

City of Akron's
RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TASKFORCE

City of Akron's
Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce



Subcommittee Reports
Quarter 2 | 2021



City of Akron's
RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TASKFORCE

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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 in 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.

In his capacity as the Chair of the Taskforce, Presiding Bishop F. Josephus Johnson, II, better known as Bishop Joey Johnson, has asked the Chairs of the Taskforce's six Subcommittees 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.

Subcommittees are to focus on their subject area, identifying problems, examining potential solutions, researching best practices and ultimately recommending policy changes to the Executive Committee.

The Purpose of This Report

Subcommittees are required to advise the Executive Committee of their findings and progress via quarterly reports. The first report was issued in April 2021 and can be accessed [via this link](#). This document contains the second of three expected reports from the Subcommittees, summarizing their work during the second 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 asked 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 second 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 attended the April 2021 meeting of the Taskforce Executive Committee to present the content of their Quarter 1 reports and will present the content of their Quarter 2 reports at the July 2021 meeting of the Taskforce Executive Committee to update the public on their progress.

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:

1. Are the assertions and concerns of each Subcommittee clear?
2. Do the Subcommittees appear to have sufficient data to support their assertions or concerns?
3. Do you have any other observations, suggestions, or questions which would improve the Subcommittees next reports?

These questions can be answered utilizing the digital survey found here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1I_OH5sgcn7dR6uFclzyBnakBCPi48v3IHPAFIzXjeec/edit

If you have additional feedback, you may also email Bishop Johnson using these links:

[Feedback for Criminal Justice, Equitable Workforce Development, and Health Subcommittees](#)

[Feedback for Communications, Education, and Housing Subcommittees](#)

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 complete their work. A brief summary of each Subcommittee Quarter Two Report can be found in the pages immediately following.

II. Executive Summary

Communications Subcommittee

The Communications Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report focuses on establishing a communications framework derived from best practices across the United States. The framework approach is recommended as a means for the City to continually adapt to an evolving social, cultural and economic environment unique to Akron. This two-way communication framework is recommended to improve information dissemination, feedback, and accountability across diverse stakeholders.

The Communications Subcommittee report examines the sustainability of the City's current equity initiatives and proposes that the City establish a more long-term "Racial Equity Guiding Coalition," led by City employees and guided by a full-time paid facilitator. The report also reflects the Subcommittee's support of the equity guidelines provided by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and recommends Akron's continued participation in GARE.

In addition, the Communication Subcommittee's final recommendations for the City will include planning for and implementing a racial equity public relations program.

Criminal Justice Subcommittee

The Criminal Justice Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report focuses on several areas of the City of Akron Police Department, including police accountability mechanisms, including a police auditor and civilian oversight board, body-worn camera legislation and policy; police training, hiring and promotion practices, and community policing models.

While the Subcommittee notes that it is not unmindful of the fact that policing is only one aspect of the criminal justice system, the Subcommittee has made the decision to focus exclusively on policing because it is within the control of the City government and has the greatest need for reform. The Subcommittee intends to make final recommendations concerning each of these topics in their final report.

Education Subcommittee

The Education Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report includes information about the historical impact which the practice of slavery continues to have on the American education system. The report also includes a variety of research materials focused upon urban educators and practical changes that can be made in schools to support equitable learning practices, as well as a discussion of state-level public policy changes which concern the Subcommittee.

The Education Subcommittee plans to make recommendations for policy changes in the following areas: student access, student-centered learning and closing the achievement gap, pandemic recovery, cultural responsiveness, and fiscal transparency. The Education Subcommittee has been divided into two research teams focused on separate sets of these goals. The practical targets of this subcommittee's work are to narrow the opportunity and achievement gaps which exist between students of color and White students, and to limit the effects of poverty on educational opportunity.

Equitable Workforce Development Subcommittee

The Equitable Workforce Development Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report focuses on four areas of workforce development, including: the City creating a pipeline of diverse talent prepared to fulfill the good paying jobs/careers available within the City; the City implementing a plan for outreach in diverse communities and removing biases from the interviewing and selection processes; professional development and retention processes the City of Akron should consider for minorities and people of color within its employ; and additional opportunities to support the growth of small, minority-owned businesses.

The Subcommittee is focusing on research and data which indicates that much of Akron, particularly its Black population, is excluded from meaningful economic opportunity. The Subcommittee's goal is to advance their recommendations in these four areas and help the City drive success throughout the rest of the County and region, with both public and private employers.

Health Subcommittee

The Health Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report focuses on four potential policy recommendations focused on addressing the root causes of inequities that exist in practices, policies and organizational structures of public health and healthcare systems.

The Subcommittee's potential policy recommendations include the following: activate diverse provider panels, cultural competency strategies, and grassroots programming to meet city employee and community mental and physical health needs; dedicate resources to advance youth violence prevention; activate a community engagement & health awareness resource; and execute a City diversity scorecard.

Each individual policy recommendation includes suggested best practices, as well as suggested supportive recommendations, programming, and partnerships to aide in the future implementation of each recommendation.

Housing Subcommittee

In the Housing Subcommittee's Quarter Two Report, the Subcommittee acknowledges the challenges that Akron's aging structures pose. Historic impediments to equity in Akron-area housing include redlining, integration, and subsequent disinvestment by property owners, lenders, government entities, and others.

Today, Akron contains a large amount of housing stock which has too many bedrooms to fit the modern family, too much physical deterioration to be considered inhabitable, or both. Today, there remains a large wealth gap between Akron's Black and White populations, which both affects and is affected by the disparity in homeownership between these groups.

It is the goal of the Housing Subcommittee to provide recommendations which will increase the number of inclusive, healthy neighborhoods in Akron, and which will increase fair access to opportunities for economic advancement and mobility. The recommendations contained in this quarter two report include more than a dozen action items housed within three strategies: invest in neighborhoods that have experienced a history of disinvestment and inequity, provide opportunities for people of color to live in more integrated communities, and promote homeownership opportunities to decrease the wealth gap.

III. 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")

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.**

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- 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 ‘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 not 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.

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Examples:

4. *At present, White patrons account for 60% of season-ticketholders, Black patrons 30% and Latino patrons 10%.*
5. *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.*

IV. 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
 Dr. Roderick C. Pounds, Sr.
 Bill Rich
 Kevin Rushing
 Brandon Scarborough
 President of Council Margo Sommerville
 Pastor Mark Ward
 Bennett 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.



V. Quarter One Subcommittee Reports

A. Subcommittee on Communications

Introduction

Nine community volunteers make up the composition of the RESJ Communications subcommittee. The regular meetings of the Subcommittee are held at 6:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month. During the Q2 period, the Subcommittee formed three workgroups. A team leader was chosen to organize and convene individual meetings. The subject-specific workgroups are data and metrics, research, and public relations. These three areas have been identified by the Subcommittee as critical to the work being done by its members and essential for delivering attainable and achievable final recommendations on racial equity and social justice that will benefit the City of Akron and its residents.

It is clear to the Communications subcommittee for the City of Akron to address the ever-evolving socioeconomic, technological, and cultural norms. The City should establish a documented framework for communicating with residents, input provided by a permanent, civic-led, multi-stakeholder, multicultural coalition to ensure honest two-way communication.

The Subcommittee has met virtually 12 to 15 times in Q2, in addition to engaging in numerous email exchanges between the Subcommittee and workgroup members.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

The following information relates chiefly to concerns and conversation contained in the official, whole-group Subcommittee meetings during April, May, and June 2021.

Determining Industry Best Practices

One area of concern, though it also became an area of inspiration and assistance, was whether the City of Akron was utilizing best practices regarding equity in communication. We identified five peer cities with working groups or taskforce groups similar in scope and purpose to the City of Akron's Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce. Those cities were:

1. Durham, North Carolina¹
2. Salem, Massachusetts²
3. Santa Clara, California³
4. Marion, Iowa⁴
5. Boulder, Colorado⁵

¹ <https://durhamnc.gov/4092/Racial-Equity-Inclusion-Division>

² <https://www.salem.com/race-equity-task-force>

³ <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/our-city/government/city-committees/task-force-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

⁴ <https://www.cityofmarion.org/government/administration/boards-commissions/community-equity-task-force>

⁵ <https://bouldercolorado.gov/racial-equity>

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Links to each group's information are in the footnotes. After our May meeting, members of our Subcommittee set to work, performing detailed reviews of all of the reports, even contacting the individuals who were involved in the work done in these cities and interviewing them on the phone. More information about what we found is included in Section IV.

Understanding Internal City Communication

A matter of great concern, and the focus of a good deal of our research and conversation, was obtaining the answer to questions about communication between City leaders and within city departments. Questions included:

1. "How well does the Mayor's cabinet communicate internally?"
2. Can you describe the communication between City Council and the Mayor, including his cabinet and staff?
3. What are the strong points and areas of growth regarding this communication?

Answers to questions two and three above were requested, in writing, to several members of Akron City Council on May 4, 2021. No written response was ever given.

We consistently have had concerns about the responsiveness, or lack thereof, of City officials. We are concerned that the City does not have a staff sufficient in number to meet its own goals of responsive and equitable communication. We struggled to "close the loop" on past conversations with City staff about how to measure success in communications.

We discussed and decided to work via small group to identify the key information/data/metrics that would provide value, scalability and flexibility for City communications. We discussed a desire to improve accountability, transparency, and trust between the City of Akron and its residents through sharing of appropriate information/data/metrics in a format that accounts for all obstacles that would impair equitable access and enable two-way communication.

Research Review

In Q2, we reviewed the importance of two-way communication and the quality of information that is shared between civic leaders and their constituents. We met with the City of Akron's Communication Department, key stakeholders in Akron and other cities throughout the U.S. In conjunction with researching best practices and methodologies that are being implemented in the U.S. These concepts and ideas are listed below:

- **Data integration**, which constitutes a framework for the collaboration, collection and dissemination of data/information. An evolving framework that requires a commitment to sustainability and scalability planning with accountable civic and public stakeholders that would reflect the social/racial makeup of Akron. *Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy University of Pennsylvania*,

https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AISP-Toolkit_5.27.20.pdf

- **Dedicated repository**, easily understood and accessible data evokes a sense of transparency and contributes to a trust factor. Having information in a centralized and dedicated location/repository allows for greater awareness and easier dissemination of the data.

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/equity-office>

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CITY OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/office-of-equity-and-racial-justice/home/dashboard.html>

CITY OF NEW YORK, NEW YORK <https://equity.nyc.gov/outcomes/education/four-year-college-readiness>

- **The Government Alliance on Race and Equity**, GARE, (<http://www.racialequityalliance.org>) provides resources for a multi-layered approach for racial justice.

It may be a valuable resource to guide Akron's development of the communications plan. It is our understanding that Akron is a member.

- **Conversation with City of Akron Communications Department:**

Requested support to establish a quarterly or bi-annual feedback committee to provide insight on the diversity of content communicated by the City to Akron residences. March 19, 2021.

The Interviews

1. Aimee Kane, Equity Manager, City of Boulder, Colorado, regarding City of Boulder's 2021 Racial Equity Plan, https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/2021_Racial_Equity_Plan_ADOPTED_2.16-1-202102171848.pdf (pages 17-19)

- Since starting this work in 2018, a core team of city employees from all levels of the organization have:

- o Created a Citywide Communication and Engagement Department;
- o Employed Community Connectors who partner with city government to serve as trusted voices within their neighborhoods and circles;
- o Developed a Racial Equity Website, used print, radio, and social media to ensure communication between the City and its citizens.

2. Elaine O'Neal & Kaaren Haldeman, Chair and Co-Chair of Durham, N.C., Racial Equity Task Force, <https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32853/FINAL-REPORT-Durham-Racial-Equity-Task-Force-72220>, (pages 55-58)

- In order to achieve maximum communication with members of the community regarding racial equity, task force members:

- o Connected with two city organizations, Partners Against Crime (PAC) and Durham Neighborhood Improvement Services and asked to be added to calendars of already scheduled meetings in order to present their work and gather feedback.
- o Connected with the head of a youth leadership non-profit that serves marginalized young people and asked to be added to those scheduled meetings.
- o Agreed that a clear definition of racial equity must first be presented to community members to avoid misunderstanding

3. Megan Riccardi, Council Member, Ward 6, Salem, Mass. Salem Race Equity Task Force

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- o Used City Website, Facebook and Twitter to post Task Force updates;
- o Held "Public Forums" on Zoom and Facebook Live with the Task Force members, City and law enforcement officials, and community members that included Q&A sessions and open chat
- o Completed two surveys;
- o Task Force members are creating their own Website with information about their work and links to all recorded public forums

4. City of Akron Council and Community Members

Robert DeJournett, GAC Vice President, Opportunity & Inclusion

Shammas Malik, Ward 8 councilman

Christine Mayer, President, GAR Foundation

Dr. Brant T. Lee, Professor of Law; Assistant Dean of Diversity & Social Justice Initiatives.

- o Akron lacks a clear and targeted communication strategy for DEI-related initiatives.
- o Website is outdated and not easy to navigate.
- o Regarding racial equity communication, mayor weighs in publicly through media, council meetings, and community discussions with Elevate Akron.
- o Regarding RESJ Task Force, a suggestion: knocking on doors, grassroots organizing as a better way to engage than a website.
- o The Office of Integrated Development created in part to improve communications among city departments
- o Recommended reaching out to Black-led organizations such as Akron Urban League and Local NAACP
- o Reach out to trusted organizations and groups working on similar missions and ask to be added to scheduled meetings.
- o Go to apartment complexes, nursing homes, community centers to talk to people, to ask questions.
- o When talking to those in the community who have been left out of the conversation, provide concrete examples of how racial equity and social justice can lead to positive changes in their lives.
- o Provide a timeline for our action items and communicate these to those in the community
- o Feedback on task force recommendations is important; use language that feels comfortable to all in any surveys/questionnaires.
- o Important to make recommendations easy to digest, direct and simple.

In Q3, we plan to contact local organizations whose constituents are underserved, and gather information about how they currently communicate with their constituents – info going out and info coming back to them. As part of this research, we will ask whether they'd be willing to communicate RESJ information from the City of Akron. This will give us a preliminary list of Community Feedback Partners to share with the City.

- Choose which organizations to contact

o We will focus on a reasonable number of constituencies: Black and immigrant communities first; then recommend to the City that they focus on other underserved populations in Year 1 of the plan (other races, gender, older and younger people, LGBTQ community, etc).

- Preliminary list of questions (to be finalized in Q3):

- Will you share information from the City re: racial equity & social justice?
- Do you have effective channels for doing that? What is your most effective way?
- How might you get info back to us re: what people are saying about what they've heard and what their questions are?

Policy Recommendations

The following are our first-pass policy recommendations and are not to be considered as final. We will continue to hone them in Q3. In particular, we intend to review the G.A.R.E. recommendations in much more depth, and continue to draw out what is most appropriate and relevant for Akron.

1. Create a multi-year, multi-stakeholder Racial Equity Guiding Coalition, led by City employees and driven by the City, to build racial equity into all aspects of City Government and City life.

a. Guiding Coalition members are *committed* to supporting racial equity in all aspects of City Government and City life.

b. Use best practices for supporting racial equity & social justice.

i. Start with U Penn and the City of Boulder research and practices.

ii. Listen, listen, listen to what people need in order to feel safe, build trust, and get their needs met.

c. Consider the following structure (modeled after Boulder, CO)

i. Racial Equity Engagement Working Group

ii. Equity Ambassadors to engage and educate the City and community.

iii. Community Feedback Partners to collaborate and share 2-way communication and feedback on what the community needs.

d. Hire a racial equity facilitator to support the Racial Equity Guiding Coalition and other needed groups.

e. Begin with a 5-year process

i. Year 1: Year of study.

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- a. Talk to people. What do marginalized people in our community want re: Racial Equity & Social Justice? What would help build trust?
 - b. Bring in trained diversity facilitators to educate more people in our community about racial equity and about being open to people who are different from us, starting with the Guiding Coalition.
 - c. Require training for City employees on bias and micro-aggressions.
4. Remember that data gathering is always an intervention. When you ask questions, you impact people's perspectives by what you ask and how you ask it.
- i. Year 2: Year of planning.
 - a. Identify structures and processes that will best support Racial Equity & Social Justice within Akron City government and across the City.
 - ii. Year 3: Year of action plus preliminary assessment
 - iii. Year 4: Year of action plus robust assessment
 - iv. Year 5: Year of action plus planning for the next 5 years
 - f. This Racial Equity Guiding Coalition could fit under the City's Office of Integrated Development (OID) which already has in place a clear statement of support and a goal around racial equity. It needs more and higher level support on a day-to-day basis, and to be integrated into every City department.
2. Create and implement a framework for a dedicated repository for RESJ-related data that can be easily accessed and understood by everyone in the City.
- a. Racial equity & social justice data to be gathered and shared using a framework for ethical data collection
 - i. Ethical framework from UPenn: Planning, Data Collection, Data Access, Use of Historical Algorithms/Statistical Tools, Data Analysis, Reporting & Dissemination
 - b. Today the repository might include a website for sharing RESJ-related data and information, and a dedicated racial equity phone line staffed by someone who genuinely listens and who has the ear of City leaders.
 - c. This is a living framework that will change over time as technology and people's needs change
3. Plan for and implement a five-year Racial Equity PR program (billboards, advertisements, etc.) to create a regular diet of positive messaging re: Black and Brown people, immigrants, and others who are marginalized.
- a. This Racial Equity PR program will be designed to counter-balance the negative messages that most people receive throughout their lifetime about people who are marginalized, and to foster in our City an openness to everyone.

Conclusion

In order for Akron residents to take the City of Akron's efforts to improve racial equity seriously, the RESJ initiative must be sustainable. One way to ensure the sustainability would be to establish a multi-

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year, multi-stakeholder Racial Equity Guiding Coalition, led by City employees and driven by the City, and guided by a paid racial equity facilitator, to build racial equity into all aspects of City Government and City life.

A multitude of credible, tangible resources are available to the City of Akron. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the City should leverage and fully embrace an existing knowledge base GARE, (<http://www.racialequityalliance.org>) which provides resources for a multi-layered approach for racial justice. It may be a valuable resource to guide Akron's development of the communications plan. It is our understanding that Akron is a member.

Communications Subcommittee Members:

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

B. Subcommittee on Criminal Justice

Introduction

The Criminal Justice Subcommittee has met six times during the quarter just concluded. In addition, various working groups of the Subcommittee have met several times.

The Subcommittee believes that, in the realm of criminal justice, the achievement of racial equity and social justice requires significantly greater degrees of (1) transparency and accountability on the part of the Police Department to the public, (2) diversity and inclusion within the ranks of the Department, and (3) closer and more positive relations between the police and the communities they serve.

Toward these ends, the Subcommittee has focused on and formed working groups pertaining to the following topics:

- Police accountability mechanisms – police auditor and civilian oversight board;
- Body-worn camera legislation and policy;
- Police hiring and promotion practices;
- Police training; and
- Community policing.

As detailed below, the Subcommittee intends to make final recommendations concerning each of these topics. (See the Subcommittee's first quarterly report for interim recommendations previously made by the Subcommittee regarding the existing police auditor position.)

The Subcommittee is not unmindful of the fact that policing is only one aspect of the criminal justice system or that the goals of racial equity and social justice can and ought to be pursued in the areas of prosecution, defense, adjudication, and corrections. However, the Subcommittee has made a considered decision to focus exclusively on policing, for two reasons: (1) policing within the City of Akron lies almost completely within the control of the City government, whereas prosecution, defense, adjudication, and corrections are largely beyond the control of the City government; and (2) in the Subcommittee's judgment, the greatest need for reform is in the area of policing and, given the limited time for finishing its work, the Subcommittee could best serve the goals of promoting racial equity and social justice in criminal justice by focusing exclusively on policing.

Additional Historical Context

The Subcommittee did not identify any additional context appropriate for this optional section during Quarter 2.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

Police accountability mechanisms – police auditor and civilian oversight board: The working group on police accountability mechanisms and the Subcommittee as a whole have discussed at length both the appropriate role and authority of the current police auditor and the role, authority, and composition of a possible future civilian oversight board. There has been considerable support within the Subcommittee for the creation of a civilian oversight board, to whom the police auditor would report, which would serve two principal functions: (1) holding the police accountable for their conduct affecting members of the

public; and (2) serving as a bridge between the public and the police. Topics discussed include who should appoint the members of such a board, who should have the power to remove members from the board and on what grounds they should be removable, whether the board should have an investigatory role or a reviewing role, and what role if any the board should have in the disciplinary process. The Subcommittee's discussions point toward recommendations in favor of maintaining and strengthening the police auditor position, increasing the resources of that office by adding a deputy police auditor position, and ensuring that the police auditor has immediate access to records and information relevant to ongoing investigations of possible police misconduct with opportunities to provide feedback to the Department not only after investigations have concluded but also while they are proceeding.

Body-worn camera legislation and policy: The working group on body-worn camera legislation and policy and the Subcommittee as a whole have discussed at length and in detail the rules that should govern the use of body-worn cameras by the police and the availability of body-worn camera recordings to the public. Topics discussed include the following:

- When police officers should be required to wear cameras;
- When police officers should be required to activate their body-worn cameras;
- When body-worn camera recordings should be uploaded to a server; and
- Whether failure to wear and activate cameras when required and upload recordings as required should be grounds for discipline.

The Subcommittee also has discussed access to body-worn camera recordings by the police auditor – both the timing of such access and whether the footage to which the police auditor has access should be redacted or unredacted.

Police hiring and promotion practices: The working group on police hiring and promotion practices and the Subcommittee as a whole have discussed strategies for recruiting more diverse candidates for the police academy and lowering barriers to success on the part of such candidates. Particular attention has been paid to the steps in the hiring process that disproportionately reduce diversity among the successful applicants and to changes that could be made to mitigate those effects.

Police training: The working group on police training and the Subcommittee as a whole have discussed methods by which and the subjects on which both new and experienced police officers are trained. The working group and the Subcommittee as a whole have been especially interested in implicit bias, cultural competence, and de-escalation training.

Community policing: The working group on community policing and the Subcommittee as a whole have discussed the need for the police department to develop and implement a department-wide community policing strategy that routinely gets police officers out of their vehicles and brings them into contact and communication with the people they serve when they are not on calls. Currently, community policing in the Akron Police Department is relegated to a small group of officers. The Subcommittee believes that a department-wide community policing strategy would foster closer and more positive relations between the police and the communities they serve and would give the police access to information that would enable them to be more effective in detecting crime, apprehending suspects, preventing crime, and promoting public safety, especially in communities where relations between the police and the people they serve have been distant and tense.

Research Review

The Subcommittee and its various working groups have made use of the following resources.

- Documents
 - Resources available on the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement web site (see <https://www.nacole.org/resources>)
 - DeAngelis, Rosenthal, and Buchner, Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: A Review of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Various Models
 - Current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #7 and the City of Akron
 - William D. Rich, A Summary of Akron Police Department Internal Investigation, Discipline, And Dispute Resolution Procedures
 - Columbus, Ohio, Police Body Worn Camera Policy
 - Toledo, Ohio, Police Body Worn Camera Policy
 - Cincinnati, Ohio, Police Body Worn Camera Policy
 - Joint Body Worn Camera Policy Recommendations of the Police Executive Research Forum and Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
 - Akron Police 2011 Police Executive Research Forum Report
 - Akron Police Body Worn Camera Policy (April 2019)
 - Akron Police K-9 Procedure (September 2020)
 - Akron Police Detention/Pat-downs/Arrest Procedure (July 2020)
 - Akron Police SWAT Procedure (November 2019)
 - Akron Police Chemical Defense Spray Procedure (January 2020)
 - Akron Police Conducted Electrical Weapon Procedure “Taser” (November 2020)
 - Akron Police “In-Progress” Response Procedure (July 2020)
 - Akron Police Critical Incident Response Procedure (February 2021)
 - Akron Police Civilian Observer Procedure (October 2019)
 - Akron Police LEADS/NCIC Procedure (August 2018)
 - Akron Police Police-Media Relations Procedure (November 2019)
 - Akron Police Secondary Employment Procedure (February 2021)

- Meetings with and/or presentations by
 - City of Akron
 - The Mayor
 - The Director of Law
 - The Deputy Director of Law
 - The Police Auditor
 - The Director of Human Resources
 - Members of the Akron Police Department who bear primary responsibility for training police officers

 - External
 - The Executive Director of the Ohio Mayors Alliance
 - The Director of the Cincinnati Citizens Complaint Authority

- The Interim Director of the Columbus Department of Education, who was loaned by the Mayor to assist the work group that developed final recommendations on how the City's new Civilian Review Board and Inspector General would oversee the Columbus Division of Police

Policy Recommendations

Police accountability mechanisms – police auditor and civilian oversight board: Apart from the interim recommendations already made concerning the role and authority of the police auditor, the Subcommittee appears likely to recommend the establishment of a civilian oversight board, to whom the police auditor would report, which would bear responsibility for reviewing police uses of deadly force and force that results in serious bodily injury as well as citizen complaints of police misconduct. Yet to be fully worked out by the Subcommittee are details such as how many members said board should have; who should appoint them; what qualifications they should have; how long their terms of office should be; who should have the power to remove them from office and on what grounds; and what role, if any, the board should have in the disciplinary process.

Body-worn camera legislation and policy: The Subcommittee has tentatively agreed to make the following recommendations regarding body worn cameras:

- All uniformed officers, including officers deployed as SWAT, should be required to wear cameras.
- Uniformed officers should be required to wear cameras while engaged in secondary employment.
- Body-worn cameras should be activated
 - Immediately when responding to in-progress calls;
 - On other calls when exiting the police vehicle; and
 - Whenever reportable force is used.
- Body-worn camera recordings should be uploaded by each uniformed police officer to the designated server at the end of each shift.
- Officers should be subject to discipline for failing to wear or activate body-worn cameras as required and failing to upload recordings as required.

The Subcommittee also expects to make recommendations concerning access to body-worn camera recordings by (1) the police auditor and (2) members of the public. The Subcommittee is likely to recommend that the police auditor have access to unredacted recordings as soon as they are uploaded to the designated server or, in the event that it is authoritatively determined that access to unredacted recordings is not legally permissible, that the police auditor should have access to redacted recordings within a short period of time. (The Subcommittee has not yet reached a conclusion about what that period should be.) Regarding access by the public to body-worn camera recordings, the Subcommittee has been generally supportive of the legislation recently enacted by Council (and had some influence on the legislation that was proposed and eventually enacted). It has yet to be determined whether the Subcommittee will recommend any changes to that legislation.

Police hiring and promotion practices: The Subcommittee has not yet arrived at any specific recommendations concerning police hiring and promotion practices.

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Police training: The Subcommittee has not yet arrived at any specific recommendations concerning police training, but expects to recommend greater emphases on implicit bias, cultural competence, and de-escalation.

Community policing: The Subcommittee has not yet arrived at any specific recommendations about community policing, but it expects to recommend that a community policing strategy be implemented on a department-wide basis rather than limited to a small group of police officers. Such strategies have been successfully implemented in various police departments across the United States.

Conclusion

The Criminal Justice Subcommittee believes that the adoption and implementation of the recommendations discussed above, taken together, would materially advance the City of Akron toward the goals of racial equity and social justice by enhancing transparency on the part of the police, increasing diversity within the ranks of the police force, and improving relations between the members of the police force and the communities they serve, which in turn will enhance the effectiveness of the police in promoting public safety and improve the quality of police officers' professional lives.

Criminal Justice Subcommittee 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
Pastor Kevin Rushing
Bethanne Scruggs
Ron Smith
Cazzell Smith
Aimee Wade
Oscar Williams
John Williams

C. Subcommittee on Education

Introduction

Many believe that education is the great equalizer. The curriculum content and social skills that students learn prepare them for the expectations of society, and the credentials earned lead to and open the doors to opportunities and success. Education policies were established in districts statewide and nationally with the design that all children would have equal access to a free public education.

What the “separate but equal” doctrine, that was overturned in *Brown v. Board of Education*, taught us is that separate was never equal. The law that called for the desegregation of schools in spirit imagined a system in which all children would have equal access to the same quality education. In practice, what has evolved is a system of exceptions that have exacerbated inequalities and reinforced separation. What has been deemed as legally equal schooling in the contemporary context has allowed for and nurtured exceptions whereby the privileged can self segregate.

School segregation in the current context has been reinforced by private and parochial schools, suburban districts that enjoy a much higher tax base for facilities and per pupil expenditures, urban districts that are plagued with overcrowding, limited resources and eliminated programs, and tracking within schools meant to separate students by ability, but likewise separate them by demographic factors as well. Those factors point out the disadvantages that are compounded for underserved populations. In many neighborhoods, schools remain largely segregated in an updated and new millennium version of separate, but equal. School reform advocates endeavor to lead towards the ideal of equality and equity in education --- a quality education, integrated, for all.

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce’s Education Subcommittee is a collaboration of advocates for equity in education in Akron and has taken on the task to research information in the following key areas impacting educational improvement and school change. We will make recommendations for policy implications on these matters: **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.

Our knowledgeable professionals in education and related fields brought their expertise to the continuing conversation. During Quarter 2, the full Education Subcommittee met in April, May and June. We have met a total of nine times, three full Education Subcommittee Meetings: Research Team #1 met three times, and Research Team #2 met twice to accomplish their research. They also invited a guest speaker, an education administrator on the district level, to contribute to the conversation.

Additional Historical Context

The historical context of public education in the United States set up an inequitable and bifurcated system. With a structure that disallowed enslaved people and formerly enslaved people to read or write, educational deficits became structural. The inequities that were centuries later referred to as the **achievement gap** became institutionalized.

It is important to note that there are myriad historical factors that have contributed to the inequities that exist in education in the contemporary context. Over 200 years of restrictions for African Americans that began during the peculiar institution of slavery. Post bellum, Reconstruction and Jim Crow segregation, and later desegregation still created inequity because those in power continued to deny equal access. Separate but equal was not equal, and those in power did nothing to alleviate the inequalities that were structural and institutionalized.

Family structures were broken down during slave times, and this is something that has had generational ramifications that continue to remain unresolved. In many communities, circumstances of *de facto* segregation exist because neighborhoods remain segregated and insular. Housing restrictions and redlining have prohibited Black people from moving into certain neighborhoods with great schools, and the lack of affordable housing near high performing schools is also a concern.

Children of color, particular young Black males, are disciplined in disproportionate excess in schools. They are more likely to be disciplined and given harsher punishments than their peers. In addition, the best and most elite schools were out of reach and had barriers to access that kept these institutions exclusively and then predominantly White. Access was denied outright in centuries past, and subsequently economic factors restricted access in ways that were legal but camouflaged.

All of these factors created an educational deficit and achievement gap for students of color from the outset that has taken generations of efforts to turn around within the sphere of public education. We are still hard at work on remedies, establishing initiatives and creating programs to circumvent this combination of factors that have brought us to the current state of education and the disparities that exist.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

The Education Subgroup originally began with six areas of focus. However, due to time constraints and the need to prioritize and more carefully analyze research topics, the group has concentrated its focus during this reporting period on five topics: Student Access, Pandemic Recovery as it relates to Student Achievement, Intercultural and Cultural Competence, Educator Professional Development and Training, and Fiscal Responsibility, to include advocacy for an equitable state contribution to educational costs.

A. Student Access

The area of student access has focused around the area of opportunity and ensuring all students are afforded equal and equitable opportunities to participate in programs, classes and overall endeavors that will serve as the gateway of opportunity for all students in Akron. This comprised an examination of the racial and ethnic breakdown of students currently enrolled in Honors and Advanced Placement Courses.

B. Pandemic Recovery as it relates to Student Achievement

Due to the current pandemic and the need for students to engage in a remote learning environment, Education Research Team #1 discussed some of the implications as a result of this type of instruction, the engagement of students (particularly minority and low-income students), and the need to examine what urban school districts in Ohio and around the country have implemented to address disruption in learning due to the pandemic. This involved an evaluation of the academic calendar with consideration of a year-round structure. In addition, it also comprised more direct and timely interventions for students who may have fallen behind during or between grading periods as opposed to summer.

C. Intercultural and Cultural Competence

The committee discussed the importance of having diverse educators at all levels in schools in Akron. There was a strong belief among members that the educator demographic should reflect the student demographic. The committee members believe there is a disconnect between the teachers and students in urban school districts. The teaching field is composed primarily of White middle class women and they often are not adequately prepared to work with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in urban schools. Many teachers in urban settings struggle with classroom management, cultural competence, self-assessing their effectiveness, and creating authentic relationships with students and families to identify the best way to engage in teaching and learning. It is important that urban school leaders identify ways to effectively attract, recruit, and retain diverse educators. We believe students should have teachers that look like them in the classroom and come from similar backgrounds as they do.

Higher education programs must consider how they are preparing teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds. Teachers and leaders working in urban settings and doing the work of school turnaround require a unique set of skills to be effective. Educators must be able to manage students that are dealing with traumatic circumstances at home and in school. Often students in challenging schools are assigned the least qualified teachers. These teachers are typically novices and lack the skills needed to transform schools. The most school-dependent students need highly effective teachers. Teachers who have demonstrated their ability to build relationships with students are also able to maximize academic outcomes. Effective teachers must be given the opportunity to mentor, support, and build capacity in new teachers. Districts must also find ways to incentivize effective teachers to ensure they are acknowledged and compensated for their effectiveness in challenging schools.

D. Educator Professional Development and Training

The subcommittee discussed the importance of job-embedded professional development opportunities for educators that focus on cultural competence and intercultural competence. We discussed ways teachers can unpack their biases and identify strategies to engage more effectively with students of color. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a great way for teachers to get a sense of how interculturally competent they are on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC).

The IDC tool is effective because it provides individuals with data based on an inventory of questions completed online. The Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) allows educators to self-reflect and examine how they navigate cultures that are different from their own. Often educators are not aware of the biases they bring into the classroom and building. It is important that educators critically examine their biases to understand how these biases may impact the ways in which they engage with BIPOC students and parents. Pairing the IDI training with cultural competency training such as: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), Courageous Conversations about Race, and Abolitionist Teaching would be a great way to help teachers better connect to the students and families they serve.

The subcommittee had an in-depth conversation around House Bills 322 and 327. There has been much discussion in the media about Critical Race Theory (CRT) being taught in schools. We all agreed on the importance of including the dialogue around CRT in this report to help dispel myths and to create a shared understanding of CRT.

E. Fiscal Responsibility

The committee believes it is important for Akron Public Schools (APS) and other schools in the City of Akron to support initiatives that are inclusive to the communities they serve. Districts and schools should actively seek minority businesses for contracting and procurement opportunities. Districts and schools should invest in their community and ensure a certain percentage (10%-20%) of their contracts are granted to small businesses and minorities. There should be a fair transparent process for all interested parties.

Districts and schools should identify processes to monitor how money is being allocated to schools to ensure each school is being funded in an equitable manner. Schools that are granted school improvement funds must be held accountable toward both educator and student outcomes. Schools should be required to examine an initiative and the programs that are being implemented and measure the impact on educator and student outcomes. It is also suggested that the districts and schools conduct an equity audit to examine what is needed in schools as it relates to equity and to identify best practices that need to be implemented to close achievement gaps.

Subtopic: State Share of Instructional Costs - Advocacy

School funding matters, and increased school funding is positively associated with improved student outcomes (Baker, 2018). Effectively funding schools can support closing achievement gaps across the state. Every urban school district in Ohio is struggling to close the achievement gaps. APS is one of the urban districts that demonstrates clear disparities among student groups. APS's issue is a microcosm of a greater systemic issue which is partly embedded in the state's previous school funding system.

On March 24, 1997 the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled the state's funding method to be unconstitutional in the landmark case *DeRolph v. State* due to a heavy reliance upon property taxes. Ohio's funding method benefits wealthier districts with higher property values. Currently, public schools in Ohio are funded through a combination of state funds, local sources such as property taxes, income taxes (in some cases), and federal funds. The state uses a formula that considers student enrollment and the property wealth of the entire district to determine the amount of state funds each district receives (ODE, 2021). This funding system is not working for most schools in Ohio and is leading to larger disparities among poor Black and Brown students.

To address the issues with Ohio's school funding system, a group of legislators, educators, and school administrators worked for several years, ultimately creating a plan to address and fix Ohio's broken funding method. These individuals created the Fair School Funding Plan.

On June 30, 2021, Governor Mike DeWine signed HB 110, the State of Ohio's Operating Budget for the following two years. This budget includes this "Fair School Funding Plan," an overhaul of Ohio's K-12 funding formula and creates a system which is more transparent, predictable, and most importantly, equitable. The Fair School Funding formula, which will be implemented in the coming school year, will not only ensure that additional funds are provided by the state to educate students in Akron Public Schools, it will also lessen the burden on Akron taxpayers and reduce the need and frequency of levy requests.

It is vital to remember that the action taken by state lawmakers this year only funds schools via the Fair School Funding formula for the next two calendar years. In early 2023, lawmakers will decide whether to continue the phase-in of this plan, or to modify or discard the formula. It is vital that all leaders

invested in Akron's success collaborate to ensure that state funding of education continues to be provided in a way that is transparent, predictable, and equitable. The fight for equity in education funding should not be considered to be over just because equitable funding was authorized for a period of time. Akron Public Schools' history of leadership and advocacy on this issue should be continued.

Research Review

The Education Subcommittee reviewed a variety of data to support the prioritized research topics. The following is a non-exhaustive list. Sources included the following:

Information from Akron Public Schools

- Credit Recovery Programs and Path to High School Success
- Equality Data Story
- Equity Policy
- Equity Assessment Checklist
- Extended Learning Plan – Summer 2021
- Learning Recovery & Extended Learning Plan
- Secondary Summer School Offerings

Presentation: Dr. Monica Womack, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Director/Program Manager, Akron Public School District

Information from the Ohio Department of Education

- Akron's Traditional Public School District – Demographic Data
- Akron's Private Schools (Chartered Non-Public and Non-Chartered Non-Public) – Demographic Data
- All Summit County K-12 Schools – Demographic Data

Information from Akron's peer city school districts

Extended learning plans from the following districts

- Chicago Public Schools*
- Cleveland Municipal School District
- Dayton Public School District:
- Columbus City School District
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Metro Nashville Public Schools*

*Note: There is uniformity in the information about Ohio school districts because Ohio Governor Mike DeWine posed specific questions for school districts regarding their plans for learning recovery and

extended learning. A national mandate was not issued. Thus, information for Nashville and Chicago will not be found in a substantially similar format.

Additional Data to be reviewed and included in the final Q3 Report:

Requested from Akron Public Schools:

- The number and percentage of students deemed chronically absent is disaggregated by race, gender, building and zip code.
- High Level Course Enrollment by gender, race, building, grade level and zip code
- Gifted Course Enrollment by same variables (listed above).
- Full report on discipline, with specific types indicated based on race, gender, building and zip code.
- Teacher Access – the number and percentage of high qualified teachers by building, race and gender (of teachers).
- Number of College Credit Plus Courses offered in all APS High Schools by building. What are the courses by building? Who is accessing those courses?

Requested from Summit Education Initiative:

- County-wide data on third grade reading, math acceleration in middle school (8th grade) and ninth grade success
- The data will be disaggregated by student ethnicity.
- We will provide the most current data available; for third grade reading, that will be 2019.

Diversifying Education - the importance of diversity in education

There is growing demand in the field of education for diverse and talented educators. According to the [Brookings Institute](#), White teachers make up 80% of the teaching field (2017). Students of color represent over half of the students in the classroom across the United States. Research indicates that diversifying the field of education benefits every student. Black students yield greater performance outcomes when they encounter Black teachers. This notion is often called “race matching” in the literature, when students are taught by teachers from the same race. [Research](#) conducted on the long-run impact on same-race teachers found that Black students who were assigned at least one Black teacher in their K-3 experience were more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college (Gerhenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2018).

According to Gerhenson et al., a disadvantaged Black male’s exposure to at least one Black teacher in elementary school reduces his probability of dropping out of high school by nearly 40 percent (2018). Teachers of color are more likely to effectively use culturally relevant pedagogical practices, hold higher expectations for students of color, have stronger classroom management skills and lower student suspension rates, and serve as models of professional success to their students (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Ultimately, these educators are successful in increasing student’s test scores and better school outcomes for students throughout their K-12 experience.

Diversifying the education workforce is not only beneficial to students of color but to all students. A study conducted in 2016 found that students of all races in middle and high school had more favorable perceptions of Black and Hispanic teachers than their white teachers (Sebastian and Haplin, 2016). Some researchers believe that it is important for White students to engage with teachers of color to help shift their thinking and biases about Black people. The benefits of diversifying the teaching force is beneficial to all students and therefore districts must take steps to deliberately recruit, attract, and retain teachers of color in schools.

If school districts are going to be successful at recruiting teachers of colors into the workforce, they will need to collaborate with higher education institutions to create a pipeline for teachers of color. In Ohio, most teachers go through a traditional pathway to become a certified teacher. The pathway requires educators to take several exams to get their initial teaching license and complete a teacher residency program, which includes a tier two teacher performance assessment.

Historically, Black and Hispanic students struggled with passing subject knowledge licensure exams. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) shared, “Among Black candidates, 62 percent on average do not qualify for a standard license because they do not pass this test, and among Hispanic candidates, 43 percent do not pass” (NCTQ, 2014). According to NCTQ only 46 percent of teachers are capable of passing the licensure exam on the first attempt. It is imperative that higher education programs actively recruit many more candidates of color if they plan to diversify the teaching force and provide support to ensure their success in these programs. The state should seek to identify ways to hold higher education programs accountable to student outcomes in their teacher preparation programs.

Teachers of color are more likely to work in underperforming urban schools. In many of these schools, the working conditions are challenging (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Novice teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession within five years. Some of the reasons identified for their dissatisfaction in the district are student loan debt, salary, negative experiences with teachers, and poor working conditions. It is vital that school districts identify incentives to keep teachers of color in the profession. These incentives may include career pathways, increased salaries or stipends for teachers working in challenging schools, bringing in cohorts of teachers of color, and creating better working conditions for teachers.

Critical Race Theory

Over the past year there has been political backlash on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Republicans have been gaslighting Americans to distract them from addressing social justice issues that many Americans of all races and classes are deeply concerned about following the murder of George Floyd. Recently, Senator Ted Cruz claimed that CRT is as racist as the Klu Klux Klan (Kruse, 2021). Unfortunately, it is becoming rather common to hear fabricated statements made about CRT. Former President Trump and other Republicans began to fuel this idea with the signing of an Executive Order (EO) in September of 2020 which prohibited federal contractors from providing training on “divisive concepts” (Burke, Clark, Plitsch, Shepson, & Weirsum, 2020). According to the EO,

...all agencies are directed to begin to identify all contracts or other agency spending related to any training on "critical race theory, "white privilege," or any other training or propaganda effort that teaches or suggests either (1) that the United States is an inherently racist or evil country or (2) that any race or ethnicity is inherently racist or evil.

Most people lack an understanding of CRT and its purposes. The term CRT was coined by Professor Crenshaw who is currently the Executive Director for the African American Policy Forum and a Professor of Law at Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Janel George's article published by [The American Bar Association](#) defines CRT as a practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields. CRT critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuates a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers.

Although CRT is not taught in K-12 schools or in most undergraduate education programs, many states are introducing legislation which would ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory or "divisive concepts" in K-12 schools. Ohio is among several states that has introduced legislation condemning this erroneous idea. At the end of May, Ohio introduced HB 322 which is titled, "Regards the teaching of certain current events, race and sex and HB 327 which is titled, "Prohibit teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts." Both of these House Bills are viewed as a direct attack on our Democracy and freedom of speech. Both the [Ohio Education Association](#) (OEA) and the [American Federation of Teachers](#) (AFT) have written statements publicly condemning both bills.

Policy Recommendations

While Education Research Team #1 is still engaged in a comprehensive review of the literature and awaiting requested data which will better inform and shape final recommendations to be included in the Q3 Report, below are preliminary recommendations based on the priorities listed above.

Access:

1. Public and Private Schools within the City of Akron provide disaggregated data that examines the racial and ethnic composition of students participating in the following: Honors, Advanced Placement and Dual-Credit Courses (College Credit Plus).
2. Create annual goals and metrics to increase the recruitment and participation of minority students into Honors, Advanced Placement and Dual-Credit Courses.
3. Disaggregate all data related to student achievement by race and ethnicity.

Pandemic Recovery as it relates to student achievement:

1. To better understand the impact of possible loss in learning due to the pandemic, through increased transparency of the academic progress of students during the upcoming academic year and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, zip code and school location.
2. Development of year-round interventions to help students who require additional academic interventions.

Other possible areas of focus to be included in the Q3 Report:

Student-centered Learning & Student Achievement & Closing the Achievement Gap

1. Increasing completion rates for students of color at the collegiate level.
2. Closing equity achievement gaps among underrepresented groups.

Diversifying Our Schools

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- Develop or expand “grow your own program” – Akron Public Schools should work alongside college institutions to create teacher academies schools.
- Create and implement loan forgiveness programs/scholarships to educators of color.
- Place cohorts of Black and Brown educators in urban schools (similar to Teach for America). This will allow for educators to have a support system and allow them to work through issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity together.
- Provide job-embedded professional development to help educators understand the culture and climate of schools and gain a deeper understanding of the student population they work with.
- Create career pathways for successful educators early in their career. Career pathways may include: teacher leadership, curriculum roles, administrative opportunities, etc.
- Create or expand network groups for Black and Brown Educators.
- Develop a local consortium or coalition to collect data and identify strategies to diversify the education in Summit County.
- Request recruitment and retention data from local colleges and universities to identify the following:
 - How are students of color recruited into the teaching profession?
 - How many students of color are enrolling in education programs? This data should include a breakdown of demographics.
 - How many students of color (broken down by demographics) are completing education programs?
- Survey Black and Brown students in high school and undergraduate settings to better understand their perception of the teaching profession and what would attract them to the field.

School Funding

- Create an adequate and equitable school funding system that is not based on zip codes but on the needs of students in each area. Identify ways to advocate for and support the long term success of the Fair School Funding Plan.
- It is critical for the school funding system to invest in professional capital. A focus must be placed on the development and transformation of educators that work with school dependent students. We must invest in the educators that we are sending in all schools, especially those entering the most challenging schools. Schools are complex organizations that require ongoing thoughtful preparation, training, professional development and support to ensure maximum student outcomes.
- Provide evidence to show the importance of school funding and its impact when money is spent wisely. Equitably funded schools lead to enhanced student outcomes. According to Baker (2018), “While money alone will not solve all of our educational challenges, there is no chance of them being solved without adequate and equitably distributed resources.”

- There is evidence that the most school dependent students require more resources and support. We must invest more in students that need more. If we are truly seeking equity in schools, there must be an investment in the demographics that have been historically denied access to education. Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to the achievement gap as the education debt. Ladson-Billings argues "...historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an education debt" (p. 5).

Conclusion

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce's Education Subcommittee has taken on the assignment of analyzing and making recommendations for policy implications on specific issues, namely **Student Access, Student-Centered Learning and Closing the Achievement Gap, Pandemic Recovery as it Relates to Student Achievement, Cultural Responsiveness, and Fiscal Transparency**. These topics were prioritized over others and selected from the grand list of significant concerns that fall within the realm of disparities in education that impact our children. These educational disparities often single children out based on demographic differences that have positioned them at a disadvantage in our society.

We will continue our research and seek to refine our recommendations for the initiation of specific programs and initiatives for Akron Public Schools and other local educational institutions in the Q3 Report. We anticipate requesting funds to implement our recommendations, and respectfully request assistance in determining the resources needed to design and execute the programs successfully.

Our work is grounded in the premise that embracing racial equity policies and practices in school districts is the first step toward remaking the American dream. The practical targets of this work are the opportunity and achievement gaps which exist between students of color and White students. When these gaps are closed, the American dream's promises will be truly accessible for all of Akron's children and families.

Education Subcommittee Members:

Bruce Alexander (Chair)
Jolene Lane (Co-Chair)
Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval (Research Group Leader)
Dr. Jennifer Ross (Research Group Leader)
Dr. N.J. Akbar
Rev. Dr. William Blake
Lauren Brenza
Carla Chapman
Christina Hodgkinson
Francie Lambert
Jim Mullen
Deniesha Newby
Linda Owens
Dr. Nena Roy
Vanessa Sampsel
Starleen Saulsberry
Allyson Strickland
Mary Kate Waggoner
Rev. Curtis Walker

D. Subcommittee on Equitable Workforce Development

Introduction

The Equitable Workforce Development Subcommittee has experienced significant change during the first half of calendar year 2021, having experienced the resignation of two Chairpersons. Despite these unfortunate setbacks, the Subcommittee has solidified its leadership and is in the process of additional data collection and dividing the twenty-three-member Subcommittee into four active working groups that will more fully investigate our four primary areas of focus (detailed below) and develop and present our final recommendations to the Executive Committee and City of Akron.

Our Subcommittee remains steadfast in its mission and charge to assist the City of Akron to improve the following as it relates to its minority residents: a) communication of employment opportunities available within the City of Akron, b) creating new/augmenting and/or replicating existing workforce development opportunities available locally, c) access to meaningful careers with upward mobility within the City of Akron and otherwise available locally, and d) hiring, retention, professional development, and promotability of Akron's diverse residents.

As a result, our four primary areas of focus our working groups will be vetting, investigating and addressing are:

- 1) As a part of the City of Akron's role in workforce development and initiatives, the City of Akron should consider building/creating a pipeline of diverse talent prepared to fulfill the good paying jobs/careers available within the City of Akron and locally in significant numbers.
- 2) Considerations the City of Akron should implement as it relates to outreach to diverse communities, advertising/communicating available jobs within the City of Akron and the interviewing and selection processes required to remove bias.
- 3) What professional development and retention processes the City of Akron should consider for minorities and people of color within its employment.
- 4) Additional opportunities to support small, minority business growth.

Since the release of our Subcommittee's 1st Quarter Report, the Subcommittee has met twice, once in April and once in June.

Historical Context

The Subcommittee's 1st Quarter Report aptly described the historical context of this committee's work, namely that much of Akron, particularly its Black population, is excluded from meaningful economic opportunity. During the 2nd quarter, our Subcommittee also reviewed information from ConxusNEO which evidences that good paying jobs and upwardly mobile careers are immediately available locally in significant numbers and are concentrated in some high-growth/high-demand Industries.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

The main areas of concern for our Subcommittee are whether we will receive enough timely information from the City of Akron in order to best understand the City's current state, organizational and structural barriers that exist and allow us to most fully investigate and vet our four primary focus areas so that our Subcommittee can make appropriate final recommendations. Due to the aforementioned leadership changes within our Subcommittee, we have lost time, and as a result, we require quicker access to information and City of Akron Staff and Officials.

The other area of concern is that topics like Workforce Development and overall government hiring/retention/development practices are complex initiatives that also involve complicated barriers to success and achievement, such as adequate and available transportation and affordable and available childcare, which could take months, if not years, to evaluate, understand and then develop meaningful recommendations towards solutions.

Our Subcommittee genuinely believes that these initiatives should not stop at the end of calendar year 2021, but should continue for the foreseeable future.

Literature Review

During the 2nd Quarter our Subcommittee reviewed the following:

City of Akron's Race and Ethnicity Information

City of Akron's Recovery Plan

City of Akron's Strategy Map

ConxusNEO Locally Available Jobs Data

Greater Akron Chamber Elevate Action Plan (and work)

Racial Equity Plan (City of Boulder)

Report of the Durham (North Carolina) Racial Equity Task Force: An Urgent call to Loving Action

King County Equity Plan (Seattle)

Policy Recommendations

Our Subcommittee will make recommendations regarding policy changes within in our four primary areas of focus, as follows:

Focus Area 1

1) As part of the City of Akron's role in workforce development and initiatives, the City of Akron should consider building/creating a pipeline of diverse talent prepared to fulfill the good paying jobs/careers within the City of Akron and locally which are available in significant numbers.

Recommendations: We will recommend that the City of Akron take a larger role in and invest in workforce development initiatives and consider locating workforce development initiatives within neighborhoods where disadvantaged, minority residents live, and use these neighborhood centers to train residents to take advantage of the incredible surplus of available jobs that are available in high-

growth, high-demand industries with well-paying jobs/careers with upward mobility, both within the City of Akron and available locally. We will recommend the City of Akron more fully partner with local non-profits and other agencies to help minority candidates to prepare for, complete and pass entrance exams and physical testing for high-paying, entry level careers within the Akron Fire, Police and other departments.

Focus Area 2

2) Considerations the City of Akron should implement as it relates to outreach to diverse communities, advertising/communicating available jobs within the City of Akron and the interviewing and selection processes required to remove bias.

Recommendations: We will recommend the City of Akron commit to developing equity-focused leadership within every department and operation, regardless of the color of the leader currently, and commit in writing to making the composition of leadership/management/other staff within each department more fully mirror the demographics of the City of Akron. We will recommend instituting formal protocols for appropriate training (implicit bias, microaggression, etc.) and instituting action plans and accountability structures around identifying opportunities for minority inclusion well in advance of the opening being marketed and filled, mandating outreach to minority populations seeking minority candidates, and reporting statistics around these initiatives regularly. We will work with the Communications Subcommittee to develop recommendations for communication processes to adequately distribute and make available jobs within the City of Akron to minority communities and residents. We will recommend creation of an Equity Review Panel which will review City of Akron population demographics, the results of the recommendations above and continue to suggest recommendations and improvements to the City of Akron.

Focus Area 3

3) What professional development and retention processes the City of Akron should consider for minorities and people of color within its employment.

Recommendations: As part of the City of Akron's commitment to equity-focused leadership mentioned above in Recommendation 2, we will recommend the City of Akron perform an internal review of its development/promotion of minorities versus development/promotion of whites over the prior ten-year period, identify trends, areas of strength, areas of weakness and areas for improvement. We also recommend reviewing exit interviews, if currently being performed, and conducting exit interviews, if not currently being conducted, with all staff upon departure, whether terminated or resigning, to determine reasons for departure, barriers to success, perceived bias, perceived conflict, sources of discomfort, perceived reasons for any failures/lack of success, and report those findings to City leadership, City Council and the Equity Review Panel described in Recommendation 2 to identify areas of improvement, action plans and accountability structures that can show results over a multi-year period. These data points should prove self-evident in areas where the City can focus to augment and strengthen training and development programs for minorities and partner with local businesses, non-profits and other partners to provide the training that minorities and people of color need within the City of Akron workforce.

Focus Area 4

- 4) Additional opportunities to support small, minority business growth.

Recommendations: As part of the equity-focused leadership commitment mentioned in Recommendation 2, we will recommend that the City of Akron implement better protocols, processes, communication structures, procedures, action plans and accountability systems around engaging minority owned business in understanding the opportunities that routinely exist within the City of Akron's procurement department, what is necessary to qualify, how to obtain the certification, skills and other things that are necessary to be selected and assist minority owned businesses to succeed in being awarded contracts for services, products and labor. We recommend engaging the Equity Review Panel also mentioned in Recommendation 2 to be a part of any accountability review.

Conclusion

While our research and data indicate that much of Akron, particularly its Black population, is excluded from meaningful economic opportunity, we conclude that there is no legitimate reason for that exclusion to continue. Rather, through the thoughtful commitment to equity-focused leadership, the training, action plans, accountability structures and independent review that can allow such initiatives to be extremely successful, the City of Akron can make great strides and gains in helping its minority residents identify, be prepared for and take advantage of the myriad of economic opportunities that are immediately and imminently available. Our Subcommittee looks forward to advancing our recommendations and work in this area and helping the City of Akron drive success in this most critical of initiatives for our City, County and region.

Equitable Workforce & Job Creation Subcommittee Members:

Chair Mark Krohn
Co-Chair Torey Tolson
Roberta Aber
Julie Costell
Heather Coughlin
Dr. Raymond W. Cox III
Robert DeJournett
Leon Henderson
Erica Howard
Darci Jackson
Sue Lacy
Darnell Roberts
Brian Rolnick-Fox
Karolyn Smith
Heather Steranka-Petit
Darrin Toney
Bernett Williams
Laurie Zuckerman

E. Subcommittee on Health

Introduction

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

(We are currently looking to present all four of our policy recommendations. We believe that two of our policy recommendations (policy recommendation 2 and 3) are being considered)

“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.

Additional Historical Context

Similar to other communities, Akron has a long history of racial inequity, health disparities, racism, violence, and discrimination. Racial marginalization remains a frustrating and continuous pattern of life for people of color in the Akron/Summit County area. African Americans have carried the burden of a historic collective memory in which their voices were silenced, their grievances dismissed, and the past ignored.

In 1969, Akron created the Ohio Commission on Civil Disorders Report. This report is very similar to the work that we are conducting 51 years later. The major focus of this report highlighted racial equity and socially unjust problems that blacks in Akron were experiencing as it relates to discrimination and the consequences of discriminatory practices. “Neither the leadership in public sectors of the city, nor the general public, has conveyed to the black’s sufficient statements or actions that would encourage them that results will be forthcoming. The failure to show concern about the condition of poverty, deprivation, degradation, inequality, and discrimination is the food on which tension and hostility feed. Collective violence is the measure of the extent of desperation of people who see no other way to be heard.” (Akron Commission on Civil Disorders, 1969, Pg.38).

In 2019, the City of Akron created the Akron Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee. The committee released a 73-page report detailing the problem, providing crime statistics and maps showing where violence is most prevalent in the city, laying out an implementation plan, and implored the community to step forward to help. The plan, which was developed over a span of more than two years, focuses on ages 15 to 24 and was devised to fill in gaps in services and create wrap-around services for that age group. The committee recommended:

- Boosting mentoring programs.
- Providing more recreational activities.
- Increasing support for incarcerated youth who return to their community.
- Improving police-youth relations.
- Expanding mental health and substance abuse support and treatment.

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- Reducing access to guns.
- Promoting community awareness and involvement.
- Developing a mechanism to share and monitor data.

Using statistics from law enforcement covering 2012 to 2016, the committee mapped problem areas in the city, finding most of the crime involving youth ages 15 to 24 occurs in west and southeast Akron. Those areas also have the highest rates of poverty, infant mortality and housing problems. They set a goal to reduce youth violence by at least 20 percent across all categories identified in the report: assault (4,844 reports), felonious assault (848), discharging a firearm (273), family violence (5,027), menacing (2,287), robbery (2,253), sexual offenses (615), weapons law violations (1,953) and shots fired reports (7,360).

Federal data reports that thousands of people experience youth violence every day. Youth violence negatively impacts youth in all communities—urban, suburban, rural, and tribal.

- Youth violence is common. 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the past year.
- Youth violence kills and injures. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24. Each day, approximately 12 young people are victims of homicide and almost 1,400 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal assault-related injuries.
- Youth violence is costly. Youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries result in an estimated \$18.2 billion annually in combined medical and lost productivity costs alone (Youth.gov, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention/federal-data>).

Within the context of a national awakening and movement to address systemic racism, the city has begun to address the issues of racial equity and look for ways to express the city's diversity and inclusion practices. Akron recognizes that while there are many promising and evidence-based programs and initiatives already in place in our community, there exists a need for better systemic coordination of existing and new efforts to maximize limited resources, eliminate redundant efforts, and direct programs and initiatives to areas and populations of need. Existing evidence-based efforts should also be maintained by focusing on the quality, equity, effectiveness and sustainability of programs and services. However, it is hoped that those with responsibility in each problem area will respond to the needs, and that the Mayor, his administration, and City Council, will use their power and prestige to encourage, support, cooperate with, and press such persons and groups toward action.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

Public Health committee has met three times since submitting the Q1 report. We divided into three subcommittees to discuss our four policy recommendations in more detail. Subcommittee 1 focused on policy recommendation one, Subcommittee 2 focused on policy recommendations two and three and subcommittee three focused on policy recommendation 4. We considered whether the roles recommended by policy recommendation 2 and 3 could be accomplished with a single position. After careful consideration, we determined that it may be best to separate the positions, having a grassroots position to be building relationships with residents and an institutional position to assist with the facilitation of the policy recommendations. All Subcommittees met two to three times during the month

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of June. These meetings assisted each subcommittee in making significant progress towards our Q2 report. An Area of concern that resonates with our committee as a whole especially as we look at our policy recommendation 1 is identifying what the city and county controls can influence.

Literature Review/ Research Review

Below is this list of resources/data that has been collected/utilized throughout our process with policy recommendation 4:

- Greater Cleveland Partnership D & I Assessment and Results: https://link.zixcentral.com/u/9a5592fc/zF5joFu-6xGKHIR_UabuwQ?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gcpartnership.com%2FInitiatives%2FEquityandInclusion%2FWorkforceDiversityEquityInclusion%2FDandIOrganizationAssessment
- Diversity Scorecard: https://link.zixcentral.com/u/2366894c/usVjoFu-6xGKHIR_UabuwQ?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.chicagobusiness.com%2FEquity%2Fcity-treasurer-keeping-score
- Equity Scorecards: https://link.zixcentral.com/u/1622c225/nCRkoFu-6xGKHIR_UabuwQ?u=https%3A%2F%2Fcreate.umn.edu%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F02%2FEquity-Scorecards.pdf
- PolicyLink- Maximizing Results Scorecard: <https://www.policylink.org/node/39431>
- National League of Cities: Repository of City Racial Equity Policies and Decisions: <https://www.nlc.org/resource/repository-of-city-racial-equity-policies-and-decisions/>
- Montgomery County, MD- Racial Equity in Government Decision-Making: Lessons from the Field: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOReport2018_8_8.pdf

During our June meeting we invited Tamikya Rose and James Hardy to discuss our policy recommendations. Mrs. Rose and Mr. Hardy gave great feedback that assisted our Public Health committee with moving forward to developing our Q2 report.

Policy Recommendations

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

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.*

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 evidenced 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 X 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 health and primary care providers supporting city employees/family members – Request report
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/Programming/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 Resources 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

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5. Establish sustainability plan for the position
6. Expand on the existing supportive recommendations

Supportive Recommendations/Programming/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.
 - 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 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 Communication Subcommittee
- 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/Programming/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 Initiatives.
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.

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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.

Conclusion

The Health Care and Public Health Subcommittee 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.

Action Items:

We will continue to meet monthly as a whole and once a month as subcommittees in efforts to complete the Q3 report by the deadline.

Health Subcommittee Members:

Chair Iriel Hopkins
Co-Chair Jerome Moss
Carole Becerra
Tierra Brightwell
Demico Buckley
Tracy Carter
Dr. Leanne Chrisman-Khawam
Marie Curry
Joan Davidson
Charde' Deans
Ciara Dennis-Morgan
Jessica Drake
Dawn Glenny
Hannah Horrigan
Sharetta Howze
Ericka Malone
Nakia Manley
Shawnique Moore
Dr. Jennifer Nicholas
Christina Porter
Jennifer Savitski
Marcia Schulz
Shaleeta Smith

(alphabetical list continued)

Dr. Kamesha Spates
Suzanna Thiese
Jessica Travis
James Yskamp

F. Subcommittee on Housing

Introduction

The Housing subcommittee has met every month since the creation of the committee in 2020 approximately 7 official convenings. Members of the committee and focus groups have been meeting outside the formal group meetings in order to complete the detailed work on the action items. 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.

Racial inequality still permeates land-use patterns and many Black neighborhoods are disconnected from access to high-quality housing, jobs, public transit, and other resources. This Committee will provide recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts of housing segregation.

Additional Historical Context

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. Akron has available a robust range of social services. Akron draws foreign-born residents and Akron's extensive hospital system appeals to people with disabilities who want to be close to their medical provider.

Development of new housing in Akron is largely non-existent 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

City of Akron Administration Values

The current administration has expressed that it values diversity, equity, and inclusion. They utilize an equity lens to ensure inclusive, healthy neighborhoods, where all have fair access to opportunities for economic advancement and mobility. The administration also states that it values inclusive community engagement and works to deliver a consistent, high-quality experience for all customers, including residents, developers, and businesses.

While the city population has been stable or declining, the City's focus is on initiatives to increase population growth and attracting new families to Akron. The desire is to increase the tax base by developing land use plans for vacant parcels, develop neighborhood plans that create nodes of activity and walkable design, modernize the zoning code, and expedite permitting. The City has also adopted a citywide tax abatement to spur development and rehabilitation of housing.

More recently, the City has seen some success in increasing property values. Median Housing prices have risen from \$57,000 to \$97,000, which provides some increase in equity wealth. Hopefully, this

gain in equity will increase the ability of property owners to invest and lenders to provide capital to allow improvements to be made with market resources.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing

The City of Akron was not exempt from systematically implemented racially discriminatory housing policies. In fact, the effects of those policies remain today and continue to have lasting impacts on our community. For example, a review of historic redlined neighborhoods in Akron shows that those same areas today struggle from continued disinvestment, poverty, minority concentrations, and lack of resources and community amenities. Multiple sources document this fact including census data⁶ and the City Market Value Analysis (MVA).⁷ Homeownership rates in redlined neighborhoods decades ago still lag far behind those areas of the city that were afforded greater opportunities.

The City conducted an Analysis of Impediments (AI) to fair housing choice in 2013. The document specifically mentions segregation and the concentration of poverty where new affordable housing tends to be built in already low-income areas, thus certain neighborhoods are continuing to be unobtainable for low-income residents with little work to address the issue. Voucher users are concentrated in certain neighborhoods. Segregated neighborhoods mean a lack of community assets, potential differences in the quality of schools, and an overall negative impact on communities and the residents who live in them. Additionally, the document cited the number of foreclosures and homes sold “for cheap” leading to a growth in “slumlords.” Residents are afraid to complain for fear of eviction.

One of the recommendations that was highlighted in the AI includes development with diversity techniques including mixed-income housing and connecting low-income residents to the benefits of economic growth through new jobs and assets. The AI listed individuals with criminal records have difficulty in finding quality housing with a desire to promote fair housing for people with criminal backgrounds.

Segregation in Akron

Racially discriminatory policies and their effects can be seen in Akron, Ohio. According to ACS data there are many neighborhoods that have both a high minority concentration and high poverty rate (U.S. Census Bureau). The Summit Lake neighborhood is an example of the interstate highway segregating a neighborhood in Akron. Before the building of the highway, Summit Lake was a thriving neighborhood that had fairs, an amusement park, and attracted many people to the area. However, once the highway was built the neighborhood became segregated and is now one of the most highly minority and poverty concentrated neighborhoods (U.S. Census Bureau).

A brief examination of census data makes the disparities through our community clear. The City of Akron has a 24.1% minority population, 50.1% owner occupancy, and a 23.5% poverty rate. Of the 24 Akron neighborhoods, 10 neighborhoods have less than a 40% homeownership⁸ rate (U.S. Census Bureau). Of those 10 neighborhoods with low homeownership rates, seven of them have a population

⁶ <https://www.census.gov/data.html>

⁷ Market Value Analysis- Akron, Ohio https://www.akroninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/akron_-_market-value-analysis-2017.pdf

⁸ North Hill, Chapel Hill, West Hill, Cascade Valley, Sherbondy Hill, Downtown, University of Akron, Middlebury, Summit Lake, and South Akron.

that is majority minority⁹, and 8 of them have more than 1/3 of the population in poverty¹⁰. When looking just at poverty and race, all 9 neighborhoods that have more than 50% minority population have more than one quarter of the residents living in poverty.

When evaluating on a census tract level the effects of policies become even more clear. There are 22 census tracts that have a homeownership rate lower than the citywide rate of 40 percent. All 22 of those census tracts have a minority concentration higher than the City's average minority population and all tracts have a poverty rate greater than the City's. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board rated 21 of 22 of these census tracts as declining or hazardous. Tract 5066 was the only tract rated desirable on the historical redlining maps.

Conversation Summary Regarding Areas of Concern

Disinvestment

A history of disinvestment by property owners, lenders, government entities, and other organizations has led to inequities across the city. People of color should not have to live in segregated areas with high poverty rates and inferior amenities. Although gaps are narrowing with the dissolution of redlining and other institutionalized discriminatory policies, clear geographic inequalities based on race still exist in Akron. 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.

Wealth Gap

When the federal government's housing policies and programs expanded homeownership across the country, many knowingly excluded Black people and other people of color and promoted and reinforced housing segregation. Federal policies contributed to mortgage redlining and lending discrimination against people of color. There are continuing racial disparities in mortgage lending in Ohio based on race. Compared to White families, Non-White families 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 Subcommittee members that represented professionals, landlords, policy experts, and community members.

Phase one began at onset with data collection. Data collection included an environmental survey of the existing work that had been made available in the community. This included the City Market Value

⁹ North Hill, Cascade Valley, Sherbondy Hill, Downtown, Middlebury, Summit Lake, and South Akron.

¹⁰ West Hill, Cascade Valley, Sherbondy Hill, Downtown, University of Akron, Middlebury, Summit Lake, and South Akron.

Analysis, Analysis of Impediments, neighborhood plans, nonprofit, and government strategic plans, and other housing plans and studies.

The environmental scan was made available to the Subcommittee. The review of the environmental scan resulted in some data analysis that led to neighborhood analysis and mapping, and literature review. Other education materials were made available to the Subcommittee at various stages of the process. Subcommittee members were asked to review 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 were asked to distribute 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 that are reflected below. Focus groups of 2-4 Subcommittee members were established to investigate and flesh out the initial brainstorming more deeply.

Focus Groups met to complete a draft of the action items which identifies the issue and some proposed solutions. Each focus group presented their action item to the Subcommittee as a whole to receive feedback and suggestions. The Chair combined the work of all focus groups and generated a list of questions for the City to respond to and other research that was needed to complete the action item recommendations. The focus groups refined their work based on additional information and we are still in the process of filling in research gaps to complete the final recommendations. A timeline and order of preference will be established in quarter three in communication with interested community members.

Literature Review

The Committee reviewed academic articles, data sources, local, plans, studies and surveys as well as local ordinances. The following is a list of materials reviewed

Akron Consolidated Plan. 2019. City of Akron.

https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/2019ConsolidatedPlanSummary/draft_2019_action_plan.pdf

- The City allocates federal funding in accordance with the Consolidated plan

Akron Housing Strategy. 2018. City of Akron. https://www.akroninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/planning_to_grow_akron_report_final.pdf

- The City of Akron also established Urban Renewal Areas and Redevelopment Areas to assist with removing blight

Burchell, R. W. 2000. *Inclusionary zoning: a viable solution to the affordable housing crisis?* Washington, DC: Center for Housing Policy.

- Some states have inclusionary zoning requirements, such as New Jersey, California, and Massachusetts

Champion, Elizabeth, and Fudge, Keith, and Gallagher, Megan, and Ramakrishnan, Kriti. 2021. *Why Housing Matters for Upward Mobility*. Urban Institute.

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103472/why-housing-matters-for-upward-mobility-evidence-and-indicators-for-practitioners-and-policymakers.pdf>

- The neighborhood where a person lives has effects on a person's mental and physical health, stress, access to transportation, access to healthcare and food, education, and economic success, which includes income, employment, job quality, skills, and human capital

City of Akron Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce. 2020.

<https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/site/0e32265c61627adc/index.html>

- There are no political barriers that will prevent housing equity, as illustrated by the Mayor of Akron creating a task force tasked with creating a pro-equity Strategic Plan: policy recommendations, funding allocations, and timelines

Cleveland City Planning Commission. 2019. *TheLandCode*. <https://thelandcode.com/detroit-shoreway-docs/>

- A strength is that it allows the community to have significant input of what they would like the community to look like

Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove. *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, And What We Can Do About It*. New Village Press, 2016.

- As Dr. Fullilove describes in her book, *Root Shock*, Urban Renewal Projects caused residents to lose their communities and hurt the displaced residents' mental health

Ellen, I. G., and Steil, J. 2019. *The dream revisited: housing segregation and opportunity in the twenty-first century*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Under inclusionary zoning, low-income citizens are able to afford the opportunity to live in mixed-income neighborhoods since that development would have to build affordable housing

Garde, Ajay, and Kim, Cecilia. 2017. *Form-Based Codes for Zoning Reform to Promote*

***Sustainable Development: Insights From Cities in Southern California*. Journal of the American Planning Association.**

- Form-based codes are zoning regulations that emphasize physical form, rather than separation of uses like current land uses and zoning codes, as the organizing principle that regulates development

Herriges, Daniel. 2020. *6 Reasons Your City Needs a Form-Based Code*. Strong Towns.

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/6/8/6-reasons-your-city-needs-a-form-based-code>

- Form-based codes are also effective because they emphasize that the buildings in a neighborhood are compatible with the built environment

Keithley, Devin. 2018. *Predicting Evictions: A Look Back on Redlining in Ohio*. OHFA.

<https://ohiohome.org/news/blog/october-2018/predictingevictions.aspx>

- As the map illustrates, there are many neighborhoods with grades of C or D, which means these areas were the riskiest areas for home financing

Knaap, Gerrit, and Meck, Stuart, and Moore, Terry, and Parker, Robert. 2007. *Zoning as a Barrier to Multifamily Housing Development*. American Planning Association

- Form-based codes will allow the city to eliminate single-family housing. Single-family zoning also has regulatory barriers that prevent affordable housing from being developed

Lowry, Sean and Marples J, Donald. 2020. *Tax Incentives for Opportunity Zones*. Congressional Research Service.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45152/13>

- Opportunity zones are tax incentives intended to encourage private investment in economically distressed communities determined by leaders at the state level

Ramakrishnan, Kriti, and Treskon, Mark, and Greene, Solomon. 2019. *Inclusionary Zoning*. Urban Institute.

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99647/inclusionary_zoning._what_does_the_research_tell_us_about_the_effectiveness_of_local_action_2.pdf

- Inclusionary zoning is a valuable tool in helping improve racial equity in housing. Inclusionary zoning encourages or requires developers to set aside a percentage (usually between 10% and 20%) of housing units to be affordable housing

Summit4Success. 2021. <https://www.summit4success.com/resources-for-your-business/opportunity-zones>

- The City of Akron and Summit County have created a site to help attract potential investors

Schwartz, Alex F. (2015). *Housing policy in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Federal, state, and local government policies caused some neighborhoods to lack access to education, employment opportunities, health care, and other safety issues.

Tighe. 2019. *State and Local Housing Policy*. Urban Housing Policy Class

- Voluntary inclusionary zoning is when local governments will offer incentives like density bonuses, public land, and tax relief

U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, generated by Fulton Benya; using data.census.gov.

- According to the ACS data in Akron, many neighborhoods that have both a high minority concentration and high poverty rate

Wells, Krissies, McMillian, Andrew, and Watson, Jillian. 2013. *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Akron, Ohio*. The Housing Center, Housing Research and Advocacy Center
https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/Fair_Housing_AI/final_akron_ai.pdf

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- Part of the segregation in Akron was caused by bank mortgage redlining; steering African Americans in where they would be showed housing, and discrimination in rental housing

White House. 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/memorandum-on-redressing-our-nations-and-the-federal-governments-history-of-discriminatory-housing-practices-and-policies/>

- There is a racial gap in homeownership, a persistent undervaluation of properties owned by families of color, a disproportionate burden of pollution and exposure to the impacts of climate change in communities of color, and systemic barriers to safe, accessible, and affordable housing for people of color

Guest Speakers have attended multiple committee meetings. The committee heard from Jason Segedy and James Hardy early in Quarter 1 to talk about the current path of the city and how our committee can enhance and assist their work and guide their direction. In Quarter 2, Rachel Bridenstine Managing Director, Development Fund of the Western Reserve; Executive Director, Western Reserve Community Fund spoke to the committee on development funds available.

Policy Recommendations

STRATEGY 1: INVEST IN NEIGHBORHOODS THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED A HISTORY OF DISINVESTMENT AND INEQUITY

History of disinvestment has led to inequities. People of color should not have to live in segregated areas with high poverty rates, inferior amenities, low wages, and inadequate political representation. Although gaps are narrowing with the dissolution of redlining, racial covenants, and other institutionalized discriminatory policies, clear geographic inequalities based on race and ethnicity still exist in our cities and towns today. Many African Americans, Latinos, and immigrants live in concentrated poverty. Segregated neighborhoods often have fewer employment opportunities, good schools, or quality amenities to offer their residents. The highest levels of segregation are still between African Americans and White people.

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

The City should incentivize local, neighborhood, minority or Akron-based contractors to repair existing vacant homes. One incentive would be the provision of strategically targeted grant funds to a developer entity that would invest in higher poverty areas, in order to fill the gap between cost to rehabilitate and property value after rehabilitation is complete. The City can use existing federal funding or general funds for this grant, but should commit a higher percentage of the total sources to impacted communities. Planning to Grow Akron 2.0 creates some incentives such as tax abatement, creation of a program offering low interest and technical assistance to rehabilitate qualified homes in a historically appropriate manner, tax increment financing, housing appraisal gap housing incentive. While Planning to Grow target resources many impacted communities, there are still neighborhoods and communities that are left behind. The next phase should expand to those impacted areas not included in 2.0.

Action Item: Preserve existing affordability of housing

Increase in property values historically means displacement for many African Americans. The City should explore tax incentives such as abatement that are tied to use restrictions that maintain affordable rents and discourage displacement of existing tenants. HUD funding can be used as a

template for the type of rent restrictions that could apply to other programs. Planning to Grow Akron 2.0 works with non-profit and for-profit developers to increase the supply of affordable private market rental properties to meet demands of a diverse population and provide greater protection and support to tenants. This initiative should be expanded to all impacted areas.

Action Item: Prioritize blight removal in areas identified as Orange or yellow markets in the City Market Value Analysis

For those that can afford to invest in their homes, property values are so low that it is not financially viable for homeowners to invest money into their properties. The improvement does not meaningfully improve the value of their home. In economically distressed areas, there are often many issues that contribute to depressed values, not just houses that need improvements. It is important to make sure vacant lots are cared for, not overgrown, or littered, and to invest in road paving, sidewalks, tree canopy, and public spaces. Targeting grant funds for specific types of improvements, i.e. roofing, siding, paint, exterior upgrades can create momentum for more private investment. A similar program would help for commercial storefront improvements for grocery stores, small business/retail, restaurants, etc. The city should dedicate a larger percentage of its CDBG/federal funding to impacted areas.

Action Item: Target code violations in areas of minority and poverty concentration

The data on code violations in housing that have resulted in orders should be available through the Akron Department of Neighborhood Assistance. The City should evaluate to ensure that code violations are enforced equitably. In order for this to be equitable the same standard needs to be applied to all areas of the city. Planning to Grow Akron 2.0 does provide stiffer penalties for non-compliance which may be necessary. More support to Neighborhood Assistance is essential to enforce code violations.

Action Item: Use the current Landlord Registry in a meaningful way

The registry is not consistently used in any meaningful way. There is no monitoring as to whether landlords register their properties. There is no collaboration between municipalities who may or may not have their own registry. Summit County registry is free. The information collected varies between registries and is oftentimes not useful information for the government or the tenants. For example, Summit County's registry doesn't collect the name of a local contact person, only the LLC. Property owners are required to register properties with the City of Akron at a cost of \$15.00 per unit in accordance with the Rental Registration Ordinance passed by City Council in 1996 and enforced since 1997. Monies should be used exclusively for Neighborhood Assistance. Collaboration is needed between county and municipalities so that information is shared between the governments. The list of registered properties should be publicly available. There are three ways that the landlord registry could be made effective:

1. Incentivize landlords to register all properties by providing free training on housing topics such as resources for repairs, tenant/landlord rights, inspection requirements, fair housing laws, etc.

2. Housing inspections should be required on an annual or semi-annual basis. Inspections provide the ability to maintain a healthy housing stock in our community. Landlords are made aware of repair needs, tenants have support from local government authority for a healthy living environment, and the community housing stock is healthier overall.

3. Landlords should be required to pay an initial and annual registration fee on each of their registered properties. These fees will go in part to training and housing inspection costs.

Planning to Grow Akron 2.0 creation of a tenant/landlord commission to improve tenant/landlord relations is positive progress and this registry should be placed on their agenda. Members of the Housing Subcommittee should also serve on the commission.

STRATEGY 2: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR TO LIVE IN MORE INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES

Families through history have been excluded from certain communities, based on factors such as race, color, religion, and income. It is essential to ensure that all areas of our community are inclusive and accepting of a diverse mix of households.

Action Item: Advocate for, sponsor, and fund mixed-income housing developments, specifically in areas of low poverty and minority concentration.

Mixed-income housing provides myriad social benefits. There appears to be widespread agreement among housing practitioners that including a mix of incomes within a development can be helpful in creating a safe, healthy and sustainable living environment for families. Mixed-income housing approach leads to deconcentrating of poverty, and racial and socioeconomic integration – high concentrations of poverty are associated with negative child and family outcomes. Many practitioners believe that mixed-income communities provide a safer environment that offers a greater range of positive role models and exposure to more job leads for area residents.

Mixed-income developments and integration of higher-income residents may lead to better schools, improved access to transportation and more retail options. Development should be in a convenient location with access to public transportation, job centers and high-quality schools. Design that does not distinguish market-rate units from affordable units by either appearance or amenities, and that disperses units at all affordability levels throughout the development.

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

Many poor and minority families are segregated in neighborhoods that are underserved and impoverished. Moving out of these areas with higher concentrations of poverty has tremendous potential to help families gain access to higher quality education, employment, healthy foods and greater social connections. Housing mobility is a strategy to help low-income families use housing choice vouchers to move from low-opportunity neighborhoods to neighborhoods that have more resources. Mobility programs can also diminish the effects of decades of discriminatory housing policy that have limited housing opportunities and contributed to segregation of people of color and higher minority concentration groups in high-poverty, low opportunity neighborhoods.

Voucher holders struggle to identify and utilize housing in high opportunity areas for a number of reasons. Housing providers are reluctant to rent to voucher holders due to programmatic restrictions and what is viewed as red tape. As a result, vouchers may go unutilized, and families lose great

opportunities for housing stability. Additionally, rental costs are rising in Akron, especially in opportunity neighborhoods. Individuals with rental assistance suffer in the competition for these desired units. Often landlords commit to individuals with the cash resources when compared to those with vouchers or other sources of income.

To help voucher holders expand their search, local governments should fund a mobility counseling program. The program would offer information, one-on-one guidance to help voucher holders search for and secure housing in areas with quality schools, good public services and other resources that help to support positive economic outcomes. The program would also market and recruit property owners and agents in areas of higher opportunity.

Discrimination based on source of income (SOI) is a barrier to using a voucher and it leads to voucher holders to be segregated in more crowded and underserved neighborhoods. Discrimination against voucher recipients based on their SOI plays a significant role in limiting moves to areas of opportunity.

Updating the existing fair housing ordinance to make it illegal to discriminate against someone based solely on their SOI will allow voucher holders to succeed in moving out of areas of poverty concentration. SOI protection can help to expand the housing choices available to low-income families.

Proposed Solutions

- City of Akron should lead a collaborative effort of governments to fund a mobility program to assist voucher holders with relocation to high opportunity areas.
- City of Akron has passed source of income legislation to protect people who use alternative sources of income, but the City, as a role model could advocate for similar legislation throughout Summit County.
- City of Akron should lead a collaborative effort of governments to fund education programs for tenants and landlords on the above program and policy.

Action Item: Zoning code reform to emphasize inclusionary practices

Task: Develop a comprehensive plan for city land use.

Plans should have at least two elements:

- Direct physical investments that are a part of any healthy neighborhood, i.e. vacant lots to be cared for; invest in road paving, sidewalks, tree canopy, public spaces, neighborhood businesses.
- Creative incentives for indirect investment by neighborhood residents to invest in their own neighborhoods.

It is important to think holistically about previously disinvested neighborhoods. Instead of only working on “housing,” develop the neighborhood with an understanding of walkability, economic development, heat island effect, green space development, CLC development, food access, childcare, skill development, etc.

Planning to Grow Akron 2.0- updates to the zoning code to promote equitable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood development and new neighborhood-based initiatives, revise zoning code to focus on “Missing Middle Housing,” adopting more form-based zoning and performance-based zoning that

imposes fewer limitations based on densities and land use but are more focused on development standards. Planning to Grow Akron 2.0- middle neighborhood districts (Goodyear Heights, Kenmore, North Hill, West Akron), and redevelopment of neighborhoods (Summit Lake, Middlebury). The next phase should focus on all impacted areas, and they should not be excluded from any comprehensive planning effort

Task: Encourage and incentivize neighborhood Entrepreneurial activities

Neighbors to benefit from, capitalize on, participate in, development, from business development, to construction and contractor development, to green infrastructure installation.

Mixed use spaces that include a live work option in affordable housing would allow low income minority families to own/work at a coffee shop/bodega/etc. in the same building where they live. Create opportunities for city residents to invest in neighborhoods to create/generate wealth similar to case studies in the northwest.

Task: Address vacant housing

Create a uniform report system for abandoned houses that after a fixed number of reports or a number of years of reports (in which homeowner is contacted per report of neglect) the house gets taken by the city or landbank with a property tax forgiveness. Through a participatory process, neighbors decide if the space gets rehabbed, turned into public or business space, or if it gets demolished. Some ideas for repurposing vacant lots/homes to serve the neighborhood such as solar or wind microgrids, market gardens, public space, etc. created as a part of participatory planning processes.

Task: Zoning Code reform and policy

Developers are put off from building as many units as they can if they have to provide more parking; perhaps this zoning policy of requiring a lot of parking in an otherwise walkable area is not inclusionary. What drives our zoning philosophy – we must look through a lens of equity when making zoning policies.

The City Can:

- Provide incentives for non-traditional moves – Pro-integrated move programs.
- City consider alternative family units, to include individuals who live with one or more siblings or non-family roommates, households with three or more generations of a family living in the same home, and other groups outside the conventional nuclear family.
- Consider: More than 85 percent of the U.S. population living in “multi-generational households” are non-White. (U.S. Census via Pew Research, 2009) [1]
- Promote policies that encourage multi-unit housing: entry to housing includes multi-unit homes.
- Proactively having young people talk about enjoying being a young person owning a home in Akron.

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

It is vital for cities to be cognizant of disparities that exist in their own jurisdictions regarding housing, income, wealth, and equity and think about how these might affect the participatory planning processes

and outcomes for different racial and ethnic populations. Participatory planning is an approach to designing livable communities, through having the planning process accessible and community-oriented.

Participatory planning is done at the neighborhood level and combines local knowledge with expert knowledge of the best practices of planning and designing a neighborhood. The most important aspect is that it involves heavy community involvement. Resident contributions are the most key element to participatory planning. Some common barriers that prevent there from being more contributions include a lack of knowledge, transportation constraints, child care needs, a lack of resources, the time of the meeting, limited access to information, language barriers, and a lack of trust. A lack of participatory planning can alienate community members and deteriorate a sense of community. It is important to note that true diversity is not created simply by increasing the number of individuals from underrepresented populations in an organization, but by empowering those individuals to reach their full potential.

There is action that can be taken to encourage more residents to participate in the participatory planning process. The biggest thing that can be done is to gain the trust of the residents. Another important aspect is to train and empower neighborhood leaders to empower their neighbors to participate in and empower individuals to reach their full potential. One such avenue is to create opportunities to those who have once not be invited to the planning process, through charettes that include cohesion and leadership skills. It is important to understand the physical needs of an area that is being worked in, and that the city is invested in neighborhood planning to serve the needs of underrepresented and disadvantaged communities. It is also important to gradually install the new plan and development instead of doing it all at once.

Action Item: Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY), get the word out/say it out loud

The City can start a campaign cross cutting intuitive with the Communications Subcommittee. Resources need to be compiled, publicized and easily accessible to residents. Housing resource centers through neighborhood CLC, CDC, etc.

STRATEGY 3: PROMOTE HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO DECREASE THE WEALTH GAP

Racial gap in homeownership; a persistent undervaluation of properties owned by families of color; a disproportionate burden of pollution and exposure to the impacts of climate change in communities of color; and systemic barriers to safe, accessible, and affordable housing for people of color. Discrimination and exclusion in housing and mortgage lending.

Action Item: Provide resources to Homebuyer education classes

New Homebuyer education

The infrastructure exists to provide education to new homebuyers. Several organizations provide new homebuyer education and housing counseling services throughout Greater Akron. Many of these programs are underfunded and as a result underutilized. Those that do complete the HBE process are more successful in obtaining and maintaining housing. However, of the 3-5 organizations that are HUD certified to provide housing counseling and new homebuyer education services, there are approximately 10 full time counselors providing this service to all of Summit County.

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These agencies need to have more trained employees to build capacity and develop minority representation and minority leaderships.

We need agencies that have minority representation and minority leadership in the organization. Counseling that is taking place is labor intensive, detailed and may be ongoing. Some clients have higher needs and stretch the resources of housing counselors.

Foreclosure prevention education

We have 16,000 properties in current tax abatement. Those are 16,000 potential Land Bank homes. A program to work with these homeowners to avoid losing their homes through added housing counseling capacity and foreclosure prevention counseling. A home that goes into foreclosure stays vacant for 2-3 years. That is a huge loss to the City. They're sitting and waiting for investors to flip these homes back into the housing market.

Collaboration and coordination of existing housing counseling organizations must begin so that all of the available resources are utilized in an effective and efficient manner. Organizations that provide housing counseling are all overburdened and underfunded. These organizations provide counseling to thousands of community members each year. These valuable services may prevent actions such as a new homebuyer entering into a predatory loan or an existing homeowner going into foreclosure. The counselors also counsel on other situations that add value to the homebuyer and homeowner experience in Greater Akron.

To support this invaluable resource for the community, the City of Akron should collaborate with existing City partners, including lending partners and foundations, that would increase necessary financial support to housing counseling agencies. This financial support can lend itself to capacity building of existing organizations. Increase in organization capacity including additional counselors, development of dedicated outreach to target populations, and increased coordination amongst housing partners will develop a more robust homeowner population throughout the Greater Akron area.

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

The city should work with nonprofit parents that are committed to low cost infill new construction to establish momentum in stagnant communities. Sweat equity organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or certain CDC's and non-profits just need some seed funding to cover the gap in construction cost vs purchase price. New construction can stretch market prices upward and help to show positive progress in sales prices. Creating comparable properties that would increase lending capacity.

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

There are currently opportunities or existing programs for general maintenance and upkeep for owner occupied or rental homes. Particularly, housing stock that is aging requires capital upgrades to maintain a habitable condition. From January 2010 through September 2020, the City of Akron has demolished 2,705 homes. Loan products do not exist in our market to provide the needed financial support for home owners and landlords to update and maintain their homes. The City of Akron tax abatement helps for larger rehabilitation efforts and additions to homes, but only for those with the financial resources to invest in their home/property. Many of the community's poor and working class residents do not have the resources to maintain their properties. Existing programs such as the lead abatement programs

through Akron and Summit County exist, but some homes do not qualify (qualification is based on occupant or homeowner income).

Action Item: Homebuyer and Homeowner Safety Net

The City should identify network of contractors that would do work at a reasonable cost. This could be accomplished through a bulk procurement where participants get the benefit of bulk pricing especially if tied to government loans or subsidy. The City should provide homebuyers and homeowners with information and education about how to care for your home, how to find reasonably priced contractors to make upgrades. City should arrange with local training schools to contract for free labor from newly certified plumbers, electricians and HVAC students. City should provide grants to pay for certification to increase number of lead certified contractors of Color. The City should provide capacity training for minority contractors. We have contractors that are being blocked out of the lending options, so they can't get capital to do projects or trainings. We need capacity building options for minority contractors. Huntington Bank provides training modules to prepare for contractors to be successful in business. Organizations can provide capacity training for contractors to support them in their business development.

Housing agencies (CDCs, and housing counseling agencies) are not funded to take these calls to address these homebuyer and homeowner needs. The City could negotiate funding with grantors to increase grant funding to provide at least 1-2 full time people at each of these organizations to support housing counseling services.

Educate owner occupied and rental occupied homeowners about the available resources for lead abatement to increase utilization of these abatement programs. The governments should ensure that homeowners and landlords have access to affordable loans and programs to pay for maintenance and rehabilitation for the community's aging housing stock. Banks should be recruited to provide loans specifically tailored to those in need of these resources. Longer term loans, lower payments each month, lower interest rates. Huntington, Westfield (Works with City of Akron) – banks that are open to small loans. Create an exception for the lead abatement program, to enable those who do not have children under 6 in the home to take advantage of the program. That way these homes still have access to lead abatement programs, despite an elderly homeowner or occupant.

Planning to Grow Akron 2.0- federal funding supports emergency roof repairs and emergency repair programs for seniors, Community Housing Development Organizations and Community Development Corporations work in more targeted areas than the City's scattered site lead abatement and emergency repair programs.

Conclusion

Since the release of the previous quarterly report the City has made substantial progress on many of the issue areas identified in this report. The City has adopted Pay to Stay and Source of Income Protections for renters. This will increase access to communities of opportunity and help to prevent evictions. Additionally. The City released its Planning to Grow 2.0 which aligns in great part with the suggestions of this subcommittee.

The recent work of this committee is to take a forward-looking approach and make recommendations for neighborhoods that are not currently prioritized in the report. The committee commends the work of

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the city and its focus in large part on minority, low income, and communities that were historically redlines. Conversely, there are parts of the City that are impacted that are not addressed in the report.

The recommendations that are forthcoming will attempt to give the city guidance for its next iteration of planning to grow and suggest a timeline for expansion of Planning to grow initiatives as well as new initiatives, methodologies, and approaches to housing in our community.

Housing Subcommittee 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

VI. Next Steps

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.

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

Ultimately, the report issued by the Executive Committee of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce will contain the Taskforce's final recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, and community.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions 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.

