small businesses grow, retain employees, or avert layoffs by providing up to $5,000 for training and or the purchase of capital equipment.
- Seattle's Director of Policy and Communications published "Municipal Financing of Workforce Development: Considerations for the City of Seattle" as part of their Seattle Jobs Initiative that outline ways Seattle can actively support workforce development services aimed at low-income, and low-skill workers and jobseekers.
- The Mayor and City Council of Albuquerque, New Mexico launched a Workforce Development and Job Training Program.

To build out our recommendations, our Subcommittee identified smaller breakout groups that will continue to research other best practices, and determine what, if any, additional information is needed to validate our recommendations. Additional research is needed to see if the recommendations listed have been attempted and or are viable in the City of Akron.

Policy Options and Responsive Actions

Our Subcommittee is reviewing practices for:

- Workforce development programs to build a pipeline of diverse talent prepared for good paying jobs within the City
- The outreach, advertising, interviewing, and selection process to remove bias
- Professional development and retention processes for minorities
- Additional opportunities for the City of Akron to support small minority business growth
- The City's role in existing Workforce Development partnerships

We are open to additional suggestions and will continue to evaluate new recommendations as they relate to workforce development and equitable jobs.

Committee Members:

Chair Janae Bragg
Co-Chair Torey Tolson
Curtis Minter Jr.
Roberta Aber
Julie Costell
Heather Coughlin
Robert DeJournett
Brian Fox
Leon Henderson
Erica Howard
Darci Jackson
Mark Krohn
Sue Lacy
Kellie Morehouse
Darnell Roberts
Darrin Toney
Bernett Williams
Laurie Zuckerman
Karolyn Smith
Robert Cox
Heather Steranka-Petit

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E. Subcommittee on Health

Introduction

"Racial Equity and Social Justice in Public Health and Healthcare" means there is an intentional effort to address the root causes of inequities that exist in practices, policies and organizational structures of public health and healthcare systems. It also means that changes in our public health and healthcare systems are an essential part of racially equitable and socially just solutions. For those solutions to be sustainable and advance culturally competent and equitable access to comprehensive healthcare services, they must incorporate inclusive partnerships and representation.

We applaud the City of Akron ("The City") for taking the lead in establishing an inclusive partnership to tackle the Black infant mortality crisis. We appreciate the affected community being engaged at the strategy level to help consider system, policy, process, program, and service changes to facilitate improved Black maternal and child health outcomes. We would like to extend this same level of inclusivity and engagement to the following opportunities to address the health and wellness needs of African American government employees and City residents.

The RESJ Taskforce Public Health Subcommittee has held four productive meetings. We reviewed and evaluated health disparity data and developed recommendations to eliminate structurally racist policies and procedures that perpetuate inequalities.

Data resources that were reviewed include:

1. Citizens' Advisory Council on Equity

2. COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force

3. Ten Solutions to Bridge The Racial Wealth Divide

4. Cities United Reimagining Public Safety

5. Lexington Plan – Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice and Equity

RESJ Taskforce Public Health Chairpersons and committee members discussed recommendations with:

1. Mrs. Veronica Sims; Council Member, representing District 5

2. Mr. Vernon Sykes; Ohio State Senator, representing District 28

3. Mr. Don Rice; Assistant to the Mayor and Director of Human Resources

4. Mrs. Annie McFadden; Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Administration

The Subcommittee will invite to future meeting to discuss recommendations:

1. Representative from Lead Service Line Replacement Project

2. James Hardy, Deputy Mayor for Integrated Development

3. Angela C. Dawson, MS, MRC, LPC - Executive Director Ohio Commission on Minority Health

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Public Health History

[Committee did not include additional historical information]

Policy Options and Responsive Actions

RECOMMENDATION #1: Activate Diverse Provider Panels, Cultural Competency Strategies, and Grassroots Programming to Meet City Employee and Community Mental and Physical Health Needs

(1) Establish an action plan to increase and sustain diverse representation on the panel of mental health providers participating in the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and (2) Establish an action plan to increase and sustain diverse representation of providers serving on the employer's health plan to meet the mental and physical needs of diverse city employees and their families.

The City employs approximately 2,100 full-time and seasonal employees. Under the contract with the City's EAP, Ease at Work, 6 free short-term confidential counseling sessions are offered to employees and family members. With the addition of providing counseling services to family members, Ease at Work is able to support over 5,000 City employees and family members with mental health services.

The disproportionate impact of racism, COVID-19, job loss and other traumatic situations take an emotional toll on diverse communities and increase the demand for diverse and culturally aware providers. Our recommendation is for the City to establish an action plan around the intentional efforts and metrics to ensure diversity of contracted mental and physical health services. **Suggested recommendation format as follows:** *Increase the diversity panel of providers by X % by X time.*

(3) To address the emotional health needs of those who are not employees or family members of the City, we recommend financially supporting The Grief Recovery Method (GRM) program, an evidence-based and action-oriented program that helps individuals identify and respond to issues that have caused trauma, pain and great stress. A community organization is currently advancing a GRM pilot program funded by the Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Board (ADM) "Change Direction" Committee and Summa Health. When the pilot program concludes in late 2021, we recommend City leadership allocate resources to this organization to help extend the program to serve additional African American communities via faith-based and community organization partnerships. **Suggested recommendation format as follows:** *Provide financial support to the organization advancing the pilot GRM program to expand model to benefit the Akron community.*

In addition to supporting GRM programming at the community level, (4) we recommend partnering with ADM leadership to explore how to best equip local mental health agencies with the education and tools they need to effectively and consistently practice cultural competency and humility with African American and other diverse communities. **Suggested recommendation format as follows:** Partner with local ADM board to fund best-practice educational initiatives designed to help local mental health providers continuously learn and practice culturally competent care. Aim to invest at least $ dollars each year over a five-year horizon. (Amounts to be determined). *If the RESJ Taskforce approves of the direction of this recommendation, listed are examples of the next steps and data collection methods needed to move forward with the process.*

1. Establish 3 years of baseline data of diverse mental and primary care providers supporting city employees/family members – Request report

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2. Establish recommended outcomes and target goal – Attendees: Ease@Work, HR, and reps from the taskforce, local mental health providers, etc.
3. Establish recommended intervention strategies
4. Expand on the existing supportive recommendations for sustainability – With the mental and physical health priorities, the City is already paying for healthcare services; we are just asking the City to ensure the healthcare vendors they choose employ and/or contract with diverse providers. With respect to grief recovery, ADM funding, insurance, health savings accounts, and self-pay sources can be used to sustain the model.

Supportive Recommendations/Programing/Partnerships:

1. Develop a community resource manual that includes a directory of health care providers of color (e.g. Black Pages). A potential resource for this work is the Chapter of the Links, Inc. which developed the Central KY African American Healthcare Directory.
2. Help facilitate and establish a partnership/pipeline process to identify and develop African American mental health providers. Explore a partnership with higher education institutions to advance this tactic.
3. Advocate and encourage for local healthcare settings and business to review outreach strategies and action plans around hiring diverse staff.
4. Develop diverse mental health scholarship opportunities through the development of a yearly scholarship for a minimum of one or two students, with a requirement to remain in Summit County working in the behavioral health field post graduate for defined period.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Dedicate a Resource to Advance Youth Violence: Hire and train a full-time staff member to implement and advance the Youth Violence Prevention Plan released by the City in April 2019:

At this current moment there is no one that wakes up every day to implement and advance The Violence Prevention Plan ("the Plan"). The City has already invested a substantial amount of time and resources in establishing the Plan and we recommend additional administrative support to position the Plan for success. Establishing a Youth Violence Prevention & Intervention Coordinator ensures the development and effective implementation of programming related to the plan.

The Coordinator, in partnership with community members and partners, will implement strategies to decrease violence and improve overall policy and system responses to those who commit acts of violence. With facilitation by the Coordinator, community members and partners will be responsible for the direct work in developing and sustaining collaborative partnerships and programs that promote public policy. The Coordinator orchestrates all these elements, with the goal of sustaining the education and systems advocacy needed to create and encourage a social, political, and economic environment that fosters communities where the diversity, dignity, and contributions of all are respected and celebrated.

Moreover, we cannot emphasize enough that the success of this effort will turn on how authentically the Coordinator includes residents who are directly impacted by this violence in the decision making about next steps. Therefore, we are recommending the City create a position structure similar to the Health Equity Ambassador for Youth Violence Prevention. **Suggested recommendation format as follows:** Hire 1 Violence Prevention & Intervention Coordinator by X date to serve in capacity for X Years. (Dates to be determined). Attract # of funders to help sustain the resource(s) to advance the plan.

If the RESJ Taskforce approves of the direction of this recommendation, listed are examples of the next steps and data collection methods needed to move forward with the process.

1. Establish recommended outcomes and target goal – Metrics associated with the plan
2. Establish more detailed job description recommendation
3. Establish reporting structure within HR
4. Establish recommended communication and outreach strategies for the recruitment of diverse candidates
5. Establish sustainability plan for the position
6. Expand on the existing supportive recommendations

Supportive Recommendations/Programing/Partnerships:

1. Submit a proposal to attract funding to support the Violence Prevention and Intervention Coordinator position to advance the violence prevention plan.
2. Apply for funding available at the Akron Community Foundation to address system change and improve racial equity opportunities.
3. Have position directly funded by the City.
   Hire a fulltime Violence Prevention and Intervention Coordinator. Examples of possible job responsibilities:
   - Include in all stages of the development and implementation of the Plan members of the community who are directly impacted by the violence.
   - Oversee and facilitate implementation of the strategies identified in the plan with an emphasis on maximum engagement of community residents and existing community services.
   - Implement responses to shootings with community residents and other local partners.
   - Publicize Safe Streets educational messages throughout the year and ensure materials are widely displayed throughout the community.
   - Plan events with and for the target population.
   - Develop relationships with local providers to ensure links to resources to address underlying social determinants. This includes but is not limited to:
     Employment Opportunities, Educational Opportunities, Substance Abuse Treatment, Housing Opportunities, Mental Health Services.
   - Establish Inter-community standing meetings with City staff, Health Department and community partners: 1) review and assess current violence data and trends 2) assess relevance and adequacy of the plan 3) refocus the plan as needed based on these meetings; and 4) determine other priority needs and goals.
   - Convene and lead and/or join a group that is representative of the community to develop support for initiative.
   - Meet with outreach staff/supervisor on a weekly basis to identify participant needs and gaps in services.
   - Conduct a community assessment to identify resources and community organizations/groups that can assist in furthering the mission of the violence prevention plan.
   - Complete and submit mandatory reports and documentation in a timely manner.

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- Bachelor's Degree in related field as well as 5 years' experience and demonstrated competence in the areas covered by the job description.
- The successful applicant for Violence Prevention & Intervention Coordinator will: Demonstrate experience in social justice policy advocacy and/or systems change work; Understand and be committed to issues of diversity and demonstrate the ability to work in a multicultural environment.
- Research, analyze, and present information effectively Listen and respond effectively to membership concerns and needs; Demonstrate ability to engage, inform, and support committees in accomplishing shared social change and advocacy goals; Communicate verbally in a clear and persuasive manner; and o Possess excellent writing skills.
- Serve as a liaison between the Mayor's Office and community residents.
- Seek funding opportunities to expand the scope of services

RECOMMENDATION # 3: Activate A Community Engagement & Health Awareness Resource: Hire a fulltime Community Health Worker (CHW) /City Community Liaison/Ambassador.

Data indicates a lack of community awareness of health-related resources and a lack of culturally competent healthcare providers, which contributes to mistrust of the healthcare system. Evidence indicates that Community Health Workers (CHWs) are uniquely positioned to build trust and address the barriers by traditionally underserved communities when seeking medical care and services. It may be more productive to embed this work with an inclusive city council subcommittee that embraces the involvement of embedded some community leaders/citizens.

If the RESJ Taskforce approves of the direction of this recommendation, listed are examples of the next steps and data collection methods needed to move forward with the process.

1. Establish recommended outcomes and target goal – Metrics associated with the plan
2. Establish more detailed job description recommendation
3. Establish reporting structure within HR
4. Establish recommended communication and outreach strategies for the recruitment of diverse candidates
5. Establish sustainability plan for the position
6. Expand on the existing supportive recommendations

Supportive Recommendations/Programing/Partnerships:

1. Conduct needs assessment and focus group with the community to craft this position.
2. Hire a fulltime Community Health Worker (CHW) /City Community Liaison/Ambassador. Examples of possible job responsibilities:
   - Serve as a liaison between the Mayor's Office, community residents and hospitals
   - Navigator to health services
   - Maintain documentation and reporting
   - Participate in the development of culturally appropriate, communication campaigns regarding health-related matters, e.g. COVID-19 response and recovery, testing, vaccine etc.
   - Utilize communication recommendations from RESJ Communications Subcommittee

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- Assist in the coordination of neighborhood-based services, e.g. periodic mobile services to the diverse communities, mobile screenings, and mobile food markets.
- Review health messaging with local Health Department.
- Establish Community Advisory Board to ensure targeted and culturally specific messaging to the community.
- Foster relationships with additional potential community partners e.g. health centers, recreation centers, social organizations, community members, to assist with community outreach efforts.
- Collect data to support benchmarks and metrics of success e.g. number of referrals.
- Seek opportunities for development to increase liaison services and community support scope.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Execute A City of Akron Diversity Scorecard & Assessment Strategy

Currently, there is no comprehensive equity scorecard available that identifies, tracks and measures multiple diversity, equity & inclusion, anti-racist, racial equity, disparities, injustices or even progress towards achieving equity within the City's workforce divisions and how it conducts business. Legislative branches of government should be tracking how they will consider equity with their budgetary decision and policymaking process. It is nearly impossible to determine whether specific communities or divisions are impacted and served appropriately without being intentional of equity in the planning process. A scorecard or way to measure the outcomes of increased DEI efforts increases transparency and accountability among the community.

Suggested recommendation format as follows: *Completion of DEI Assessment by X date. Establishment of the City of Akron Diversity Scorecard by X date.* **(Dates to be determined).**

If the RESJ Taskforce approves of the direction of this recommendation, listed are examples of the next steps and data collection methods needed to move forward with the process.

1. Review comprehensive file of the City of Akron Demographic data
2. Determine focus areas based on disparities in data
3. Receive feedback from City divisions impacted
4. Establish Assessment tool
5. Receive feedback from the community
6. Establish the scorecard

Supportive Recommendations/Programing/Partnerships:

1. Facilitate and advance the collection, reporting and display of health equity, disparities and diversity data within the City of Akron communication channels (Website, State of the City Address, Reports, etc.)
2. Create and implement a metric to measure representation of governance and policy decision makers in relation to the City's racial demographics.
3. Create a Community Advisory Council to review new and ongoing city polices or ordinances that can potentially or are currently exacerbating health disparities and racism/discrimination.
4. Possible Scorecard categories: Workforce, Education, Supply chain, Infant Vitality Initiatives, Violence Initiates.

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5. Provide mandatory education and training opportunities on implicit biases, behavior change and cultural humility for City employees and local organizations/businesses.
6. Increase partnership, support and collaboration with the local Office of Minority Health.
7. Build on the data collected by the City to monitor and track the progress with equity concerns.
8. RESJ Public Health Subcommittee will work in concert with Mayor to address the data derived from Assessments and use the data as a metric of community perceptions on the impact of the Mayor's Office on Social Justice & Racial Equality.
9. Develop a Community Advisory Board comprised of lay citizens from each affected community. Justification: Data suggest a lack of trust and feelings of marginalization among communities of color. The Community Advisory Board will work closely with the Mayor's Office to develop solutions to racial equity injustices.
10. Offer incentives for business that can demonstrate intentionality and progress around DEI efforts.
11. Offer incentives for City division departments that can demonstrate intentionality and progress around DEI efforts.

Committee Members:

Chair Iriel Hopkins
Co-Chair Jerome Moss
Carole Becerra
Tierra Brightwell
Demico Buckley
Tracy Carter
Dr. Leanne Chrisman-Khawam
Marie Curry
Joan Davidson
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Nakia Manley
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Shaleeta Smith
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Jessica Travis
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F. Subcommittee on Housing

Introduction

Generally, throughout the 20th century in the United States, federal, state, and local governments systematically implemented racially discriminatory housing policies that contributed to segregated neighborhoods and inhibited equal opportunity and the chance to build wealth for Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American families, and other underserved communities.

Over 50 years ago, Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act attempting to remove barriers that created separate and unequal neighborhoods based on race, skin color, national origin, and other protected characteristics. Federal departments and recipients of federal funding are obligated to administer their programs and activities relating to housing in a manner which affirmatively to furthers fair housing.

History of Housing in the City of Akron

Akron's housing stock features many well-built houses from the 20th century, and the City has been successful in maintaining and rehabilitating many older homes. Development of new housing in Akron is largely nonexistent through most of the 21st century. This is partially due to the low property values in the city and high cost of construction that does not incentivize developers to build. The low property values also create issues where many land parcels sit vacant and many property owners will not invest in their properties.   A substantial portion of the housing stock is midcentury design with more bedrooms than necessary to accommodate the modern household sizes. The older housing stock makes retrofitting particularly costly, those wishing to "age in place" are often forced to move the finances or equity to retrofit their homes. The older stock suffers from myriad possible existing environmental issues, including lead, asbestos, mold, radon, as well as outdated and out of code building systems

Racially discriminatory policies and their effects are seen in Akron. According to census data there is a correlation between neighborhoods that have both a high minority concentration and high poverty rate.

Areas of Concern

Disinvestment

A history of disinvestment by property owners, lenders, government entities, and other organizations has led to inequities across the city. Segregated neighborhoods often have fewer employment opportunities, lower performing schools, or less quality amenities to offer their residents.

Integration

Income directly affects housing choice as it can make certain housing and/or neighborhoods out of reach for an individual or family with limited economic opportunities. There is a need to de-concentrate low-income housing in Akron through building or rehabbing homes in areas that are in typically middle-class neighborhoods.

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Wealth Gap

There is continuing racial disparities in mortgage lending in Ohio based on race. Compared to White families, families of color have a lower rate of homeownership, and there exists a persistent undervaluation of properties owned by families of color.

Methodology

The Housing Subcommittee methodology is composed of multiple phases that incorporate the opportunity for input feedback and reconsideration at any stage. Preliminary work included the recruitment of committee members that represented professionals, landlords, policy experts, and community members. The first phase began with data collection. Data collection included and environmental survey of the exiting work available in the community. This included the City Market Value Analysis, Analysis of Impediments, neighborhood plans, nonprofit, and government strategic plans, and other housing plans and studies that currently existed.

The review of the environmental scan resulted in some data analysis that led to neighborhood analysis and mapping, literature review other education materials are made available to the committee at various stages of the process. Committee members reviewed the documents, research and materials and respond to an online survey to outline what each member believed were strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to making progress toward housing equality in Akron. Members distributed the survey widely, and the survey is still available to supplement the data collection process.

The second phase began with organization of survey data organization into themes or issue areas. This phase led to brainstorming of possible policy options and actions. Focus groups of 2-4 committee members started to investigate and flesh out the initial brainstorming more deeply. This is the current status of the subcommittee work. The next quarterly reports will reflect a more fleshed out list of action items to address areas of concern.

Future phases will include narrowing, action formation, focused research, and timeline formation to identify some quick wins and other deeper long-term systematic changes.

Policy Options and Responsive Actions

Strategy 1   Invest in neighborhoods that have a history of disinvestment.

The policy recommendation may be to provide a prioritization of local, state, and federal funds including CDBG, and state and local funds for housing investment in addition to other capital investments in communities with concentrations of poverty and low market values.

Possible Action Item: Prioritize Housing Improvements in communities with higher concentrations of Poverty.

Possible Action Item: Prioritize blight removal in areas identified an Orange or yellow Markets in the City Market Value Analysis.

Possible Action Item: Target nonconforming uses, "predatory" businesses, and code violations in areas of minority and poverty concentration.

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Strategy 2   Provide opportunities for People of color to live in more integrated communities.

The policy recommendation may include providing or resources and legislation through zoning reform that would allow all people to live in any community in Akron.

Possible Action Item: Advocate for funding mixed-income housing developments.

Possible Action Item: Promote housing mobility and vouchers, source of Income legislation.

Possible Action Item: Zoning code reform to emphasize inclusionary practices.

Possible Action Item: Develop and utilize a participatory process that actively recruits those that traditionally do not have political power and influence.

Strategy 3   Promote homeownership opportunities to decrease the wealth gap.

This policy recommendation targets the wealth gap and would incentivize homeownership though education and financial assistance that would help families gain equity in either a purchase of a home or access funds to help maintain and keep up the home they currently own.

Possible Action Item: Provide resources to homebuyer education classes.

Possible Action Item: Provide incentives to purchase in communities where historical redlining barriers existed.

Possible Action Item: Create and fund an owner safety net program that assists with emergency capital needs of homeowners with low home values/equity.

Conclusion

The research conducted, and strategies proposed, are all considered within the framework of creating a welcoming community that will attract people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to communities that they currently are the least likely to consider in their housing options. This will open all of the resources of Akron to all communities in Akron. We do believe that the transition will take time, but we hope to identify quick wins that the city an implement soon while other market strategies will reflect positive outcomes over time. The committee is engaged and is committed to making an equitable Akron.

Committee Members:

Chair Brian Gage
Co-Chair Vince Curry
Debbie Barry
Vanessa Beane
Mar-quetta Boddie
Billi Copeland-King
Michael Dowdell
Melva Foster
Brant Lee
Michael Naso
Andrew Neuhauser

Joe Scalise
Allan Thomas
Ron Unk
Elizabeth Vild
James Reddick
Kenny Thomas
Katie Beck
Gina Burk
Pastor Ray Green
Nanci Self

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V.   Next Steps for the Taskforce

Each Subcommittee Chair will present their research during the Taskforce Executive Committee Meeting, to be held **April 13, 2021 at 6:30 PM.** Members of the Executive Committee are asked to provide this feedback by Monday, April 19, 2021.

Bishop Johnson will distribute Executive Committee feedback to the Chairperson to whom it applies. Chairs will review the feedback, discuss it with Subcommittee members, and take it in to consideration as they continue their work.

The schedule at right contains the remainder of the Executive Committee meetings for the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce. The Executive Committee will continue to meet to discuss racial equity topics in the context of the City of Akron and its needs. About half of the Executive Committee's remaining meeting time is scheduled to be dedicated to the review of Subcommittee reports.

It should be noted that Subcommittee reports for Quarter 2 are due on July 1, 2021. Reports for Quarter 3 (the final reports required of the Subcommittees) are due on October 1, 2021.

Ultimately, the report issued by the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce will issue final recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, and community.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestion or other feedback, please contact Taskforce Chair Bishop Joey Johnson by emailing flanvis@thotl.org .

NOTE: This document was prepared for the review of the RESJ Taskforce Executive Committee and is NOT a final recommendation of the Taskforce.

Remaining Executive Committee Meetings

April 13, 2021 ⇐ Review Q1 Subcommittee Reports

May 11, 2021

June 8, 2021

July 13, 2021 ⇐ Review Q2 Subcommittee Reports

August 10, 2021

September 14, 2021

October 12, 2021 ⇐ Review Q3 (Final) Subcommittee Reports

November 9, 2021 ⇐

December 14, 2021

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