



AGENDA
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH
SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING - SYSTEMIC RACISM TASK FORCE
BY TELECONFERENCE
TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020 - 6:00 PM

ROLL CALL:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: led by Vice Mayor Andy Amoroso

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. [Creating a Task Force to make recommendations to the City Commission on the issue of eradicating systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach](#)

ADJOURNMENT:

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the board, agency or commission with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. (F.S. 286.0105)

EXECUTIVE BRIEF SPECIAL MEETING

AGENDA DATE: June 23, 2020

DEPARTMENT: Commission

TITLE:

Creating a Task Force to make recommendations to the City Commission on the issue of eradicating systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach

SUMMARY:

At the June 16th meeting, the Commission discussed a proposal by Commissioner Robinson regarding the creation of a Task Force to address systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach. After much discussion a motion was made to bring back additional information from the National League of Cities and the US Conference of Mayors for discussion on the best way to approach the process locally.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION:

In an effort to discuss issues raised in the recent, senseless death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, Commissioner Robinson, at the June 2, 2020 Commission Meeting, requested a special meeting to discuss creating a task force to make recommendations to the City Commission on the issue of eradicating systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach. Commissioner Maxwell made a motion that Commissioner Robinson bring back in writing an outline of how he would like to see a workshop on the issue conducted. In preparing for this meeting, Commissioner Robinson met with Commissioner Hardy at a "Sunshine Meeting" and discussed issues of concern, including reform to policing in the city and furthering racial equity in the city.

Subsequently, at the June 16th meeting the idea of the Task Force was discussed and a motion was approved by the Commission to direct staff to come back with what the National League of Cities or the U.S. Conference of Mayors has with regard to resources and guidance on how to establish a task force, Additionally, how to get the affected parties here in the City of LWB to be directly involved in the process in order to figure out what community is feeling, their needs, and how the City may address them going forward.

Leon T. Andrews, Jr., Director, and Rita Soler Ossolinski, Program Director of Race, Equity And Leadership (REAL), National League of Cities have been invited to participate in the meeting. In the wake of the 2014 unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, NLC created the REAL initiative to strengthen local leaders' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. REAL offers tools and resources designed to help local elected leaders build safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

Included below is the Task Force recommendation brought forth by Commissioner Robinson as part of the original June 16th item.

OUTLINE OF ISSUES TO DISCUSS RELATING TO THE CREATION OF A TASK FORCE:

Timeframe: Task Force members should be chosen in the next 30 days as time is of the essence.

Composition: The Task Force should consist of diverse community stakeholders in the city. May include 10-20 individuals, some of whom will represent organizations. The City Commission should discuss who those stakeholders will be, how many members will the Task Force include, and whether the Task Force should include commission members.

Scope of work: The Task Force will be empowered to make recommendations for eradicating systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach. The scope should be addressed by five committees with deadlines being established for each part as shown below:

Police Committee to make recommendations on policing in Lake Worth Beach to reach the goal of eradicating systemic racism. The Task Force committee should be given 90 days to identify issues, research, review, and make written recommendations. The issues would include reviewing the current contract with PBSO and addressing the need for body cameras, enhanced and targeted training for officers including de-escalation tools, police accountability, etc.

Education Committee to make recommendations to the School District as it relates to its policies in education that lead to systemic racism in the school system. The Task Force would again identify issues, research, review, and make written recommendations within a specific timeframe.

Housing Committee to make recommendations about rental assistance for families who have fallen behind on their rent or for legal counsel for families facing eviction due to financial hardships.

Health and Human Services Committee to make recommendations on strategies and policies to deal with racial equity in the criminal justice system with a focus on how the City of Lake Worth Beach can contribute to the solutions.

Financial Security Committee to make recommendations on providing racial equity in banking and lending for minorities (personal and business lending practices), developing mechanisms to assist minorities in taking advantage of banking institutions newly established racial equity funds (e.g., Goldman Sachs), etc.

There are a myriad of important and necessary issues the Task Force Committees could address as illustrated by the above examples. Commissioner Robinson looks forward to having a constructive dialogue with his colleagues.

MOTION:

Motion to create a Task Force (with five committees) who will make recommendations to the City Commission on the issue of eradicating systemic racism in the City of Lake Worth Beach.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Fiscal Impact Analysis – N/A
NLC REAL documents

About REAL



Race, Equity, And Leadership (REAL)

In the wake of the 2014 unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, the National League of Cities created the Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative (<https://www.nlc.org/program-initiative/race-equity-and-leadership-real>) to strengthen local leaders' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. REAL offers tools and resources designed to

help local elected leaders build safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

VISION

A nation in which every local official is equipped to effectively lead and serve an inclusive, thriving and healthy community. Inclusive, Thriving and Healthy Communities are safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

MISSION

To strengthen local elected officials' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities.

VALUES

We value empowering visionary thinkers and leaders.

We believe in supporting all who catalyze positive change and innovative solutions and who share their expertise with the broader organization. We value innovation and bold ideas. We believe in the power of knowledge and collective expertise.

We believe our staff deserves the resources to realize, cultivate and try bold, new ideas and to forge new partnerships.

We value inclusiveness.

We believe in an environment where all individuals and all ideas are welcomed and encouraged.

We value collaboration.

We believe that our best work and solutions are a product of our combined efforts and diverse expertise.

We encourage dynamic as well as new partnerships internally as well as externally.

We are committed to cultivating and supporting thriving and sustainable communities.

We believe our collective energy, individual experiences, and expertise are valuable resources that empower city leaders to implement strategies with sustainable impact, promote equity and to help support healthy thriving communities.

STAFF

Leon T. Andrews, director

Rita Soler Ossolinski, program director

Anique Baker-Frazier, program specialist

Jordan Curry Carter, program manager

Katherine Carter, senior program specialist

Ian Snyder, Heinz Fellow

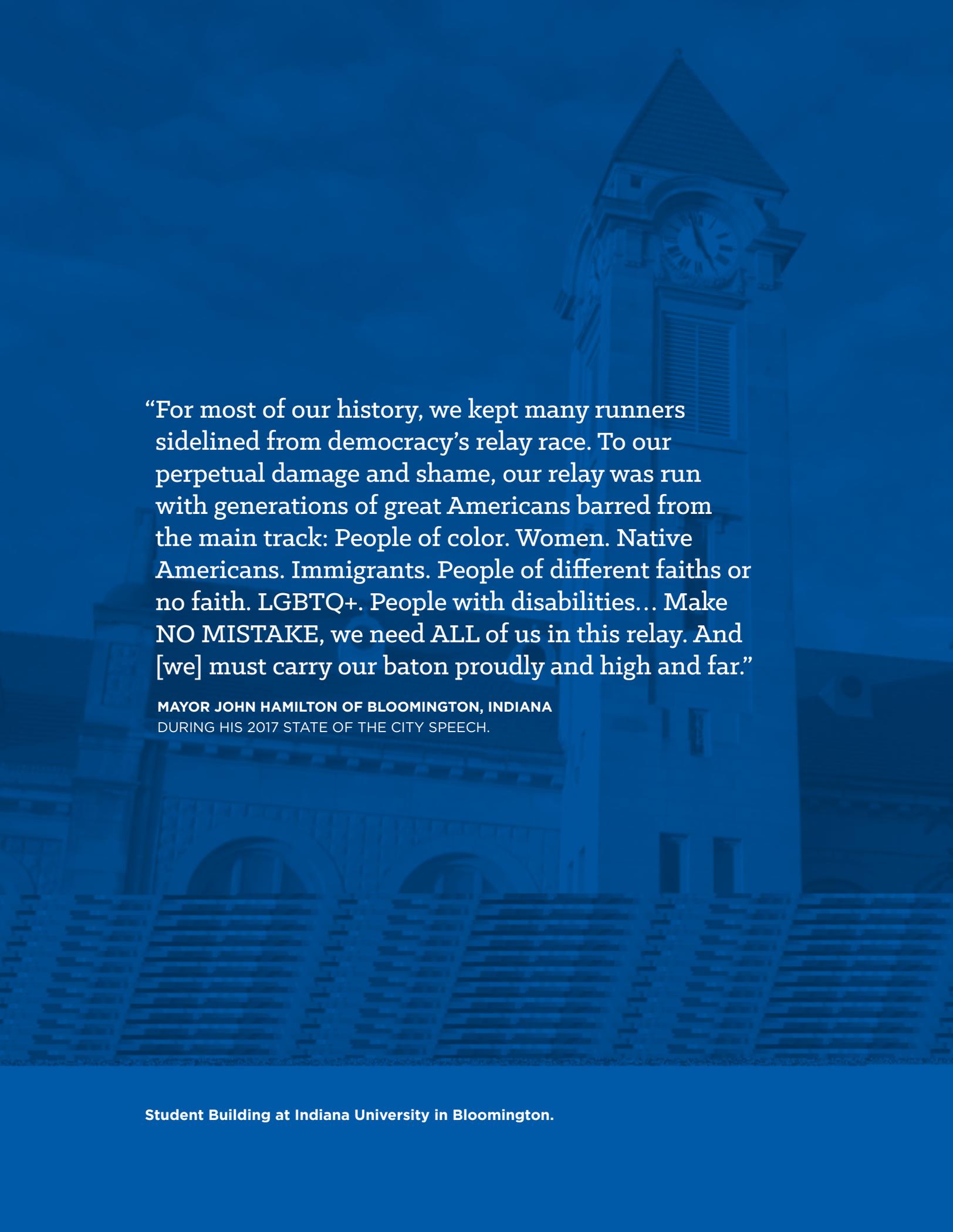
MUNICIPAL ACTION GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity in Your City



NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

REAL RACE, EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP



“For most of our history, we kept many runners sidelined from democracy’s relay race. To our perpetual damage and shame, our relay was run with generations of great Americans barred from the main track: People of color. Women. Native Americans. Immigrants. People of different faiths or no faith. LGBTQ+. People with disabilities... Make **NO MISTAKE**, we need **ALL** of us in this relay. And [we] must carry our baton proudly and high and far.”

MAYOR JOHN HAMILTON OF BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA
DURING HIS 2017 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH.

Student Building at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Introduction

NLC’s Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative is dedicated to helping local leaders understand and gain the tools necessary to combat racial disparities in their communities. We’ve compiled these six steps you can follow to begin improving equity throughout your city and creating better outcomes for everyone in your community.

Definitions to Understand Racial Equity

Racial Equity — “Closing the gaps” so that race does not predict one’s success, while also improving outcomes for all.

Institutional Racism — Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Structural Racism — A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

REAL’s Mission

The REAL initiative serves to strengthen local leaders’ knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. Through training and online resources, REAL helps NLC members build safe places where people from all racial, ethical and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

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Boston, Massachusetts, has trained facilitators and engaged thousands of residents in a broad series of monthly community race dialogues. Pictured, Boston's Mayor Walsh attends a community dialogue.



1. Set an Example and Strike the Right Tone

As city leaders, you play a unique role in setting the tone of local governments and institutions. Mayors and councilmembers can set an example and commit themselves to prioritizing racial equity, by participating in equity leadership trainings or starting a community conversation to engage voices throughout the city.

REAL offers numerous trainings opportunities:

- At NLC Conferences
- Through NLC University
- Regional Trainings & State Municipal Leagues
- Individual City Trainings by REAL Staff
- Online webinars at www.nlc.org/REAL

Quick tips for starting a conversation on race in your city

1. Encourage city staff to examine the racial biases embedded in city department services.
2. Convene community stakeholders to understand their perspectives on different racial impacts of city policies.
3. Engage both residents of color and white residents to understand the way policies historically and currently impact each racial and ethnic group.
4. Integrate an understanding of structural and institutional racism.

“I think the single most important thing I can do as the mayor would be a convener, a convener for these really hard conversations that we need to be having about how our police interact with our minority communities, how our minority communities are impacted by education and housing and transportation and poverty.”

RESPONSE FROM THE **2016 MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS**

The City of Madison, Wisconsin, has used its existing Neighborhood Response Team infrastructure to orient to the needs, issues and priorities of residents who may historically have been left out of government processes. By focusing on agendas driven by the community, teams of city employees have engaged other agencies to address how services are delivered. In one case, this resulted in an opportunity for the city to begin lighting basketball courts, like those pictured, as residents in a neighborhood identified the desire for evening access.



2. Observe and Listen

Without a doubt, there are already many voices promoting racial equity within your community. One of the easiest and first things you can do is to simply observe and listen:

To Voices in Your Community

Across America, communities of color tend to have less access to government resources and less communal experience with government as a force for good. These differences result from our historical legacy of structures and policies that perpetuate differential outcomes based on race. Local elected officials and city staff must commit time and space to listen to the lived experiences of communities of color and intentionally consider these experiences in city decision-making processes.

To Those Already Focusing on Racial Equity in Your City

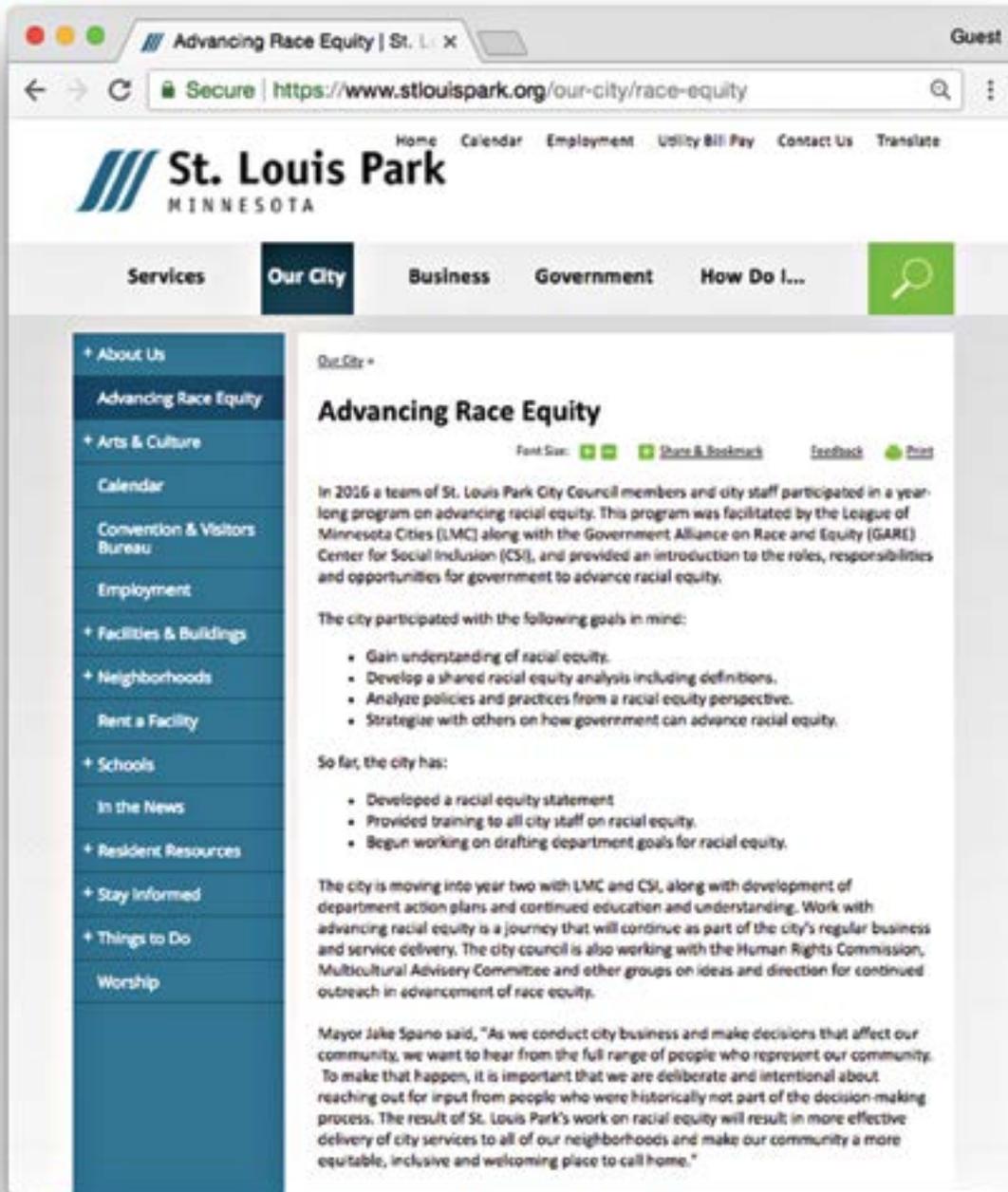
Seek out which organizations and community efforts in your city are already doing work with equity or bringing people together to talk about race and offer to engage with them. Create opportunities to engage city staff that have institutional knowledge and other important perspectives that provide meaningful opportunities for them to inform your understanding of local racial disparities.

To the Data

You know the importance of metrics and data when evaluating city performance in services. When analyzed through the lens of racial equity, data on city services and resources can reveal racial disparities that may not be obvious without this analysis. Disaggregate data from all city programs, services, policies and practices by race and ethnicity of impacted residents to gain a deeper understanding of how these disparities can hide in plain sight.

Examples of data to examine by race:

- Permitting fees
- Tickets and citations
- Arrests
- Health outcomes
- Code violations and inspections.



The City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, released a statement on its website informing residents of plans to advance racial equity. The webpage outlined more than a year of work, including completed staff trainings, progress made in city council and data analyses supporting the need for equity efforts. The webpage, pictured above, also includes video links where residents can hear the city's priorities directly from the Mayor.

3. Make a Public Declaration

Your residents need to know your city's commitment to racial equity. As with instituting any citywide initiative, leaders can leverage the bully pulpit and media attention to make constituents aware of the city's priorities and efforts. A public declaration is a bold stance that builds connection between communities of color and governing bodies.

Leaders can use these announcements to gain broader support for and highlight existing work to advance racial equity or healing in their communities. These announcements open the door for meaningful communication between leaders and impacted residents.

4 Ways to Make a Public Declaration:

- **Resolution** — Allows your city to officially announce and publicize the local government's position on race-related issues. Resolutions declare a commitment to racial equity, and city leaders can bring other councilmembers on board via a public vote.
- **Racial equity guiding statement** — This short statement works to briefly amplify an official's (or an office's) role and mission in advancing racial equity, in a message that can be easily shared.
- **Racial equity presence on a website** — Webpages dedicated to racial equity can serve the purpose of proclaiming the city's commitment, while also informing residents of official plans and progress made on those plans. Webpages are easily available to many city residents and can help them visualize important statements from their leaders through photos and videos.
- **Publicly sharing disparity data or personnel demographics data** — Data visualization is a strategic method to provide context to a city's new initiative. Many times, data help confirm the sentiments of city residents and emphasize the need for the city to pay attention to the feedback and concerns of its constituents.

The City of Tacoma, Washington, passed a policy that made equity a consistent principle across the city with the goal of changing “how business is done.” By funding several staff in the Office of Equity & Human Rights, pictured, Tacoma has been able to invest in significant staff training on racial equity and unconscious bias, adopt the use of tools to facilitate equitable budgeting and workforce practices, and assess inequities in the distribution of city resources across neighborhoods.



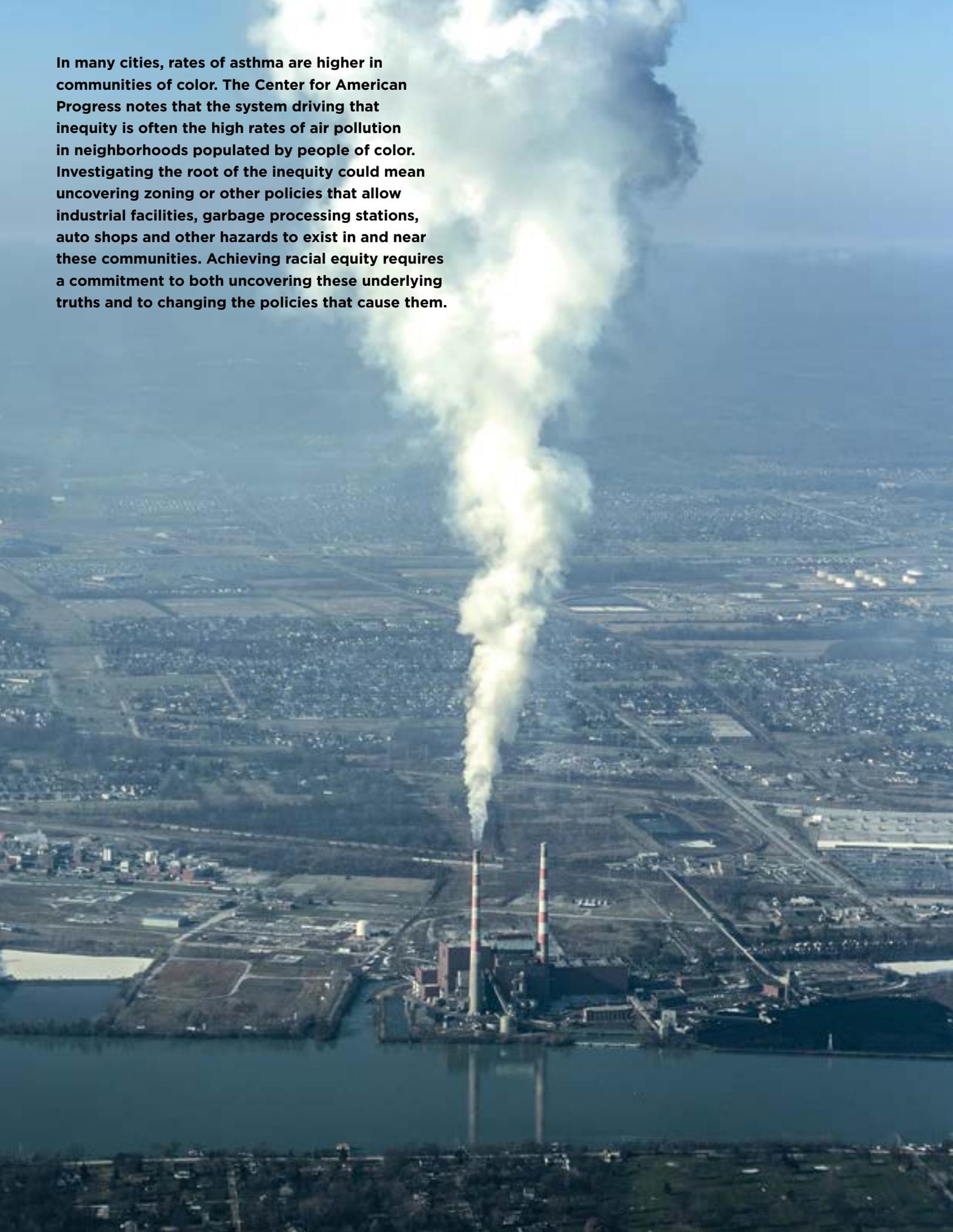
4. Dedicate Infrastructure to Action

After declaring its commitment, your city needs to dedicate new or align existing resources to create a system capable of bringing about changes. Building a team and developing staff skills to address the impacts of racism throughout local government are necessary steps toward achieving real progress. Local elected officials need to provide the leadership to generate a citywide coordinated effort and infrastructure to carry out these functions.

Suggested Steps for Building Your Team

- Designate senior leadership to play an oversight role.
- Engage the private sector to raise external resources to facilitate this work.
- Identify which city agencies can collect and analyze the data that will support your city's efforts.
- Offer additional support and resources to city agencies already working on racial equity.
- Dedicate new or existing resources to support racial equity work across all departments.
- Identify opportunities to support individuals motivated by this work in your office.

In many cities, rates of asthma are higher in communities of color. The Center for American Progress notes that the system driving that inequity is often the high rates of air pollution in neighborhoods populated by people of color. Investigating the root of the inequity could mean uncovering zoning or other policies that allow industrial facilities, garbage processing stations, auto shops and other hazards to exist in and near these communities. Achieving racial equity requires a commitment to both uncovering these underlying truths and to changing the policies that cause them.



5. Commit to Policy and System Change

Institutions and structures have historically created and continue to perpetuate racial inequities throughout cities — often unintentionally. These inequities will continue to exist unless there is intentional intervention to counter and reverse those effects. Local leaders have the responsibility as chief policymakers to address the ways in which institutional and structural racism have shaped their city.

By making long-lasting changes to both policies and systems that benefit their residents of color, city leaders can commit to policy and system changes that bring their practices in line with their priorities. More racially equitable outcomes start by addressing the root of a city's disparities and making meaningful policy and system changes.

Things to Keep in Mind

1. Even if policies do not contain explicit racial biases, they can still inadvertently contribute to racial inequity in your city.
2. Learn about policies that have historically shaped inequity across the nation and determine if they exist in your community.
3. Conduct an in-depth analysis of racial disparities that you've discovered through previous steps.
4. Begin with racial disparities in outcomes (ex. educational achievement gaps) and track backwards to uncover the root causes of these differences.

Going Forward — Analyze Policy through a Racial Equity Lens

Before making local policy decisions, ask the following questions:

- Who will be better/worse off through this policy?
- Who is deciding the goals, parameters or features of this policy?
- What historical structures or social norms drive the policy?
- Which systems will implement the policy?
- Who has access, both physically and socially to that system?
- What do data analyses say about where inequities have manifested due to previous policy changes?

6. Create a Racial Equity Plan

Racial equity plans provide a blueprint of the city's intentions to improve outcomes for people of color by outlining citywide goals and agency-specific strategies for accomplishing those goals. They give community members, stakeholders and colleagues a means for holding their government accountable and a benchmark from which to build trust.

Local governments can begin this process after going through the previous steps to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs and hopes of residents of color. Each city department or bureau can create action plans targeted by issue area. By combining those action-plans, cities create an institutional road map that continues beyond leadership transitions.



Many cities have developed a city government performance management system across agencies to track progress on achieving city goals. Aligning a racial equity goal within this

process is an opportunity to hold all city agencies and staff accountable in ways that impact their day to day work, without creating separate siloed processes.

Steps to Making a Racial Equity Plan:

1. Create a racial equity guiding statement for your city or each department.
2. Select a Citywide Equity Goal and create five-year objectives.
3. Create actions to achieve each objective.
4. Create annual performance measures for each action and commit to a completion date.
5. Create or identify the mechanism by which each action will be tracked, measured or evaluated.
6. Identify lead staff for each action—the person or body that holds the staff accountable for completion.



The City of New Orleans, Louisiana, outlined its plans to “dismantle barriers to opportunity” in the racial equity plan titled “Equity New Orleans; The Road to Equitable Government.” The plan - published in print and online - includes a statement from the Mayor explaining the city’s priorities and setting the tone for staff and residents to follow. In only 16 pages, the guide covers the city’s mission and vision, issue-specific data, projected path to completion, and department specific objectives and accomplishments.

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REAL Cities and Towns Action Model

Racial disparities have been driven and maintained by public- and private-sector policies. REAL is designed to empower mayors and other local elected officials to adequately address these challenges. REAL acknowledges that every city is different; therefore, NLC developed an action model (Documents/REAL/REAL Action Model Draft(0).pdf) to guide REAL's work to help local leaders address issues of race and equity. These actions are not meant to be taken in a particular order, rather all of the actions will be pursued simultaneously.

ACTION AREA 1: STRENGTHEN LOCAL LEADERS' KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF RACE AND EQUITY

This action area seeks to strengthen local leader's knowledge and capacity to address issues of race and equity. Discussing issues around race and equity can be difficult. Local leaders sometimes may not know exactly where to start. Through structured trainings and learning opportunities, REAL will equip members with the skills

needed to navigate and lead challenging discussions. The ability to lead these discussions is contingent upon having an understanding about the systemic and historical policies which have created racial disparities. For example, New Orleans is one city taking the lead in this space. Since 2004, Mitch Landrieu, former Lt. Governor of Louisiana and now Mayor of New Orleans, has worked to address racial reconciliation and community building in New Orleans. His leadership has been critical to the sustainability and seriousness of this work. Due to his leadership, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded a multi-year initiative which intends to foster racial reconciliation within the city.

ACTION AREA 2: CHANGE THE NARRATIVE AROUND RACE AND EQUITY

This action area seeks to create a positive narrative around race and equity. The face of America has changed. Between 2000 and 2010, racial and ethnic minorities attributed to 91.7% of the nation's population growth. Yet, most conversations around race are often viewed as divisive and negative. Changing the narrative to a positive tone that celebrates our diversity is essential to the goal of achieving Inclusive, Thriving and Healthy Communities. Diversity must be seen as an asset for communities, not a liability. Creating this narrative will lead to changed hearts and minds. Narrative informs our perceptions of one another and ultimately how we interact. Narrative is also deeply rooted in stigmas which have been established over time. To achieve Inclusive, Thriving and Healthy Communities, we must create a society that allows everyone to achieve his or her potential regardless of race. REAL will empower local leaders to launch productive conversations around race and replace negative narratives with positive ones.

ACTION AREA 3: SHOWCASE BEST PRACTICES AND LEADING SOLUTIONS

This action area seeks to showcase the best practices and leading solutions that are being adopted by communities across the country. Local elected officials are encouraged to use and share lessons learned so others may replicate. Approaches and processes highlighting real-time efforts will be shared. While we will seek to share evidence-based solutions, we will share promising discoveries as well.

ACTION AREA 4: PRIORITIZE NEEDED SYSTEMS AND POLICY CHANGES

This action area focuses on improving and changing systems and policies which have contributed to racial inequities. Systemic, institutional racism and bias have had negative impacts on public policies. To create Inclusive, Thriving and Healthy Communities, historical, systemic and structural barriers that further inequity and racism in our nation's cities must be addressed. Local elected officials are encouraged to follow the steps outlined in the Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity, which was developed by the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE). The toolkit details six questions local elected officials should consider when pursuing equity in local policies and programs.

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[PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES \(/PROGRAM-AREAS\)](#)

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Municipal Action Guide

Responding to Racial Tension in Your City

With support from:

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About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the nation's leading advocacy organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. Through its membership and partnerships with state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource and advocate for more than 19,000 cities, towns and villages and more than 218 million Americans. Learn more at www.nlc.org.

About Race, Equity And Leadership (REAL)

In the wake of the 2014 unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, NLC created REAL to strengthen local leaders' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. REAL does this through several intervention channels and support systems and with the understanding that local government leaders may not know where or how to start, offering tools and resources designed to help local elected leaders build safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

Vision:

A nation in which every local official is equipped to effectively lead and serve an inclusive, thriving and healthy community. Inclusive, Thriving and Healthy Communities are safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically.

Mission:

To strengthen local elected officials' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities.

About the Authors

Rita Soler Ossolinski is the REAL program director, Ariel Guerrero was a manager of REAL tactical support and outreach, and Leon T. Andrews Jr. is the REAL director.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge Wells Fargo Foundation who provided funding for this municipal action guide, national and local experts who provided contexts and insights, and Paris Williams who designed the guide. Lastly, and most importantly, the authors thank local leaders across the country who work every day to build strong communities.

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Introduction

If you are picking up this document in a moment of crisis, we recognize that you are moving and acting with a sense of urgency. The National League of Cities (NLC) created this document to support you in this very moment.

NLC interviewed several current and former municipal leaders who have been through similar moments of crisis with racial tension. This document provides important contextual and tactical information to support your municipality's efforts to respond effectively. It includes:

- **Definition of common values** — Five common values need to be embedded in all actions in response to racial tension.
- **Insight** — Lessons learned, tactics, and such additional considerations can provide direction and suggest actions municipalities can take in real time.
- **Context** — Historical context that will help leadership get a more robust understanding of the situation at hand, and how the event may uncover deep rooted issues that the municipality can address.

- **Checklists** — Practical checklists ensure that you have some of the more critical components in place to respond:
 1. Direction to leadership in the immediate response to the crisis.
 2. Guidance on crisis communications protocol.
 3. Guidance on stakeholder identification and engagement.
 4. Guidance on how to continue the work of advancing racial equity post-incident.

We urge you to take time to review this document in its entirety. An effective response is more than simply responding to the incident but responding to the trauma and tension that exists as part of this incident.

Prepare to Address Racial Tension

Account for Implicit and Explicit Bias

Humans cannot escape from bias. However, we can control how much we let bias influence our actions. We must explore both the implicit and explicit biases that inform our actions. The Kirwan Institute defines implicit bias as¹:

The biases we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. Biases inform a segregated reality that limits relationship building and interactions across races. Explicit bias as defined by the Perception Institute refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person, group, or thing on a conscious level.² Individuals and/or groups are aware of the particular bias. It is critical that leadership and those involved in the team responding to the incident be aware of their own biases which can inform how one talks about an issue, the language used, and how the municipality interacts with the community. Being

aware of and actively working through biases will support the community in how it responds to an incident or crisis sparked by racial tension.

Embed Common Values in Local Response to Racial Tension

As you prepare to address racial tensions in your community it is critical to approach them head on. In NLC's conversations with several municipal leaders who experienced these situations firsthand, five common values stand out: empathy, transparency, authenticity, partnership and collaboration, and consistency. Municipal leaders are encouraged to embed these values in their municipality's response to crisis. Below we review the five values and provide examples of how these can reflect in your response. It is important to note that leadership sets the tone, but these values should be carried by everyone in the municipality who has any role in the response.



Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.

Empathy

“I was given direction not to answer questions during a community forum and that was the wrong advice. It is critical to respond to the community during this time with empathy and a shared priority.”

— City Mayor

Municipal leadership and those responding to these crisis moments of racial tension navigate a very difficult and emotionally charged situation. In these moments the community is looking for answers and wants to be heard. Leading with empathy, the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing within their frame of reference, the capacity to place yourself in another’s position, is critical in a time like this. When communicating in public forums, to the family/victim(s), and specific communities, the ability to demonstrate empathy in how you lead and respond can directly impact the response of the community.

Things to consider:

- Recognize the pain that a family and/or community may be experiencing.
- Express the shared urgency by the city to resolve fairly and reassure the community that the current situation is a priority.
- Acknowledge the different lived experiences that create racial tension.
- If you are unable to answer questions due to an ongoing investigation or because you do not know the answer, acknowledge the community’s desire to get the information, and provide whatever information you can provide. For example, if there is an ongoing investigation, explain that you cannot provide any information that would jeopardize that investigation, but give a broad overview of the way in which the matter will proceed.

Transparency

“Our city decided immediately that any investigation to be conducted would be through an independent investigative body to preserve transparency and fairness of the process.”

— City Mayor

It is important to understand the historical context of systemic racism in order to recognize the fractured relationships between communities of color and a government. The history provides context for the mistrust that exists between the two. Municipal leaders have an opportunity to rebuild the broken trust between communities and local government by being transparent with the family/victim(s) and community throughout the process. Providing regular and transparent updates to all stakeholders can demonstrate to all that the municipality is committed to a transparent process. An independent investigator is just one example of how to lead with transparency. Managing expectations goes hand-in-hand with the value of transparency. Municipal leadership can be forthright with information on processes to ensure that the community is fully aware of what to expect. It is critical that the community understand what type of information you will release to various stakeholders and when you will release it.

Things to consider:

- Utilize an independent investigation to preserve transparency and reduce any perception of municipal partiality.
- Provide frequent updates to all relevant stakeholders. If there is not any significant information to share, simply communicate that there is nothing new to share.
- Share information upon request as long as it does not interfere with any ongoing investigation.
- Consult with legal counsel on legal requirements and liability issues.

Authenticity

“From the beginning, the family and the community knew that I was invested in this. They knew that I was authentic in my words and actions as we went through this process. This helped with any racial tension in our municipality.”

– City Attorney

In addition to one who is empathetic and transparent, the community is looking for authentic leadership. When the municipality expresses shared urgency demonstrated through transparent actions, the family/victim(s) and community will be looking for authenticity within leadership for reassurance. Words and actions must align. It is important to understand that these will be measured against your record and of those lived experiences of the community. Recognizing that these might not always align, authentic leadership demonstrates clear responsiveness to constituents. It will be important to have community leaders and other stakeholders by your side through this process. They will validate your authenticity within the community and during public forums.

Things to consider:

- Meet people where they are and lean on your community partners if you need to ask for something. It is essential to develop these relationships with community partners before a crisis occurs.
- Determine who the community partners are; identify individuals who can assure the community of your sincerity and authenticity in addressing the issues at hand. Be sure to identify local leaders in neighborhoods who may not hold high profile positions, but who have earned respect in their communities.

Partnership and Collaboration

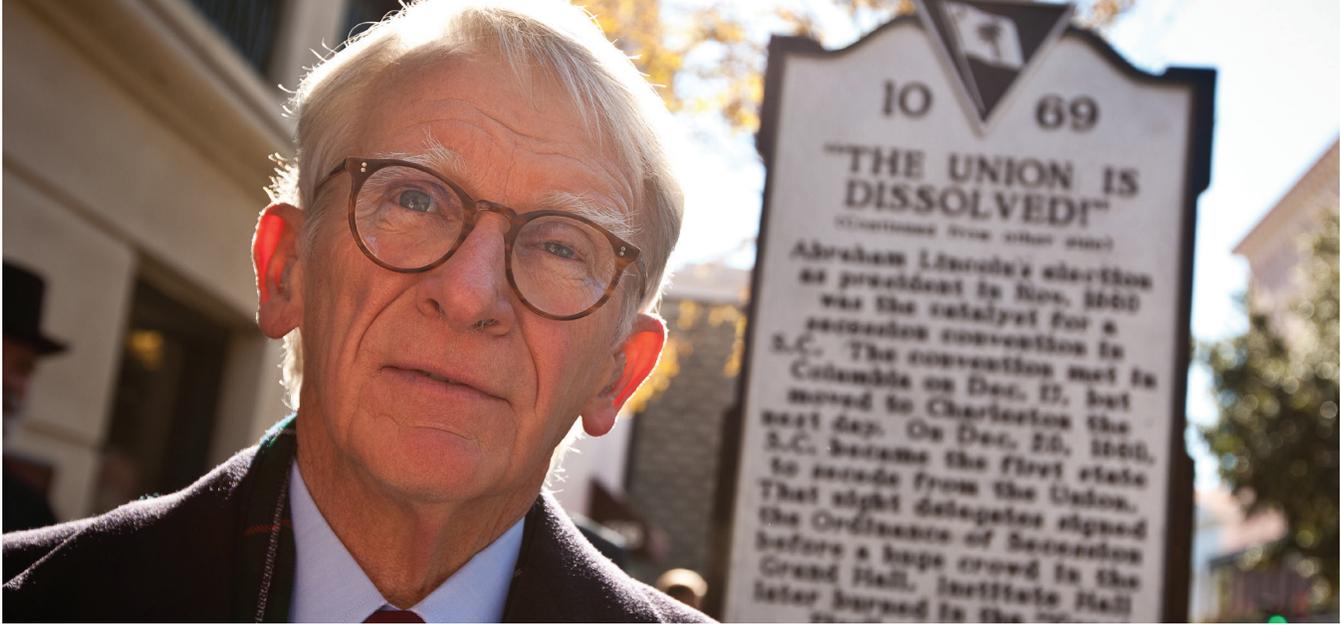
“A city isn’t going to be able to establish fruitful relationships on the spot in a moment of crisis. It’s the relationships I established prior to any incident that were critical in helping me to respond to the situation at hand and ability to truly work with the community.”

– City Mayor

Active partnerships and intentional collaboration must appear across all areas of a city’s response. The community needs to see, know, and feel that the municipality is committed to working with the community to find the right resolution. These incidents are deeply rooted in history and lived experience that cannot be addressed in a short timeframe. Incidents of racial crisis require intentional and sustained efforts to find solutions and actions now while also keeping a long-term vision in mind. Municipalities, as conveners, should explore ways to make space for collaborative efforts to find solutions and actively listen to the various communities’ feedback, insight, and suggestions. Municipalities must be willing to engage in active listening. This will allow information from all stakeholders to surface, and will inform needed changes in policies, practices, and procedures that may be contributing to the existing racial tension. Working in partnership and collaboration with the community will help to build a municipality’s credibility in addressing the issues at hand.

Things to Consider:

- Municipality takes the lead in creating space for community input.
- Create authentic opportunities to stand in the decision making.
- Provide ways to facilitate the exchange of ideas and feedback.
- Partner with community leaders to identify the community needs.



150th Anniversary Of South Carolina's Secession Marked In Charleston

- Identify ways to collaborate at the community level using trauma informed practices.
- At listening sessions, be prepared for anger and emotion; recognize that part of your role as a leader is to hear the community where they are in that moment and respond effectively.

Consistency

“City leaders have the opportunity to set the tone for how the community responds in times of racial tension. By being consistent, the community can find a way to trust leadership is doing everything they can to do the right thing.”

– City Mayor

The final value, consistency, affirms the previous four. In embracing empathy, transparency, partnership and collaboration, and authenticity on a consistent basis before and during a crisis, a solid foundation is established for navigating these crisis moments of racial tension.

Consistency is measured by the community in the following ways:

- How municipal leadership shows up to public forums
- Frequency of communication
- Inclusive messages that reach all community residents
- Actions taken

When leadership consistently expresses empathy, shares information, partners and collaborates with the community, and is authentically engaged in the situation, it signals acknowledgement of the severity of the tension. Consistent response from city leaders affirms the government’s commitment to logic, accuracy, and fairness. This will help operationalize a sensitive response to the situation and demonstrates government’s commitment to being present and to working toward resolution and repair.

Things to consider:

- Establish clear roles for your municipality’s staff response team.
- Ensure consistency and continuity in response.
- Articulate expectations and guidelines for clear messaging across the team.
- Establish consistent channels of communicating with various stakeholders.

Understand Historical Impacts of Systemic Racism

A key component to dealing with racial tension in your municipality is acknowledging the trauma and pain those have experienced from long-standing issues including poor police-community relations, poverty, lack of educational opportunity, economic immobility, racial tension and inequity. As part of the work NLC is committed to, racial healing and transformation sets up the process of advancing racial equity. This moment requires the whole municipality—elected/appointed leadership, staff across all levels, and the community—to come together to determine a resolution.

Racial tension is not born solely from crisis-level events in Baltimore, Minneapolis, Ferguson and other areas. These events surface long-standing issues that created racial tension. Our country's historical interaction with communities of color through government policy and practice create a fractured and tense relationship. It is critical to understand this historical context in how and why communities of color respond to these incidents. Racial equity requires understanding of justice and fairness. Historically, it is a lack of justice and fairness for communities of color that serves as the foundation for understanding and responding to the racial tension in your city.

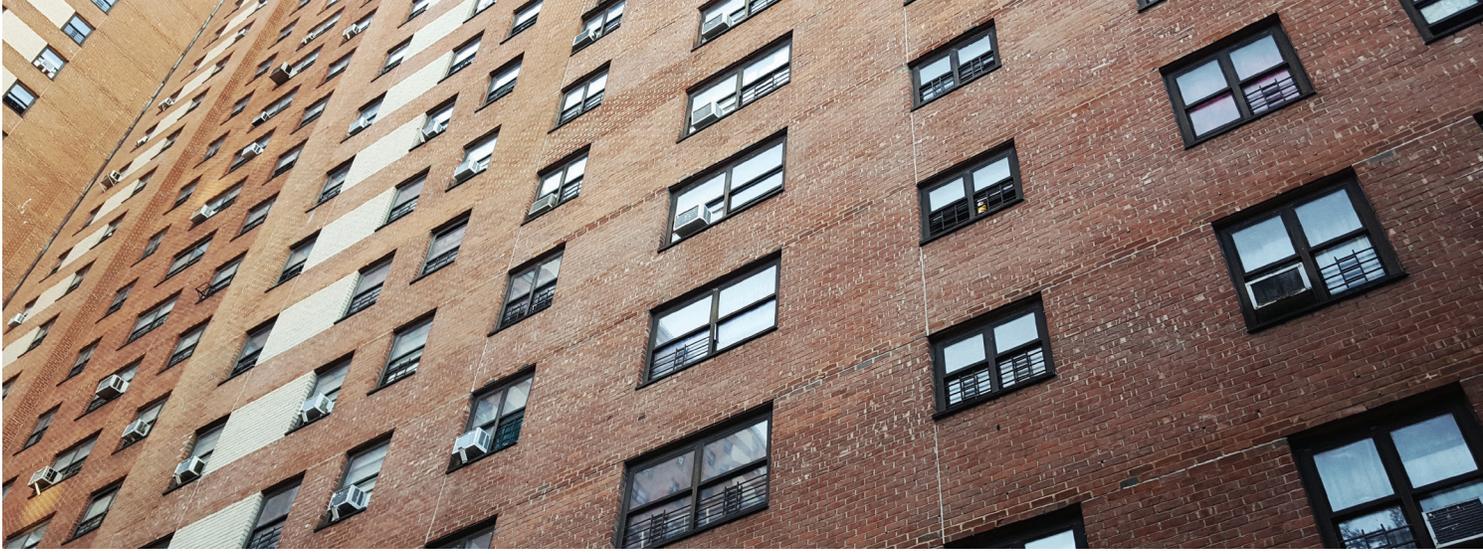
Our country operates in a racialized system that is fundamentally grounded in white supremacy, a descriptive term capturing an all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white in the context of overarching political, economic, and social system of domination.³ Our systems have intentionally been built to the advantage of white people over people of color through the development and implementation of policy, practices, and procedures. Racial tension has always been present in our country. It is incumbent on

leadership within municipalities to understand and embed this understanding within responses to moments of crisis and racial tension. This Lessons Learned document will provide historical context, knowledge acquired from examples across the country, and practical steps your municipality can take to address racial tension.

We highlight four examples of federal policies that have been implemented alongside local municipal government through policy, practice and procedure. Each of these examples shows how structural racism manifests into real lived experience. It is critical to note in explicitly calling out race within racial tensions, that these systems have been operated primarily by white people. This dynamic is critical to underscore and understand the deep-seeded roots of racial tension between government and communities of color. This is not to assign blame, but to call out how government programs contribute to existing fractured racialized relationships. Each example illustrates how a policy, practice or procedure did not create equitable, fair, and just conditions for communities of color. These examples are violent in nature and in practice. This violence inflicted upon communities of color has created deep seeded trauma and a level of tension between government and communities of color.

Housing: Redlining

Redlining was an overt practice of denying mortgages based upon race and ethnicity, a policy explicitly practiced by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) when determining neighborhoods for approved mortgages. Redlining limited financial services to neighborhoods based on racial or ethnic composition without regard to residents' qualifications or creditworthiness. The term



“redlining” refers to the practice of using a red line on a map to delineate the area where financial institutions would not invest. Complicit in redlining, local government used federal guidelines to complete “area descriptions” and rate neighborhoods as best (green), still desirable (blue), definitely declining (yellow), or hazardous (red).

The FHA allowed personal and agency bias favoring all white suburban subdivisions to affect the kinds of loans it guaranteed, as applicants in these subdivisions were generally considered “better” credit risks. According to James Loewen in his 2006 book *Sundown Towns*, FHA publications implied that different races should not share neighborhoods, and repeatedly listed neighborhood characteristics like “inharmonious racial or nationality groups” alongside such noxious disseminates as “smoke, odors, and fog.” One example of the harm done by the FHA is as follows:

“In the late 1930s as Detroit grew outward, white families began to settle near a black enclave adjacent to Eight Mile Road. By 1940, the blacks were surrounded and neither they nor the whites could get FHA insurance due to the proximity of an “inharmonious” racial group. So in 1941, an enterprising white developer built a concrete wall between the white and black areas. The FHA appraisers then took another look and approved mortgages on the white properties.”⁴

Between 1934 and 1962, the federal government underwrote \$120 billion in new housing. Less than 2% went to non-whites.

The legacy of redlining laid foundation for the racial wealth gap since most Americans build wealth through homeownership. People of color were systematically denied loans and forced into devalued properties. The government essentially subsidized intergenerational wealth building opportunities for white families, denying black families and people of color the opportunity. Homes in predominantly white communities grew in value faster allowing future generations in predominantly white communities to accumulate wealth more quickly. This left people of color living in neighborhoods with fewer resources, less investment, and fewer opportunities to build wealth. The cumulative impact of the legacy of redlining means that today “the median white family has 41 times more wealth than the median African-American family and 22 times more wealth than the median Latino family.” Similarly, “the proportion of black families with zero or negative wealth rose by 8.5 percent to 37 percent between 1983 and 2016. Native-American median household income is similar to that of black households. Nearly 34 percent of Native-American children live in poverty in contrast to 10 percent of white children.”⁵

Transportation: National Interstate and Defense Act of 1956

The National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956 authorized the construction of a 41,000-mile network of interstate highways that would span the country. It allocated \$26 billion of federal dollars to fund this bill. The new interstate highways were controlled-access expressways with no at-grade crossings—that is,

they had overpasses and underpasses instead of intersections. This national system ultimately included over 46,000 miles of limited access highway and was the largest and most expensive public works project ever undertaken. The construction process was greatly expedited by using standardized designs and accelerating condemnation of properties along the interstate right of way as these interstate highways connected the largest cities. This resulted in bypassing instead of encompassing access to smaller towns.⁶

Highway promoters and builders envisioned the new interstate expressways as a means of clearing slum housing and blighted urban areas. These plans date back to the late 1930s, but they were not fully implemented until the late 1950s and 1960s. Massive amounts of urban housing were destroyed in the process of building the urban sections of the interstate system. By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year; urban renewal and redevelopment programs were destroying an equal number of mostly low-income housing units annually.

A 1965 report by the U.S. House Committee on Public Works asserted that the amount of disruption was significant. Planning scholar Alan A. Altshuler noted that by the mid-1960s, when interstate construction was well underway, it was generally believed that the new highway system would “displace a million people from their homes before it [was] completed.” A large proportion of those dislocated were blacks, and in most cities the expressways were routinely routed through their neighborhoods. Urban expressways tore through long-established inner-city residential communities in their drive toward the core of cities, destroying low-income housing on a vast and unprecedented scale. Huge expressway interchanges, cloverleaves, and access ramps created enormous areas of dead and useless space in the central cities. **A general pattern emerged, promoted by highway officials and private agencies, of using highway construction**

to eliminate blighted neighborhoods and redevelop valuable inner-city land. The victims of highway building tended to be overwhelmingly poor and black.⁷

Economic Development: Urban Renewal

Urban Renewal was a comprehensive scheme to redress a complex series of urban problems, including unsanitary, deficient, or obsolete housing; inadequate transportation, sanitation, and other services and facilities; haphazard land use; traffic congestion; and the sociological correlates of urban decay, such as crime. Early efforts usually focused on housing reform and sanitary and public-health measures, followed by growing emphasis on slum clearance and the relocation of population and industry from congested areas to less-crowded sites. The Committee on Blighted Areas and Slums, a group formed out of President Hoovers Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership in 1932, held the approach of wholesale demolition of existing structures was legal since “the elimination of slums is a public purpose,” and expressed its confidence “that a large portion of the group displaced by slum clearance will be able to find suitable accommodations elsewhere.”⁸ The majority of those displaced were disproportionately communities of color, primarily black.

Those displaced from Urban Renewal received constitutionally mandated “just-compensation.” This measure of compensation covered only the fair market value of the taken property and omitted compensation for a variety of incidental losses such as moving expenses, loss of favorable financing, and notably, business losses such as loss of business goodwill. The majority (approximately 90%) of homes destroyed during urban renewal were never rebuilt.

Between 1956 and 1972, urban renewal and urban freeway construction displaced about 3.8 million residents from their homes and was increasingly referred to by critics as “Negro removal” due to its focus on black neighborhoods.⁹

Crime: Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, also known as the crime bill, provided resources through the COPS program for 100,000 new police officers, \$9.7 billion in funding for prisons, and \$6.1 billion in funding for prevention programs designed with significant input from experienced police officers. Mass incarceration of people of color and low-income people began in the 1970s. It then accelerated with the passage of the 1984 Sentencing Reform Act to lengthen prison terms and abolish the federal parole system, and the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act to establish mandatory minimum sentences for specific amounts of cocaine and set a lower sentencing threshold for smaller quantities of crack cocaine than the pure powder itself. However, the 1994 crime bill embraced implicit biases embedded in the public conversation about crime to create new policy levers that significantly increased the disproportionate policing, arrest, and incarceration of people of color. The nation's combined federal and state prison population rose to its peak of 1.6 million in 2009.¹⁰ In 1994, black men were roughly 6.8 times more likely than white men to be incarcerated in federal and state prisons.¹¹

These three federal laws contributed to disproportionate incarceration through several components including the development of federal mandatory minimum sentences that institutionalized existing racial bias and the development of a federal “three strikes and you’re out” provision. Among the most pernicious aspects of the 1994 crime bill was its influence on states to increase their prison rolls by setting a precedent for state level “three strikes” laws.

The 1994 law also increased prison funding tied to state laws requiring people to serve 85% of their sentences regardless of behavior. The impact on the development of state tough-on-crime laws included a proliferation of state laws in the 1990s that eliminated parole, removed judicial discretion in sentencing, and enacted mandatory minimums as measures to attract bonus dollars from the federal government. While these measures did little to decrease crime, they played a major role in the upward spiral of disproportionate incarceration of people of color and of low-income. Today, more than 60% of the people in prison are people of color. Black men are still six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men and Latino men are 2.7 times more likely.¹²



Municipal Voices from the Field: Tactics for Responding to Racial Tension

Local municipal leaders who have experienced moments of racial tension shared several lessons learned that other municipalities can benefit from. These lessons provide guidance for local municipalities that are either currently experiencing racial tension or that want to prepare their municipality in the event of an incident that surfaces racial tension. These moments of crisis in a municipality will require that the municipality have some of the most difficult conversations. The result can be a focus on policy, practice, and procedure in relation to race and how communities of color are served. NLC found that the lessons learned from local municipal leaders fit into three areas:

- 1. Stakeholder and Community Engagement**
- 2. Communication**
- 3. Responsiveness**

In each area, the five common values (empathy, transparency, authenticity, partnership and collaboration, and consistency) are essential elements of the municipality's learning process.

Following this section, a checklist is provided to ensure that your municipality is considering some of the most crucial components of an effective local response to racial tension. These points are lessons critical to strategies and tactics that municipalities can consider taking to establish and maintain critical relationships to navigate the existing racial tension.

1. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

At the outset, it will be important to identify and define the various communities within your municipality, beyond just race and ethnicity,

i.e. military, religious, etc. Determine who should be at the table to ensure that a broad range of knowledge and skills are available to comprehensively address all aspects of the incident. Developing and investing in the critical relationships with community residents and leaders is key. Ideally these relationships are established prior to any incident. These individuals will serve as trusted lines of communication and information.

Tactics:

- Municipal leaders and anyone involved in response efforts should identify several trusted community stakeholders they can engage to help coordinate the engagement between the local government and the community.
- Engage key individuals within communities who can organize and coordinate townhalls and community conversations; this may include leaders in neighborhoods as well as leaders from established organizations or advocacy groups.
- Keep all stakeholders informed of ongoing information gathering efforts.
- Appoint stakeholders to serve as ambassadors for the municipality within different communities.
- Provide resources and make appropriate accommodations to maximize community engagement (i.e. childcare, evening meetings, public transportation, locations accessible for people with disabilities, parking accessible locations, provision of sign interpreters for people with hearing impairments, etc.).

2. Communication

Municipal governments are uniquely positioned to build bridges of trust in communities of color in the face of tragic events that are the result of racial tension. How local governments communicate and engage communities during this time is vital to set the foundation for advancing racial equity. It is critical to have dedicated lines of communication specific to each stakeholder and to provide a medium for individuals to express themselves. Open and direct lines of communication between the family/victim(s) and municipal leadership is critical.

Overcommunicating during a crisis is a positive strategy. Providing information to the community on a consistent basis signals that the municipality is dedicated to transparency. The level of consistency with information dissemination is a sign that the municipality made the situation a shared priority with the community.

Tactics:

- Consult with legal counsel early to determine how the municipality will handle any legal proceedings and dissemination of information.
 - Establish protocol for city handling of any internal, external, or independent investigations.
 - Create a dedicated line of communication with the various stakeholders of the community.
 - Provide guidelines to the press on its role in how the municipality disseminates information:
 - name and contact information of primary spokesperson for the municipality.
 - information on when, where, and how often information will be shared publicly.
 - Identify the type(s) of dedicated lines that the municipality will create. (i.e. a website or direct call line for the community).
 - Determine who will manage these dedicated lines of communication.
- Engage community stakeholders so they can promote use of dedicated lines of communication.
 - Establish additional communication outlets to communicate with broader community and stakeholders. (i.e. city website, city e-news tool, press conference, print and broadcast news media, community meeting(s), social media, etc.).
 - Communicate to county, state, and federal officials with updates and/or requests for support as appropriate.
 - Family/victim(s) become(s) the public “face” of the racial tension and they are seeking answers, so they have accurate, regular, and up-to-date information from municipal leaders:
 - Create open and direct lines of communication between municipal leadership and the family/victim(s).
 - Plan how and who will provide family/victim(s) with regular updates; assign a designated point of contact between the municipality and the family/victim(s).
 - Exercise the five values mentioned earlier (empathy, transparency, authenticity, partnership and collaboration, and consistency) to help navigate the charged atmosphere; family members can help address the tension if municipal leadership establishes the right relationship.
 - Offer to establish a direct line of communication between the municipality’s response team and the family/victim(s).
 - Assign a designated point of contact between the municipality and the family/victim(s).
 - Provide the family/victim(s) with direct access to municipal leadership (i.e. mayor).
 - Make counseling services available to family/victim(s).



3. Responsiveness

Moments of racial tension are difficult to navigate while sustaining some of the most fundamental responsibilities government has to the community at large: public safety and protection of municipal property. Incidents that lead to crisis moments of racial tension create unique governance challenges for municipal leadership. Governments have the burden of keeping communities safe, protecting public property, and serving the community at all times. Municipalities must be careful and intentional in their decisions about how to respond to the community at different stages of this process.

Police response to crowds can escalate or diffuse a situation. Ideally, municipal leadership should work closely with law enforcement agencies in advance of any incident to discuss, decide, and prepare for different scenarios. It is critical for the municipality to establish its policies on how it will respond and provide the respective training for those executing these policies, practices, and procedures effectively.

Tactics:

- Create a dedicated team with defined roles among city leadership and staff can help ensure a coordinated response.
- Identify and assign roles to a dedicated response team.
- Establish a clear and direct line of communication with police chief.
- Follow established policies, practices, and procedures for crowd management, handling demonstrations, and responding to protests.
- Engage professionals who are trained to facilitate conversations about racial healing.
- Engage community stakeholders in the response process when applicable to listen to community concerns and to help de-escalate situations
- Provide space for community members to engage with others in the healing process.
- Understand the optics of the municipality's response to help prevent missteps (i.e., a large presence of law enforcement in riot gear can incite confrontation rather than prevent it).



- Understand that there is an underlying historical context to racial tension. The municipality has opportunities to create space for healing.
 - Leverage community conversations, public spaces, and community stakeholders as touchpoints for community healing and to address any longstanding issues.
 - Ensure the constitutional right of people to gather peacefully, a core principal in crowd management.
 - Strive to ensure that de-escalation is top of mind.
 - Embrace racial healing as a cornerstone to the city's response.
- Additional considerations for advance planning:
- Develop a proactive plan on how the municipality will respond in the event an incident occurs to can help ensure that the response is coordinated.
 - Strategically identify and select city staff to participate on a crisis response team.
 - Develop scenarios on how best to respond to potential demonstrations.
 - Establish clear expectations for how law enforcement will respond to various types of escalation during demonstrations.
 - Develop training for law enforcement and municipal staff to prepare them for response to moments of racial tension; adequate training for law enforcement and other dedicated responders engaged in managing these tense situations can improve outcomes (i.e., de-escalation tactics).
 - Establish the policies, practices, procedures and training for de-escalation (i.e., identify and review de-escalation protocols).
 - Work with organizations that can train religious leaders and other community members to help keep demonstrations safe.



Racial Tension: Looking Forward

No city wants to be confronted with a disaster—natural or human. Human disasters that spark racial tension are even more difficult to navigate. As your municipality works through the current incident, record feedback from family/victim(s), community leaders, and the community at-large. Local leaders must recognize that this work requires being comfortable being uncomfortable. This moment of racial tension is an opportunity for cities to use all the community engagement work to create stronger, more equitable outcomes for all who live in your municipality.

Governing for racial equity is continuing the uncomfortable conversations internally and with the community to identify where adjustments can be made within policies, practices, and procedures to prevent future incidents from occurring. Municipalities must recognize that the work continues once you have “moved past” an individual incident.

As long as racial inequities persist, the possibility of incidents sparked by racial tension may surface in any municipality. Be intentional about exploring the root causes of racial inequity and tension. Municipal leaders should continue the momentum and engage in constructive dialogue with the community to navigate the incident. Identifying and partnering with the community around long-term solutions will help to prevent further incidents. Governing for racial equity is the work within policies, practices, and procedures to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities for all. This is the work going forward.



Racial Tension: Checklists

Crisis Response

This list provides some of the most critical steps your municipality will want to take to respond in moments of racial tension.

Convene all cabinet/executive level staff to ensure city leadership is briefed from outset.

- Elected officials, managers, department heads, and key staff must operate from the same basis of knowledge and information.

Consult with municipal legal counsel to ascertain any issues of municipal liability.

Identify options for independent investigation in consultation with legal counsel.

Establish a clear and direct line of communication with police chief.

- Ensure that all facts about the incident are accurately and collectively known in real time.
- Agree on timing of fact sharing with stakeholders and/or public.

Identify elected leadership/staff and clearly state roles for internal response team; (i.e. spokesperson, family/victim liaison, media liaison, etc.). Set the tone:

- Publicly affirm commitment to the five values (*empathy, transparency, authenticity, partnership and collaboration, and consistency*).
- Update the family/victim(s) and the public with new information as developments occur.

Articulate a balanced message to law enforcement leadership and personnel.

- Provide acknowledgement and appreciation of their work but also stress the need for thorough investigation into incident.

Prioritize outreach to family/victim(s).

- Designate family/victim(s) liaison.
- Connect family/victim(s) to appropriate services.



Engage community stakeholders.

- Identify and engage a broad and diverse array of stakeholders who can bring knowledge, skills, abilities and assets to the crisis response management and post-crisis response efforts. (see Stakeholder Checklist, p. 22)
- Set up community conversations in partnership with community stakeholders to engage them in understanding and learning from the incident and to prevent future incidents.

Develop an asset map of community stakeholders. Establish direct lines of communication to:

- Family/victim(s) - Discuss appointing a liaison so family has a direct line of communication to municipal leadership. Inquire if family would like to appoint a liaison as well for channeling all communications.
- Community stakeholders - Establish a direct line of communication to the identified community stakeholders and engage them in sharing accurate updates throughout the crisis.
- Public - Establish communication platform(s) (i.e. - website, hotline) that community can access to receive information/updates.

Establish/review crowd management response policies with police chief and response team.

- Identify and review demonstration/protest polices, practices, procedures (Keep de-escalation at top of mind).
- Identify and review de-escalation protocols.

Continue to communicate updates to and any need for support from county, state, and federal officials.



Communications¹³

This checklist provides guidance on effective communication in the event of a critical incident in your municipality. It reinforces some of the suggestions in the Crisis Response Checklist provided on page 18 and should be used in tandem with it.

- Designate a primary spokesperson and a backup spokesperson.
- Understand your audience and who you are communicating with (Note: your key audience is always your constituents, even if you are on the national news).
- Gather information and be thoroughly briefed by relevant agency and community stakeholders before you make any written or verbal statements.
- Based on your audience, identify the appropriate communication methods and channels for disseminating information to this audience. Ensure that all audiences' language needs and access needs are considered and addressed (i.e. non-English speakers; hearing impaired; digital divide; elderly; etc.).
- Establish a regular schedule of updates to manage expectations around information-sharing; communicate the schedule transparently.



Stick to the facts and acknowledge context:

- Consider details that may be relevant beyond the single incident.
- Consider differing lived experience of impacted residents/communities. (See pp. 8-11 on Historical Impacts of Systemic Racism).
- Do not editorialize or express your personal opinion.

Do not simply say “no comment.” Provide factual responses about why you may not have an answer in the moment and be transparent to the extent legally appropriate.

Track and respond to media and community requests.

Maintain a crisis communications inventory, a running document of statements, speakers, and coverage.

Stay calm and composed even when asked tough questions.



Stakeholder

This list provides a framework for identifying and engaging a broad and diverse array of stakeholders who can bring knowledge, skills, abilities and assets to the crisis response management and post-crisis response efforts.

Every municipality is unique, and the range of stakeholders will vary. For each category below, consider:

- 1** Who is essential to the crisis response and the subsequent coordinated action and support?
- 2** Who in your community can contribute to a better response to and outcome from the crisis?

Local government

- Municipal leadership: elected officials; appointed officials; department heads; line staff

Law enforcement

- Police chief; deputies; community liaison officers

County, state, and federal government

- County health and social services
- State legislators
- Federal law enforcement (in the event of an independent investigation)

Non-profit, community-based organizations

- Local, private organizations providing social services; youth-serving organizations; cultural organizations

Neighborhood groups

- Advisory neighborhood groups; neighborhood watch groups



Religious community

- Religious leaders; ensure multidenominational representation of all religious groups in your community

Health services/mental health services/hospitals

- Private health and mental health service providers; hospital representatives (i.e. ER, crisis response personnel)

Education community

- Primary and secondary education officials
- College, university, community college representatives

Business community

- Chamber of Commerce; major employers; business owners

National organizations

- National organizations providing support to municipalities addressing issues of racial equity

Philanthropic organizations

- Regional representatives of national philanthropic groups engaged in supporting racial equity work

The Future

The following list includes things to consider as your municipality continues the work of advancing racial equity. Challenges to the municipality create opportunities for constructive community engagement, identifying and sharing priorities, and focusing on root causes and solutions. This list will help your municipality think through how to use the momentum to govern for racial equity and push for changes within policies, practices, and procedures. This short list introduces many of the guidelines articulated in more detail in the [REAL Municipal Action Guide](#).

- Develop formalized community engagement structure to continue the discussion on racial equity in policy, practice, and procedure (i.e. – task force/s, working group/s, commission/s).
- Develop, create, and implement infrastructure (in conjunction with community) to develop shared decision-making power between government and community, relative to policies, practices, and procedures.
- Document the challenges and lessons learned following this experience to codify it for reference in the future and share with peers.
- Secure additional resources to fund initiatives and/or policy, practice, procedural changes; consider partnerships with non-governmental organizations to sustain the work.
- Crisis intervention training for both municipal and community stakeholders.
- Implicit bias training for city leadership, city staff, and community stakeholders.
- Modify police officer trainings to emphasize de-escalation and alternative options to use of force.
- Explore areas of change within police department policy, practice, and procedure (i.e. – body cameras).
- Sustain ongoing community conversations on race relations, justice, and equity.
- Consider formalizing dedicated lines of community conversations (i.e. – counseling lines, website).
- Explore integration of racial healing into policy, practice, and procedure.
- Assess mental health and trauma-informed practice within law enforcement to ensure appropriate level and manner of response.
- Develop a racial equity plan.

Endnotes

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- 8 http://www.columbia.edu/cu/c2arl/pdf_files/USURRP_Phase_I_Final_Report.pdf
- 9 http://www.columbia.edu/cu/c2arl/pdf_files/USURRP_Phase_I_Final_Report.pdf
- 10 <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/complex-history-controversial-1994-crime-bill>
- 11 <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus9701.pdf>
- 12 <https://sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Trends-in-US-Corrections.pdf>
- 13 List adaptation resources:
 - Center for Public Issues Education; University of Florida; [Crisis Communication Checklist 2014](#)
 - International City/County Management Association; [Crisis Communications Checklist 2016](#)

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