

City of Akron's  
**RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TASKFORCE**

City of Akron's Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce

**Final Report: A Five-Year  
Strategic Plan  
2022**



City of Akron's  
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## **I. Introduction to the Taskforce**

### **Introduction to the Taskforce**

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. Mayor Horrigan answered that call, and the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce ("the Taskforce") began its work on November 10, 2020.

The Taskforce's mission was 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.

The Taskforce was comprised of six Subcommittees and an Executive Committee. The Subcommittees were asked to focus on their individual subject area, identifying problems, examining potential responses, researching best practices and ultimately recommending policy solutions to the Executive Committee. The Taskforce Executive Committee was responsible for finalizing a Five-Year Strategic Plan, based off of the Subcommittees' Quarterly Reports, which includes specific policy recommendations, timelines, and funding allocations required to achieve the recommendations.

The Office of the Mayor did not stipulate, require, or direct Subcommittees to consider particular policies, but specifically directed that the reports which follow reflect the concerns, ideas, and preferred framework for change dictated by members of the Subcommittees.

The Taskforce's work and direction was led by the City of Akron's Health Equity Ambassador Tamiyka Rose, with administrative assistance and coordination.

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

Over the course of a year of meticulous work, final recommendations of policy changes are outlined in this Final Report: A Five-Year Strategic Plan, which will be delivered to the Mayor, City Council, and the community during the first quarter of 2022.

## II. References Guide

### Introduction

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

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

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

### Shorthand

Introduce the following terms in full and allude to shortened titles in the beginning of the executive summary

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")

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## Terms Relating to People

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

- *Akronites* or *City Residents* – people living in the City of Akron. Capitalize “City”
- *Black people* - Acceptable for an American Black person of African descent. Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: *Black people, Black culture, Black literature, Black studies, Black colleges*. The terms are not necessarily interchangeable. **See additional note below.**
  - If specifically referring to only U.S.: “*African Americans*” (do NOT use a hyphen).
- COMPOUND PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: No hyphen in designating dual heritage: *Italian American, Mexican American*
- *Latino, Latina* – Latino is often the preferred noun or adjective for a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America. Latina is the feminine form. The gender-neutral term Latinx, should be confined to quotations, utilized only when requested by the person(s) to whom the word refers in the text, and be accompanied by a short explanation, i.e. “Hernandez prefers the gender-neutral term Latinx.” For groups of females, use the plural Latinas; for groups of males or of mixed gender, use the plural Latinos.
- *Enslaved people* - The term slaves denotes an inherent identity of a person or people treated as chattel or property. The term “enslaved people” underlines that the slave status has been imposed on individuals.
- *Immigrants* – use this to refer to people who have traveled to the United States from outside U.S. borders and who now consider the U.S. to be their place of residence in this way. Use without a qualifier.
- *People of color* - The term is acceptable when necessary in broad references to multiple races other than White: We will hire more people of color. Nine playwrights of color collaborated on the script. **Do not use “person of color” for an individual.**
- *Police violence* - use this to refer to aggression from a member or members of any police force intended for, or resulting in, the physical harm of other person(s). (referenced the Ask the Editor question section of the Stylebook)
- *Systemic racism* – use this term to refer to social, political and institutional systems and cultures that contribute to racial inequality in areas such as employment, health care, housing, the criminal justice system and education. Avoid shortening this use to simply “racism,” to avoid confusion with the other definition.
- *White people* – use when referring to “persons who are part of any of various population groups considered as having light pigmentation of the skin”

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

### **Special Note on Using the Singular While Discussing Race**

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

Examples:

- (a) *At present, White patrons account for 60% of season-ticketholders, Black patrons 30% and Latino patrons 10%.*
- (b) *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.*

### III. Overview and Statement from the Chair

#### 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 Bible Scholar, counselor, educator, conference speaker and workshop facilitator. His experience in leading one of the City's largest churches for forty-five years has equipped him to impart wisdom for issues related to church growth and development, business management, leadership and team building.

#### Statement from Bishop Johnson

For the past 14-months, the Taskforce Executive Committee and Subcommittees have diligently worked towards creating policy recommendations to encourage a more equitable City of Akron.

Countless hours of deliberation by our Subcommittees; Communications, Criminal Justice, Education, Equitable Workforce Development, Health, and Housing, have been devoted to identifying viable solutions to create lasting change. Meeting after meeting was held to research, consider best practices, and ultimately draft policy. No stone was left unturned by the Subcommittees while completing their assigned tasks.

Members of the Executive Committee brought their individual expertise to the table, but they were also dedicated to following the Taskforce's process. The Executive Committee attended workshops such as Dr. Rachel Talton's "The Powerful Intersection of Trust and Inclusion to Drive Social Justice Work," they listened as the definitions of racism were taught by the Health and Policy Institute of Ohio<sup>1</sup>, and they split into small workshops to analyze the Subcommittees' research and proposed policy recommendations.

While the Taskforce understands it cannot eradicate racism or injustices overnight, the goal was to reinvent policies and systems that perpetuate inequalities in order to become a more racially and socially just community, and the Taskforce feels that it has achieved that goal.

In order to understand the Taskforce's final policy recommendations, it is important to understand the history of race and racism in the City of Akron. A friend of the Taskforce, Mr. Dave Lieberth, has presented a brief overview of the City's history that gives context concerning the policies and systems the Taskforce sought to change.

By establishing the Taskforce, Mayor Horrigan and the City of Akron approached finding solutions to eliminating systemic racism and inequalities like no other city in Ohio has. We know that the City is willing

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<sup>1</sup> **Racism:** a system that categorizes and ranks social groups into races and differentially distributes resources and opportunities to those groups based on their perceived inferior or superior ranking. Racism results in the devaluation and disempowerment of racial groups that are classified by society as inferior (i.e., communities of color in the U.S.).

**Institutional racism:** when beliefs of racial prejudice, oppression or privilege are directly or indirectly acted on or perpetuated by institutions or organizations. For example, human resource policies and practices that result in fewer individuals of color being hired or promoted into leadership positions within an organization.

**Structural racism:** is far-reaching and occurs within and across systems in society. Structural racism impacts our healthcare, education, housing, transportation, food, criminal justice, political and other systems. Examples of structural racism include disinvestment from communities of color through historical practices of residential redlining and present-day gentrification.

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to lend a listening ear and recognizes that the Taskforce is merely the beginning. With Mayor and City's support, the Taskforce's work has the ability to create true change and progress.

Our faith is in the people of Akron to continue this purposeful work as we transition to creating systems of accountability and implementation.



## **IV. The History of Race in Akron, Ohio**

Assembled by Dave Lieberth<sup>2</sup>

*When President Clinton conducted his first Town Meeting on Race at E J Thomas Hall in December 1997, I commented to the 60-person panel onstage that this is a conversation Akron has been having for 168 years. Since that time, I have had occasion to write about these topics and deliver them in published essays, PowerPoint presentations, tours of the city and speeches.*

### **Settlers 1830**

Akron was settled by men and women from Connecticut. They brought with them a dedication to social movements of the time: education for all children, temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery.

### **Fugitive Slave Law of 1850**

Congress enacted the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, which decreed that runaway slaves be returned to their so-called owners. Free states - like Ohio – bristled at being ordered to comply. Akron, Hudson and Tallmadge were what we might call “sanctuary cities.”

### **Sojourner Truth**

In 1851 in Akron, a freed slave, Isabella Von Swearingen addressed the national Women's Rights Convention at the Old Stone Church on North High Street. She selected a name marking her freed status, Sojourner Truth. She delivered the iconic “Ain't I a Woman” speech on May 29, 1851 and her words had a profound effect on those attending that day. Truth was born a slave in 1797 and escaped to freedom with her infant daughter in 1826. She remains one of the most famous abolitionists and feminists in US history. Her list of accomplishments extends beyond the one speech she gave in Akron.

### **John Brown, 1844 -1854**

The single most consequential person ever to live in Akron or Summit County was John Brown. The historian Evan Carton said that he was the first United States citizen committed to absolute racial equality. Brown was prayerful, pious, generous, kind, intelligent, tough, unreasonable, rigid, angry, and vengeful. His life is filled with contradictions.

Brown came to believe that violence was not only acceptable, but necessary to achieve the eradication of African slavery in America.

### **1900 Arrest of Louis Peck**

On August 22, 1900, a riot erupted in Akron, Ohio that would live on to be called the “darkest night in Akron's history.” The cause of the riot occurred the day before, on August 21, 1900.

Louis Peck, an African-American, was arrested for assaulting six-year-old Christina Maas, who was white. Peck was caught the next morning and confessed to the crime. The local newspapers printed stories of the heinous crime. One paper's story was published in red ink and exaggerated the story of Peck's confession, causing extreme anger and malice to spread throughout the city.

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Dave Lieberth is known by many as “a veritable walking history book for the community.” The Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce is honored to have him provide historical context for understanding the history of race in the City of Akron.

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Peck was removed from the city to Cleveland and that evening, a mob started to form with the intention of lynching Peck for his crime. City Hall was burned to the ground, two young children were killed in a crossfire of bullets, and the National Guard was eventually called in to restore order to the city.

Peck was found guilty in record time and sentenced to life in prison. He did not even have any legal representation as no one would defend him. In 1913, Governor Cox pardoned Peck, citing the lack of a fair trial.

### **1910-1920 Migration**

Akron did not attract a heavy influx of southern blacks on a level comparable to other industrial cities and its black population remained relatively small before World War II.

In 1910, only six hundred and fifty-seven blacks lived in the city. In a study written later, before the war the members of Akron's small black community (approximately one percent of the city's population) were welcome "at all the city's restaurants, not segregated in places of public entertainment," according to one longtime black resident.

In 1917, the Akron Evening Times observed that although a "short time ago few negroes could be seen on Akron's streets," the number of blacks applying for jobs in the city had increased by fifty percent.

During World War I, black Akronites were alarmed as segregation began appearing in stores and other public places in Akron. Signs began appearing in some business places in Akron stating "colored people are not wanted" and movie theaters began refusing admission to blacks. By the end of the war there was no question Akron was becoming an increasingly segregated town. In his history of Akron, Karl Grismer observed, "Akron had less difficulty assimilating the newcomers from foreign countries than it did Negroes from the South, not because the 'colored people' were less adaptable or less desirable but because of race prejudices.

By 1920, the city's black population had reached 5,580 (2.7 percent of the population); the growth having derived mainly from black newcomers from southern states who arrived during the war years.

### **1917 Housing Developments**

African American residents were forced to take squalid quarters in the worst districts. Although residential segregation was not enforced by statute, discrimination in housing was commonplace. Landlords in the more prosperous sections of the city would only rent to whites and the new neighborhoods built during the 1910s—including the company-financed Goodyear Heights and Firestone Park—initially refused to sell to Blacks.

When F-A Seiberling and Harvey Firestone created their great industrial residential neighborhoods, Goodyear Heights and Firestone Park, the land sales were specifically limited by covenants contained in the deeds to the properties, that no transfer should take place to a person of African or Ethiopian Descent.

Thus, the black population remained clustered in the valley area around Furnace Street in central Akron.

### **1920 Ku Klux Klan**

The infusion of Appalachians to Akron with deeply-held Nativist sentiments contributed to Akron's earning the dishonorable distinction of having the largest KKK klavern in the state of Ohio, and one of the largest in the nation in the 1920's.

The Summit County Klan drew a large membership and publicly claimed a membership of 52,980 at its peak in 1923. According to historian Kenneth T. Jackson, "Klan No. 27 claimed 350 applications per day, suggesting that the name of Summit County be changed to Ku Klux Kounty.

The Klan at one time controlled the office of Mayor, Superintendent of Schools, County Sheriff, County Prosecutor, Clerk of Courts, two of the three County Commissioners and four of the seven seats of the Akron Board of Education including the Presidency. One of Akron's Common Pleas Court judges explained, "The Klan to me was just another club to join. I belonged to anything I could get in. Anybody with political pretensions joined."

### **Contributions of African Americans to Akron's Rubber Industry**

During the 20th century heyday of the rubber and tire industry in Akron, approximately 4,000 African-American men and women were employed at jobs in the big companies. World War I brought about a marked increase in opportunities and in the number of Black residents, which expanded eight-fold between 1910 and 1920.

Overt Racism was evident at every level of the rubber companies until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forced new hiring practices. By the time of World War II Akron's Black population was nearly 24,000.

### **The Hotel Matthews**

The Jazz Era was made famous by artists who traveled the country in the 1920's and 1930's. It produced vibrant clubs on Howard Street where jazz musicians could jam and be part of the local music scene: The Green Turtle, The Cosmopolitan, the Benny Rivers. That's why Akron's Howard Street and the Hotel Matthews are monuments to the Jazz Era and Akron's own African American history.

Many musicians were African Americans who produced the sounds of jazz for audiences black and white, but who were denied accommodations in cities north and south. Jazz pioneers such as Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald slept at the Hotel Matthews on Howard Street because they were denied accommodations at the Portage Hotel, the Mayflower, and other hotels that catered only to whites.

### **1930-1960 Segregation**

By 1968, Akron's population was 275,000 with 60,000 African American residents. Fifty years ago, Akron was a city where blacks and whites lived separately. A study of racial conditions made in the 1950's – "The Akron Community Audit" found Akron to be a racially segregated city in many ways.

### **1960-1970 Urban Renewal**

Akron's Urban Renewal program effectively destroyed a dozen intact African American neighborhoods. Failure to provide living accommodations for thousands of people dispossessed of their homes a root cause of riots.

Urban Renewal came to cities as a federal program in the late 1950's, when interstate highways and the neighborhoods being dispossessed were being designed by architects sitting in Washington DC.

In Akron, from about 1960 to about 1970, the city of Akron would transplant 3-thousand households, more than 80% African American.

The 1960 Map of Urban Renewal Neighborhoods reveals the damage that would be done to mostly-Black neighborhoods when Route 59 was constructed. The map shows the elimination of housing north of Wooster Avenue for the new AT&T facility and the FirstMerit Operations Center.

The result of this relocation of Black families according to the Lively Commission, was the aggravated compression of black families into Akron ghettos, primarily a consequence of the Route 59 project, the Grant-Washington project south of the University and downtown.

And no new housing was constructed under Urban Renewal.

### **1968 Wooster Avenue/Arlington Street Disturbances**

Smithsonian called 1968 the Year That shattered America.

On April 4, The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis by a white gunman. The next day, riots exploded in Washington DC, Chicago and 5 other cities where The National Guard would be called out. A week later, on April 11 President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

In June Senator Robert F. Kennedy was shot and killed by a gunman, after winning the California presidential primary.

It would be a volatile summer. In July, young black men on the west side Wooster Avenue area, got into a territorial dispute with groups from the east side, the Arlington Street area. Police were called out to break up rock throwing and bottle throwing disturbances. The dispute erupted, lasting 6 nights. The National Guard was called to help control the situation.

After 6 nights, 57 fire bombings, some 400 arrests, the call-out of a thousand soldiers, Wooster Avenue would never be the same again.

### **1969 Lively Commission Report**

On July 27, Mayor Ballard wrote to Dr. Edwin Lively, head of the Sociology Department at the University of Akron, asking him to chair a ten-member commission to study the direct and indirect causes of the disorder and to make recommendations aimed at preventing similar occurrences in the future

The commission would hold hearings that Fall and winter, and in April would issue its final report.

Its findings:

The disorders were not nor deliberately started although there were some persons and groups who were receptive to trouble and willing to encourage and accentuate it.

The primary cause: resentment against discrimination toward blacks in all areas of community life, anti-Semitism, personal animosities, opportunism, hoodlumism, and a lot of youthful excitement.

Failure of the law enforcement officers to distinguish those black citizens who, at considerable personal risk, were attempting to ease the tensions and disperse those who were creating it from those who were active contributors to the disorders.

Police are convinced that the use of chemicals minimized the need for physical force, many blacks are certain that there was an excessive and indiscriminate use of tear gas.

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A year after the Lively Commission report was issued, the Beacon Journal reviewed what had happened in the interim. Dr. Lively felt some issues had been addressed, but too many issues raised had simply been ignored.

Councilman Ed Davis questioned why the Mayor had failed to appoint a Human Relations Commission that would replace the Council of Civic Unity, which was founded in 1948, led by Opie Evans.

Ballard listed improvements:

- The city sent crews in to remove debris and address the problem with rats.
- Wooster Avenue was the only city neighborhood now getting twice-weekly garbage pick ups.
- The main issue in the report was the absence of recreational opportunities for youngsters.
- The city hired 10 new recreation supervisors
- Invested \$800,000 in a new Lane-Wooster athletic field
- Installed a portable swimming pool behind the fire station on Wooster Avenue that summer
- Sensitivity Training and a new initiative to recruit African American candidates for the police and fire departments.

**2010 -2020 Improvements**

In the last decade, 200 million dollars has been invested in the Wooster Avenue area. New homes, like City View and Rhoulac circle; a new Urban League and community learning center; a new Akron Zoo; The 65-million-dollar Edgewood homes replaced “projects” from the 1940’s; and a new Lane Field.

## **V. The Taskforce's Final Report and Recommendations**

### **A. The Taskforce Executive Committee**

Upon review of the Taskforce Subcommittees' Quarterly Reports, the Taskforce Executive Committee determined that accountability and transparency is crucial to the Taskforce's overall success.

One common concern throughout all of the Subcommittees' reports was the need for transparency and accountability. This concern is not just regarding the implementation of the policy recommendations, but also transparency and accountability surrounding diversity and equity in general. Keeping this in mind, the Executive Committee suggested that the City dedicate a person to monitor and be responsible for the overall equity and diversity in the City. As a result, the Executive Committee suggested that a Chief Equity Officer oversee the City's efforts.

Another recommendation that was well received by the Executive Committee was the request for a diversity scorecard. The Subcommittee on Health presented a scorecard to be implemented by the City in the area of health care. The Executive Committee agreed that the recommendation would provide successful outcomes and felt that the diversity scorecard was actually necessary within several areas, and not just in health care. The goal of the diversity scorecard is to record data regarding the City's progress in the areas of equity and diversity.

In addition to the recommendations made above, the Executive Committee formally adopted the policy recommendations made the six Subcommittees. The Subcommittees' recommendations are outlined below in this final report and explained detail in the Quarter Three Report.

Please use this [final report as an outline to the Quarter Three Report](#) for clarity's sake.

## **B. Subcommittee on Communications**

The Communications Subcommittee focuses on finalizing the plans for a communications framework and establishing the Racial Equity Guiding Coalition. The Subcommittee also renews its support of the equity guidelines provided by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and recommends Akron's continued participation in GARE.

### **One recommendation to be implemented during the year of 2022.**

1. Hire a City of Akron Deputy Mayor for Racial Equity & Social Justice who has the influence, authority, and resources to guide the City in recognizing and eliminating racial inequities and improving outcomes for all racial groups with an initial focus on the African American community.
  - a. Overview: This role is recommended by the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE), and has already been successfully instituted in other cities. (See p. 98 of Quarter Three Report). Responsibilities of this role are outlined in the Quarter Three Report.
  - b. Supporting Recommendations: The top priorities for this role in Year One are:
    - i. Infrastructure: Create an Office of Racial Equity & Social Justice to support sustainable, system-wide change. Determine which support roles are needed, work out the budget, and fill them.
    - ii. Vision: Work with the Mayor, the cabinet, and city council members to establish a City of Akron Vision for Racial Equity that everyone supports. This will guide the City's racial equity work for years to come.
    - iii. Two-Way Communication: Develop two-way communication relationships between the City and communities of color to increase engagement and understanding, and to provide feedback on racial equity to the City. In Year One, start with major organizations of color.
    - iv. Support the overall Racial Equity & Social Justice Plan: Help establish and support priorities from the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce Report in service of an overall 5-year Racial Equity & Social Justice Plan.
    - v. Website: In Year One, put updated, accurate, responsive racial equity content on the City's current website and make it easier to find.
    - vi. GARE: Use GARE as a guide for decision-making. In particular, draw upon the "Results Based Accountability Framework" to support clear goals, action, and accountability. The template for racial equity work already exists; there is no need to reinvent it.

### c. Subcommittee on Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice Subcommittee finalized recommendations in several areas of the City of Akron Police Department. The Subcommittee's final recommendations focus on police accountability mechanisms, a police auditor and civilian oversight board, body-worn camera legislation and policy; police training, hiring and promotion practices, and community policing.

#### **Recommendation adopted by the City:**

The Subcommittee previously made the following recommendations concerning the police auditor position:

#### **1. Resources**

- a. The police auditor's position should be made full time (adopted).
- b. There should also be
  - i. a full-time deputy police auditor and (not adopted)
  - ii. a full-time administrative assistant (adopted).

#### **2. Access to information**

- a. The police auditor should, within 72 hours of making a request, have access to all documents, photographs, audio recordings, electronic files, and other tangible evidence in the possession of the Akron Police Department (APD) or any other city office relating to any of the following (partly adopted):
  - i. any duty-related incident involving APD personnel during which, or as a result of which, anyone dies or suffers serious bodily injury;
  - ii. any allegation of improper use of force by APD personnel; or
  - iii. any allegation of bias, discourtesy, retaliation, or other misconduct by APD personnel.
- b. If the police auditor requests body-worn camera footage relating to any of the above, the City should complete its review of such footage, redact any information that federal or state law prohibits the police auditor from receiving, and provide it to the police auditor within 72 hours of the request (partly adopted).
- c. The police auditor should have convenient access to any professional standards software applications used by APD (adopted). If such access cannot be provided in the police auditor's office, the police auditor should be provided with such access at a workstation in the headquarters of the APD.
- d. Within 72 hours of any of the following, the police chief or the chief's designee should inform the police auditor of the following (not adopted):
  - i. The commencement of an internal investigation into an APD employee;
  - ii. The receipt of a citizen complaint;
  - iii. An incident involving a reportable use of force as defined by APD policies and procedures;
  - iv. An incident involving an in-custody death or serious injury; and
  - v. Becoming aware of the filing of a lawsuit against the APD or an APD employee acting in their official capacity.



### **Recommendation to be implemented in 2022**

1. Body-worn camera legislation and policy (some of these items have already been adopted; it should be feasible to implement the remainder in 2022).
  - a. Overview:
    - i. All uniformed officers, including officers deployed as SWAT, should be required to wear cameras.
    - ii. Uniformed officers should be required to wear cameras while engaged in secondary employment.
    - iii. Body-worn cameras should be activated
      1. Immediately when responding to in-progress calls;
      2. On other calls when exiting the police vehicle; and
      3. Whenever reportable force is used.
    - iv. Body-worn camera recordings should be uploaded by each uniformed police officer to the designated server at the end of each shift.
    - v. Officers should be subject to discipline for failing to wear or activate body-worn cameras as required and failing to upload recordings as required.
    - vi. The police auditor has immediate access to unredacted body-worn camera recordings or, if it is authoritatively determined that such access is legally impermissible, that the auditor have access to redacted body-worn camera recordings upon request within 72 hours; and
    - vii. Members of the public have access to redacted body-worn camera videos of the use of deadly force or force that causes serious bodily injury within seven days as required by the ordinance recently enacted by the Akron City Council.

### **Recommendations to be implemented between 2023-2025**

1. Civilian Oversight Board: See recommendations 1-7 in the Quarter Three Report concerning the establishment of a civilian oversight board. The first steps toward the establishment of such a board can and should be taken in 2022, but full implementation will require more time.
2. Police Hiring and Promotion Practices: See recommendations 1-9 in the Quarter Three Report under the subheading "Recruitment", recommendations 1-10 in the Quarter Three Report under the subheading "Hiring", and recommendations 1-6 in the Quarter Three Report under the subheading "Promotion".
3. Police Training: See recommendations 1-10 in the Quarter Three Report under the heading "Training".

### **Recommendations to be implemented in 2025 and beyond**

1. Because it involves a department-wide change in operations, the recommendation that the Police Department adopt a true community policing strategy will take longer to implement than the other recommendations. See recommendations 1-21 under the heading "Community policing" in the Quarter Three Report.

#### D. Subcommittee on Education

The Education Subcommittee centers its findings on recommendations for policy changes that will narrow the opportunity and achievement gaps which exist between students of color and White students and limit the effects of poverty on educational opportunity. The areas in which the Subcommittee has made recommendations includes student access, student-centered learning and closing the achievement gap, pandemic recovery, cultural responsiveness, and fiscal transparency.

##### **Recommendation adopted by the City:**

The Akron School Board recently passed the Racial Equity Policy in summer of 2020. This policy incorporates several aspects germane to the recommendations made by the Education Subcommittee of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce – and this policy is a core aspect that will impact the five areas within the recommendation of the Education Subcommittee. The Racial Equity Policy was briefly referenced on page 48-49 of the Quarter Three Report, referring to the local data reviewed in preparation of our recommendations.

##### **Recommendation to be implemented in 2022.**

1. The most salient recommendation and logical beginning would be to focus on Pandemic Recovery in 2022. This recommendation, by definition, is connected to student achievement, and is therefore inexorably linked to Student Access, which is also our primary recommendation.

##### **a. Overview:**

- i. **Pandemic Recovery:** The Education Subcommittee discussed some of the implications of the COVID pandemic for students, focusing particularly on minority and low-income students. To address learning loss for these vulnerable populations, we recommend the following:
  1. Ensure that information about the academic progress of students during each academic year is transparent. Provide the community with disaggregated academic progress data which breaks down student achievement by student race/ethnicity, zip code and school location, so that the public can better understand the impact of the pandemic on learning loss – and especially the pandemic's effects on different groups of students.
  2. Continue to provide year-round interventions that help students who require additional academic interventions, beyond the pandemic.
- ii. **Student Access:** All students should have equitable access to in school programs which provide a strong educational foundation and, as a result, open the gateway of opportunity. If our goal is to support more equitable academic outcomes, it is critical that structured learning opportunities are available to every child prior to kindergarten.

Early childhood education must be deemed a critical component of each child's school experience. The Education Subcommittee proposes a holistic approach that prioritizes equity in educational access and delivery from P-16. The Student Access section also includes recommendations for targeted interventions to

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ensure each child graduates from high school prepared for their choice of college or career. Our “best practices” recommendations are listed below.

1. Support efforts to make early childhood education available and accessible to all children in the city of Akron.
2. Design interventions at the elementary level, both to prepare students for middle and high school success, and to increase the percentage of minority students (specifically Black and Hispanic students) who participate in Algebra 1 or another high school level math class in 8th grade.
3. Create interventions that identify students who are not on track to achieve 9th Grade Success which include engaging parents in the process.
4. Encourage all public and private schools within the City of Akron to provide (disaggregated) data regarding the racial and ethnic composition of students participating in Honors, Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual-Credit Courses, including College Credit Plus (CCP) when allowed by applicable laws.

**Recommendations to be implemented between 2023-2025.**

These initiatives are interrelated and will manifest best if they are implemented in tandem. However, because they are co-dependent, they will be most effective when partnerships and effective communication allow the current state of affairs to determine the sequence for the most useful and efficacious order of operations.

1. **Family and Community Engagement:** Engagement of families and community stakeholders in student learning and the learning process is fundamental to successful student outcomes (Mapp, K. 2002). Policies established to promote family engagement in schools should aim to support strong family-school partnerships, encourage consistent, helpful and culturally responsive communication between families and school staff, provide resources and options for learning at home, and create welcoming school environments.
2. **Diversifying the Field of Education:**
  - a. Create teacher academies within high schools (in collaboration with colleges and universities).
  - b. Create loan forgiveness programs/scholarships for educators of color who work in low-performing urban schools over multiple years to attract and retain educators of color.
  - c. Organize support systems within cohorts of new Black and Brown educators in urban schools when assigning educators to schools, allowing them to work through issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity together.
  - d. Create or expand network groups for Black and Brown educators.
  - e. Develop a local coalition to collect data and identify strategies to diversify the field of professional educators in Greater Akron; the consortium can share best practices with local schools.
  - f. Request recruitment and retention data from local colleges and universities to identify subgroups within the data sets

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- g. Survey Black and Brown students in high school and undergraduate settings to help school leaders and academics better understand their perception of the teaching profession and what would attract them to the field.

**3. Cultural Competence and Educator Professional Development:**

- a. Provide ongoing job-embedded professional development that will help educators understand the culture and climate of schools
- b. Train educators in schools/districts to become facilitators of the Intercultural Development Inventory ® (IDI), which measures professionals' capability to shift cultural perspectives and appropriately adapt to cultural differences.
- c. Create career pathways for successful educators early in their career.
- d. Recruit and retain Black and Brown leaders to support and mentor classroom teachers.
- e. Address and oppose any legislation that bans the teaching of certain parts of US History, especially the parts that focus on the brutal history of systematic and institutional racism
- f. Educate community members, educators, and families on the difference between Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP).

**4. Fiscal Transparency and School Funding:**

- a. Encourage and insist that state lawmakers approve a fair K-12 funding plan beyond Fiscal Years 2023 and 2025.

### E. Subcommittee on Equitable Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Subcommittee focused the bulk of its recommendations on preparing diverse candidates for employment with the City and its largest employers. The Subcommittee also fully supports the hiring of a Chief Equity Officer at the City.

#### **Recommendation to be implemented in 2022.**

1. The hiring of a Chief Equity Officer (\$120,000-\$140,000 salary per year) and making that position a member of the Mayor's Cabinet, reporting directly to the Mayor and being in charge of all diversity, equity and inclusion efforts of the City of Akron, including building out his management team. We also recommend that the Chief Equity Officer is supported by a team (2-3 people) as one person alone cannot sufficiently plan, execute, and report on accountability and that team focuses year one on designing, implementing and beginning to execute a plan to accomplish all of Recommendation Set 1 from this Subcommittees Quarter Three Report and covering items 1(a) through 1(g) with a priority as follows: 1(f), (1g), 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d) and 1(e) to the extent they cannot be accomplished simultaneously.

#### **Recommendations to be completed between 2023-2025.**

1. Recommendation 2(a) and 2(b) which can occur simultaneously; creation of neighborhood workforce development hubs to prepare and create a more diverse applicant pool for the City of Akron and other employers.
2. Recommendation 2(d); utilizing local non-profits to help minority candidates prepare for, apply, train and pass entrance exams and/or physical tests necessary for employment.
3. Recommendation 2(c); preparing high school students in Akron Public Schools to be career ready and assist these career ready students to apply, train and pass any entrance exams and/or physical tests necessary for employment.
4. Recommendation Set 4, working with an independent, nationally recognized, consulting firm which is an expert in social equity programming and information obtainment, analysis and reporting. Request their assistance to assess the information and systems available and develop and implement a transparent accountability and reporting structure.

#### **Recommendations to be implemented in 2025 and beyond.**

1. The last remaining recommendation are those contained within Recommendation Set 3; Driving meaningful change in how minorities and minority-owned business are started, developed, fostered, contacted, engaged and hired to fulfil services and products that the City of Akron routinely purchases proportionate to the demographics in our community. Within that recommendation are the following Recommendations:
  - a. Recommendation 3(a)-Continuing to make investments in Bounce and understanding and replicating successful incubators like those that exist at GPD.
  - b. Recommendation 3(b)-Further undertake significant changes in the City of Akron's approach to equity in contracting. Many cities listed in our Third Quarter Report have made significant gains in this area by investigating and implementing creative solutions to barriers and obstacles.

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- c. Recommendation 3(c)-Implement significant analysis and reporting around all these baselines, initiatives and results.

## F. Subcommittee on Health

The Health Subcommittee finalized 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 Diversity Scorecard was adopted as a recommendation of the Executive Committee to be utilized by the entire Taskforce. The rest of the Subcommittee's recommendations focus on how the City can work to improve health care for its employees and citizens as a whole.

### **Recommendation adopted by the City):**

Recommendation #2: Dedicate Resources to Advance Youth Violence Prevention, of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce Health Subcommittee was adopted by the City. This recommendation is referenced on page 72 of the Quarter Three Report. A press release announcing the position was disseminated by the City on October 28th, 2021. The City is currently in the process of vetting applications and candidates for the position.

### **Recommendation to be implemented in 2022.**

#### 1. Recommendation #3: Activate A Community Engagement & Health Awareness Resource:

##### a. Overview:

- i. Hire a fulltime Community Health Worker (CHW) /City Community Liaison/Ambassador to support the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator position and plan.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.

##### b. Supporting Recommendations:

- i. Establish recommended outcomes and target goal – Metrics associated with the plan
- ii. Establish more detailed job description recommendation
- iii. Establish reporting structure within HR
- iv. Establish recommended communication and outreach strategies for the recruitment of diverse candidates
- v. Conduct needs assessment and focus group with the community to craft this position.

### **Recommendations to be implemented between 2023-2025.**

#### 1. Execute A City of Akron Diversity Scorecard & Assessment Strategy

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a. Overview:

- i. 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.

b. Supporting Recommendations:

- i. It was decided that the Health Care Subcommittee's Scorecard will function as an example for the rest of the Subcommittees.
- ii. The Health Care Subcommittee will not be responsible for drafting a Scorecard for the other five Subcommittees.
- iii. This will be a task for the Taskforce Executive Committee, or it will be recommended that the City follows the Health Care Subcommittee's Scorecard as an example.
- iv. Attached to the Quarter Three Report is the example set forth by the committee to measure the recommendations that were brought forth.

2. Activate Diverse Provider Panels, Cultural Competency Strategies, and Grassroots Programming to Meet City Employee and Community Mental and Physical Health Needs.

a. Overview:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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.

b. Supporting Recommendations:

- i. Establish recommended outcomes and target goal – Attendees: Ease@Work, HR, and reps from the taskforce, local mental health providers, etc.



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- ii. Establish recommended intervention strategies
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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.
- vi. Advocate and encourage for local healthcare settings and business to review outreach strategies and action plans around hiring diverse staff.
- vii. 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.

### G. Subcommittee on Housing

The Housing Subcommittee finalizes 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 the quarter three report include 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.

#### **The following recommendation was adopted by the City**

Through the advocacy of several community organizations, the Akron City Council passed Source of Income (SOI) and Pay to Stay legislation on May 10th, 2021. Though this occurred separately from work conducted by the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce Housing Subcommittee, it was accomplished concurrently. Our Quarter Three Report identified that SOI passed and the City should ensure enforcement of this ordinance.

#### **Recommendation to be implemented in 2022.**

1. Main Recommendation: Prioritize and fund housing improvements and blight removal in previously redlined, high concentration of poverty neighborhoods (as stated in Planning to Grow Akron 2.0).
  - a. Overview: It can be assumed that homes in the previously redlined neighborhoods are more dilapidated and in areas of disinvestment that have contributed to depressed home values and the number of homes that need improvement. The City should dedicate a larger percentage of ARPA/CDBG funding funds to specifically target these neighborhoods.
    - i. Target grant funds for specific types of improvements (i.e. roofing, siding, paint, exterior upgrades etc).
    - ii. Identify a network of contractors who perform general maintenance and upkeep at a reasonable cost, preferably Black owned businesses.
    - iii. Provide homebuyers and homeowners with information and education on how to care for a home, how to find reasonably priced contractors and how to make upgrades.
    - iv. Provide grants for homeowners and landlords to fund housing improvements in communities with higher concentrations of poverty.
    - v. Arrange with local training schools to contract for free or reduced labor from newly certified plumbers, electrician and HVAC students.
    - vi. Provide grants to also pay for certification to increase the number of lead certified contractors of Color.
    - vii. Develop a portal for homeowners and landlords where they can find a list of organizations that provide affordable loans and/or programs to pay for maintenance and rehabilitation for the cities aging housing stock.

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- viii. Develop an online tool to report vacant structures. The tool should ask for pictures of potentially dangerous structures.
- ix. Bring back contracting with CDC's to do maintenance and cleanup of vacant lots.
- x. Provide better support to the Department of Neighborhood Assistance so they can enforce code violations from private Section 8 housing.

**Recommendations to be implemented between 2023-2025.**

1. **The City of Akron should collaborate with Summit County to share landlord registry information, because each currently maintains their own. The list of registered properties should be publicly available.**
  - a. There are three ways in which the landlord registry could be made more effective.
    - i. First, incentivize landlords to register all properties by providing free training and resources on housing topics such as resources for repairs, tenant/landlord rights, inspection requirements, fair housing laws, etc. Make registration a contingency of receiving these resources.
    - ii. Second, housing inspections should be required on an annual or biennial basis for those properties that do not already have an inspection requirement in place (i.e. LIHTC, HOME, AMHA, etc.) 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.
    - iii. Third, registration should be enforced. Properties are currently being rented that are not on the registry. If there was consistent enforcement of registration of properties, monitoring of housing conditions could be more consistently and accurately applied.
2. **Develop a city-wide comprehensive plan through a participatory planning process and reform zoning code and policies that emphasis inclusionary practices.**
  - a. Develop a city-wide comprehensive plan using a participatory planning process.
  - b. Reform the City's zoning code through an equitable lens to ensure that it is promoting inclusive zoning versus old previous exclusionary zoning practices.
  - c. "Eliminate" single family ONLY zoning, allow more flexibility for duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes to be built on single family lots.
  - d. Establish inclusionary zoning especially in high opportunity neighborhoods.
3. **Preserve existing affordable housing & provide funding for mixed-income finance housing developments.**
  - a. Create tax incentives, such as abatement, that are tied to use restrictions that maintain affordable rents and discourage displacement of existing tenants.

- b. Expand to all impacted areas the “Planning to Grow Akron 2.0” initiative for non-profit and for-profit developers to increase the supply of affordable private market rental properties.
  - c. Legislate rent and property tax controls that is scheduled to very gradually increase over time (instead of all at once).
  - d. Require local and/or federal funds be tied to rent restrictions that maintain affordability.
  - e. Exempt low-income, long-time homeowners from increases in their property taxes.
  - f. Commit \$1 million in City investments per tax credit allocation in order to fill the funding gap and draw new developers to Akron.
  - g. Create a program that uses CDBG funds to automatically award gap financing upon receipt of LIHTCs for rehabilitation and renovation of existing affordable housing.
  - h. Participate in Summit County’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
4. **Provide incentives to purchase in communities where historical redlining barriers existed.**
- a. Target funds toward further development and expansion of Homebuyer Education (HBE) programs and homeowner safety net assistance programs with a special focus on areas of historical redlining and/or current high Low to Moderate (LMI) populations.
  - b. Include these communities as priority areas for homeownership program and purchase assistance along with the communities designated in Planning to Grow Akron 2.0.

**Recommendations to be implemented in 2025 and beyond.**

1. **Promote housing mobility.**
- a. Increase funding for additional Housing Counselors that are being hired through the SCCOC to include 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.
  - b. Provide funding for the education on the benefits/importance of high opportunity areas to tenants and landlords.
2. **Develop a Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) Campaign.**
- a. Create a multi-sector committee to develop a campaign for the City’s YIMBY initiative that will educate/inform residents, businesses and organizations about the importance of affordable/equitable housing and dilute the common stereotypes surrounding it.
3. **Provide more resources and funding to homebuyer education (HBE) classes.**
- a. Provide additional funding to increase necessary financial support to housing counseling agencies.

## **VI. Next Steps**

### **City of Akron's Action Steps**

The City has expressed its dedication to implementing policies recommended by the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce. It goes without saying that to see true equity and inclusion within the City, a cultural shift is necessary. The City has repeatedly echoed its commitment, not only shifting its culture, but to changing its culture.

Taskforce policy recommendations will require a review of the City's budget to determine an implementation process and timelines. The City's next steps with handling the Taskforce Report are outlined below:

- The Mayor, City Council, and the Mayor's Cabinet Members will review the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce's Final Report.
- The City will submit a response to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce's Final Report by the third quarter, outlining which policy recommendations it plans to undertake immediately, and which recommendations will be considered thereafter.
- The City will review its general revenue funding to ensure sustainability of the policy recommendations.
- The City will utilize American Rescue Plan Act funding where appropriate.

## VII. Appendix

### Membership:

#### Taskforce 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  
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Teresa LeGrair  
The Honorable Elinor Marsh-Stormer  
Stephen Muhammad  
Jim Mullen  
Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval  
Rev. Roderick Pounds  
Bill Rich  
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Brandon Scarborough  
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Bernett Williams  
Laurie Zuckerman

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Mary Brooks  
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Jessica Drake  
Dawn Glenny  
Hannah Horrigan  
Sharetta Howze  
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Billi Copeland-King  
Michael Dowdell  
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Michael Naso  
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Joe Scalise  
Allan Thomas  
Ron Unk  
Elizabeth Vild  
Kenny Thomas  
Katie Beck  
Gina Burk  
Minister Ray Green  
Nanci Self

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