

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest elements of this Committee is the thought-provoking racial equity work that we are tasked to tackle. Beyond the practices of the City, we must have a willingness to address any and all elephants in the room. Learning about our City through the representatives at our diverse table prompts us to think beyond our block. Bringing diverse leaders together absent of political pressure, allows for a free flow of ideas. While attendance at the table helps, at times there is a need for an outside stimulus. Our liaison submitted to us some reading choices that would fan the flames of discussion around the idea of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Taking our lead from her, we were assigned a masterfully written book entitled *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson¹.

This book could not have addressed our assigned mission more accurately. As we gather to present ideas and suggest policy enhancements to aid in the creation of a more united Concord, it can only happen when there are candid conversations that can lead to effective change. To further cultivate a more unified culture, Wilkerson says, “people show a greater sense of joint responsibility to one another when they see their fellow citizens as like themselves...societies can be more magnanimous when people perceive themselves as having an equal stake in the lives of their fellow citizens.” As we round out year two of this initiative, our goal is to encourage commonality. We see the truth in our nation’s creed, “we are one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

During the summer of 2022, the CUC experienced several layers of transition. The City’s CUC Liaison Officer, Ms. Emma Sellers, vacated her role to accept a national position in her DEI skill set, allowing for Ms. Jaime Brown to be hired as our Liaison to the City Council. This season allowed us to examine CUC Committee Members whose terms of service had expired and to fill the anticipated vacancies (Appendix A). Filling vacancies also brought with it the concomitant need to hold Open Meeting Laws training and review, ensuring the North Carolina legal requirements for the conduct of CUC public meetings were met.

B. SECOND YEAR FOCUS

- Finalizing Transit Recommendations
- Tying up loose ends from the 2021-2022 Housing Study

¹Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York, New York: Random House.

- Police Department
- Human Resources Department
- Fire Department

C. MECHANISM EMPLOYED

On a monthly basis, the City of Concord above-mentioned Department Heads & Staff made their presentations to the full Concord United Committee. These were meaty sessions whose granular data often called for the presentation and discussions to overflow to a second month. These standing meetings were held in a hybrid forum: both in-person and via the Zoom electronic platform. This flexibility contributed to maximum committee member participation.

Based upon that which was presented to the full committee, a subcommittee of volunteers subsequently met over a Zoom call and took a deeper dive into data for further analysis. The subcommittee members often generated follow-up questions for clarity and additional data. The subcommittee findings, analysis and recommendations were then brought to the full committee at the monthly meetings.

D. CUC MEMBERSHIP

CUC Committee Membership for 2022-2023 Service Year

- o Initial cadre of citizens: Ann Fleming, Bertram Hinton, Jr. , Robert Kirk, Aimy Steele, Amos McClorey, Bob Anderson, Carrie Overcash, Cindy Hanson, Douglas Carroll, Gracie Galloway, Greg Mills, Ingrid Nurse, Jaymond Bryant-Herron, Jennifer Terris, Kiran Patel, Lamarie Austin-Stripling, Lyndia Gabriel, Michelle Joshua, Quinton Locklear, Rayshion Sashington, Roy Hawkins, Sandra Torres, Theresa Scott-Stills, Tina Boyer

CUC Committee Membership Currently

- o Final cadre of citizens: Ann Fleming, Bertram Hinton, Jr. , Robert Kirk, Aimy Steele, Amos McClorey, Bob Anderson, Cecilia Plez, Cindy Hanson, Douglas Carroll, Gracie Galloway, Greg Mills, Ingrid Nurse, Jaymond Bryant-Herron, Kay Tembo, Kiran Patel, Lamarie Austin-Stripling, Lyndia Gabriel, Michelle Joshua, Quinton Locklear,

Rayshion Sashington, Sandra Torres, Theresa Scott-Strills, Tina Boyer, Wendy McConnell

Dates for Committee, Sub-Committee, and Leadership Engagement

Full Committee	Sub-Committee	Co-Chairs & City Liaison
June 28, 2022 (20)		
	July 12, 2022	July 12, 2022
		July 21, 2022
No July Full Committee		July 26, 2022
		August 9, 2022
		August 18, 2022
August 23, 2022 (20)		
	No August Sub-Committee	August 25, 2022
		September 3, 2022
September 8, 2022 (21) CUC Report to Council: Year 1		
September 27, 2022 (15)		
	October 11, 2022	
October 25, 2022 (16)		
November 29, 2022 (17)		November 29, 2022
No December Meetings		
Full Committee	Sub-Committee	Co-Chairs & City Liaison
January 24, 2023 (15)		
		February 9, 2023
	February 14, 2023	
		February 21, 2023
February 28, 2023 (18)		
		March 21, 2023

March 28, 2023 (16)		
	April 11, 2023	
April 25, 2023 (13)		
May 23, 2023 (14)		
	June 13, 2023	
July 25, 2023 (18)	Dinner & Book Review <u>Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents</u> by Isabel Wilkerson	
August 22, 2023 (20)		

- Estimated number of people-hours committed in pursuit of excellence: 326 hours
- During the period when Ms. Jaime Brown took off from work to care for herself and her family following her birthing process, the full Committee shifted from a hybrid form of meeting to an entirely Zoom platform meeting format. The CUC appreciates the Herculean efforts on the part of the City’s Ms. Kim Deason who provided tremendous support during Ms. Brown’s absence. Ms. Deason ensured technology links were provided, communication to various departments for scheduling presentations and follow-up questions from the CUC.
- As the subcommittee has been meeting on a weekday, from 2:00-3:00 PM, a fully electronic Zoom platform has been the meeting venue for these two years.

YEAR 1 REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Data Point(s): Last Year’s Housing Survey (Appendix B & Appendix C)

- With the immeasurable help of Ms. Angela Graham, City of Concord Housing Director, we were able to formulate, disseminate, and collect a survey for the residents currently living in public housing (Appendix B)
- Supported by Ms. Diana Grudman, the housing survey was translated into Spanish, to help overcome any linguistic barriers to data collection within our Hispanic Communities.
- Of the 46 residents who completed the survey, 19.5% reported having experienced some form of discrimination (9 out of 46), while 80.43% (37 out of 46) reported they had not experienced discrimination.

- 9/9 stated that their landlord was the main person who discriminated against them
- Leading perceived causes of discrimination as reported: economic, racial, family status
- The survey showed high rent numbers, high numbers of people with disabilities

Transit Summary:

At the time of the year 1 report, the Committee’s work with Transit was still in progress. Due to the granularity of the presentation, which was certainly appreciated, we concluded Transit following last year’s report and have included recommendations in this year’s report.

Transit Recommendations:

1. Make transit a key consideration by requesting departmental input as affordable housing is planned and developed, prior to build.
2. Procurement of micro buses for low-use stops as reflected by the data.
3. Ask Concord businesses to consider providing transit options where currently there are gaps in availability.
4. Rider transit and CCTS merge to open funding availability to better serve our community.

YEAR 2 REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Policing Summary:

“ The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent on public approval of police existence, actions, behavior and the ability of the police to secure and maintain public respect.”
Lee P. Brown, Policing in the 21st Century: Community Policing

Policing Recommendations:

1. Establish a diverse recruitment team with equal representation of race, ethnicity, and gender. The recruitment team should develop a targeted diverse recruitment strategy which would include attending recruitment events at local and nearby

HBCUs, local and nearby community colleges, high schools, communities of color, in all cities that comprise Cabarrus County.

2. Recommended ideas for a truly diverse team for these recruitment efforts might include, but not limited to, ideas such as:
 - a. Potential recommendation for promotion mentorship/shepherding that comprehensively includes both the eligibility component along with active encouragement
 - b. Transparency on how personnel get promoted, will also potentially help with retention
3. Extend the diverse recruitment team into elementary, middle, and high schools to inform the youth about law enforcement and encourage minority participation in the youth police and the cadet academy
4. Implement the addition of a mental health option for emergency call needs, the consideration to also have veterans respond to veterans who are experiencing a mental health crisis
5. Establish readily available access to all traffic and community engagement stops with the citizens of Concord that is easily accessible to all citizens on the city website, where the information can be extracted based on zip code, radiuses, distances and specific communities.
6. Need for traffic data availability regarding *blue light stops* and *contact stops* and the outcome of these stops for at least 3-5 years for appropriate benchmarking.
7. An additional question emerged related to the police equipment - why are we paying through forfeiture money vs. allocated funds for the equipment?
8. The following captures unanswered CPD questions:
 - a. What and how are recruitment materials distributed?
 - b. What is the recruitment approach?
 - c. Are there designated teams? If so, who is on them?
 - d. Do you keep/utilize notes from hiring interviews?
 - e. How are the internal promotions posted?
 - f. What does transparency behind the promotion process look like?
 - g. Is there a feedback loop if an internal candidate is not selected?
 - h. Is there a mentor program to assist with the promotion process?

Human Resources Summary:

Insufficient demographic data spanning recent years coupled with inaccessibility of the data on an electronic platform makes it challenging to parse out, identify, and assess trend data.

Human Resources Recommendations:

1. List HR Department personnel directory on the homepage, including personnel's name, title, and contact information.
2. Budget and execute a strategic plan to convert all HR files from existing paper to a digital format, thereby enabling data searches. This step should also include Council's .pdf files to be topic/word searchable.
3. Track demographic data (race, gender, ability, age, and language) of applicants and employees.
 - a. If demographic data collection is optional, encourage applicants and employees to provide the information (if willing), by highlighting the benefits of providing said information.
 - b. Create recruitment processes that allow for better representation across the City staff.
4. Collect and synthesize exit interview data.
 - a. Identify and rectify grievances related to inequity expressed during exit interviews.
 - b. Use data to better inform retention practices.

Fire Department Summary:

The Fire Department's thoroughness and transparency made this topic accessible. The process felt collaborative and aided in the Committee's ability to make recommendations.

Fire Department Recommendations:

1. Establish a diverse recruitment team with equal representation of race, ethnicity, and gender. The recruitment team should develop a targeted diverse recruitment strategy which would include attending recruitment events at local and nearby HBCUs, local and nearby community colleges, high schools, communities of color, in all cities that comprise Cabarrus County.
2. Ensure personal biases on race, gender, body image, and/or perceived physical fitness are not barriers to the application process
 - a. Through trainings/workshops and other tools that address unconscious bias
3. While the average response time for our fire department is 4 minutes or less, there are areas of our city where response times are as long as 8 minutes.

Tracking response times by neighborhood location would be very helpful in assessing fairness and equity by community demographics.

Systemic Bias/Racial Equity Findings

While the City of Concord departmental leaders have done a masterful job of presenting their respective departments in the best light, as one would expect, the Committee's subsequent requests for more granular data have not always been fruitful; apparent reasons for the information gaps included the lack of record-keeping of the requested data, a lack of an efficient data collection mechanism with sorting capability, or reluctance to simply provide the information requested.

In light of this paucity of comprehensive data, the determination of systemic bias or racial inequity, extant in the City of Concord's policy and procedures pertaining to these respective departments, **is inconclusive**.

Post-Script

In addition to reviewing the City's departments for issues of racial inequities, it has become evident that the CUC has an additional purpose in the community. As a diverse and appropriately represented body of the City of Concord, the CUC has served as an open group for feedback, ideas, and community support towards the improvement of diversity, equity and inclusion in various community programs and projects.

- Concord 101 Classes
- Concord International Festival
- Cabarrus Arts Council
- NAACP

We are looking forward to deepening our engagement with the community over the course of the next year and are grateful that the City Council is open to receiving our recommendations, providing feedback, and acting on those actionable items in a timely manner.

APPENDIX A

Concord United Committee

At the February 11, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council approved the establishment of the Concord United Committee. In order to stagger the terms of office, one-third of initial appointments will be for 1 year, one-third of initial appointments will be for 2 years, and the one-third of initial appointments will be for 3 years. Members shall have three-year appointments following initial appointments.

Robert Kirk	4/30/24 – Co-Chair
*Bertram Hinton, Jr.	4/30/25 – Co-Chair
**Ann Fleming	4/30/26 – Co-Chair
Wendy McConnell (filling unexp. tm of Jennifer Terris)	4/30/24
Michelle Joshua (to fill Joe DeJesus' term)	4/30/24
Kiran Patel	4/30/24
Lyndia Gabriel	4/30/24
Rayshion Sashington	4/30/24
Sandra Torres	4/30/24
Theresa Scott-Stills	4/30/24
*Aimy Steele	4/30/25
*Bob Anderson (to fill unexpired term of Betty Stocks)	4/30/25
*Cecilia Perz (filling unexp. tm of Caroline Overcash)	4/30/25
*Greg Mills	4/30/25
*Lamarie Austin-Stripling	4/30/25
*Quinton Locklear	4/30/25
Tina Boyer	4/30/25
**Amos McClorey	4/30/26
**Kay Tembo	4/30/26
**Cindy Hanson	4/30/26
**Douglas Carroll	4/30/26
**Gracie Galloway	4/30/26
**Ingrid Nurse	4/30/26
**Jaymond Bryant-Herron	4/30/26

*Reappointed to first 3-year term at the April 14, 2022 Council Meeting

**Reappointed to first 3-year term at the May 11, 2023 Council Meeting

APPENDIX B– Housing Survey English/Spanish

Racial Demographics

Ethnic Categories (select only one)

Hispanic or Latino - 7

Not Hispanic or Latino - 23

Did Not Report - 7

Racial Category (select only one)

White - 5

Black/African American - 19

Black/African American/White - 1

Other Multi-Racial - 8

Did Not Report - 4

Other Demographics

Age

18-24 - 2

25-34 - 6

35-44 - 7

45-54 - 8

55-64 - 4

65+ - 3

No answer - 7

Do you have a disability?

Yes - 11

No - 21

No answer - 5

Do you have children under the age of 18 years old in your home?

Yes - 16

No - 18

No answer - 3

In the event that category totals do not equal 46 (the total number of respondents), please note it is because respondents did not answer certain questions. The survey and its accompanying questions were optional and voluntary.

APPENDIX C– Follow Up on Year 1 Recommendations

Responses as of July 2023

The 2022 Advice:

1. Housing: Recommendations addressing racial and other inequities

a) It should be the policy of the City of Concord Housing Department that all programs and materials are available in both English and Spanish.

City Housing-Follow Up Response

The Housing Department employs a bi-lingual Spanish speaking staff member to assist with clients who have limited English proficiency. In addition, the Housing Dept is able to utilize HUD provided translated documents that support the assistance of persons with limited English proficiency in utilizing our housing programs.

The Housing Department plans to revamp its website with a multimedia marketing firm that specializes in website design for housing authorities. The new website will provide translation as well as meeting ADA requirements.

Additionally, all after-hours calls to the Housing department are now handled by the Communications Department, which utilizes third party translation services as needed.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

WeBuild Concord's website has a translator that features seven languages, including Spanish. Over ninety-five percent of our materials are virtual. However, we will provide English and Spanish versions as we produce hard copies of materials for public consumption.

Our home application partner, Prosperity Unlimited, has a Spanish-speaking counselor and application materials in Spanish. They are investigating changes to their website to add translator services similar to WeBuild Concord.

b) It should be the policy of the City of Concord Planning Department that affordable housing opportunities are made available in English and Spanish in a variety of advertisement methods, including, but not limited to, website, print, social media.

City Planning Department-Follow Up Response

All Community Development printed information is available in both English and Spanish. This includes applications for residents, applications for contractors, brochures, etc. CD Staff begun in 2021 providing educational opportunities in both English and Spanish. All information regarding public input, surveys, or websites features a 'translate' button for non-English speaking residents. Staff keeps a "What's your language card" to help determine needs of non-English speakers. Community Development has had a language translation service under contract since 2019 to assist with calls or in-person needs.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

In addition to WeBuild Concord's website and translation services, our Advisory Council recommended placing advertisements in Spanish-speaking media. As part of our strategic marketing plan, we are integrating language access and barriers into our plan.

2. Recommendations for affordable housing

a) Computer Literacy programs were noted as offered. More emphasis should be placed on financial education and literacy with emphasis on progressing to rental readiness and home ownership. This should be a requirement for program participation. Education should be an outreach effort, taking the information and training to trust places and through trusted people.

City Housing-Follow Up Response

The Concord Housing Department has partnerships with local agencies and financial institutions that provide workshops on financial literacy topics. Participation in these programs is voluntary and is not a requirement to receive housing assistance. Under our current structure, we cannot make program participation a requirement. We could restructure (with HUD approval) and seek this as a requirement. It is a process but the option is there if Council wants staff to pursue it.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

WeBuild Concord requires all applicants to undergo Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified training with Prosperity Unlimited to promote financial literacy, rent-readiness, and homeownership. We do not duplicate services whenever possible.

While financial literacy is outside the direct scope of WeBuild, we urge current financial literacy agencies to do two things related to this recommendation.

- 1) Develop a collective impact model and shared curriculums for financial literacy, rental-readiness, and homeownership that includes the existing strengths of the target population. For example, many individuals in these target communities manage meager budgets well. They lack income. Thus, expanding financial literacy to play off of these strengths provides a more strategic and inclusionary approach to the topic. This includes wrap-around support in other areas such as workforce development, entrepreneurship, financial products, or other income generation or expense reduction tools.
- 2) The Spanish-speaking community should be engaged to inform leaders what and who are the “trust places” and “trusted people.” However, this does not mean these individuals have the skills to provide the financial services needed to accomplish the goal. The conversation should be focused on how you use trusted individuals and organizations to integrate inclusive services into the subject matter expert agencies (SME-A) or SME-As into Spanish-speaking agencies. This requires recruiting individuals representing these communities' cultures, as language is only part of the opportunity. As part of this effort, beware of going to the same individuals as representations of these communities. The diverse populations within these cultures face “isms” (racism, colorism, classism, gender bias, etc.) within the broad categories of Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, or others.

b) After analyzing homes back five (5) years in the records, for the four (4) houses built by the City, three (3) were purchased by African Americans, one (1) purchased by Caucasian. Of the seven (7) grants submitted, six (6) were African American and one (1) was Caucasian. Demographics in the community also include Asians and Hispanics. The City should ensure equitable outreach of resources and education programs to all ethnic groups in the City.

CUC recommends potentially adding financial outreach/literacy to the International Festival to reach a broader audience of ethnic groups. Additionally, broadening the scope of financial literacy from Logan/public housing which can create a greater reach of the City, perhaps through partnerships with the community colleges and through the faith-based community.

City Housing-Follow Up Response

WeBuild relies heavily on Prosperity Unlimited for financial literacy so they may be a good fit for the International Festival. However, to avoid the perception of favoritism to a certain agency, the County-wide Housing Collaborative would be an advisable starting point to see if they have interest in setting up a booth at the International Festival.

WeBuild - Follow Up Response

WeBuild Concord is recruiting additional board members and Advisory Council members. We will focus on representation from the Hispanic, Latino, and Asian communities. Representation at higher levels of decision-making may support diversification at the ground level in addition to comments in the previous sections above. Related to this recommendation, we may need to look closer at economic and social data related to these groups, as it may be an indicator of affordable housing needs.

c) The summary of homeownership programs asserts that these programs promote more self-sufficiency and economic homeownership opportunities. However, the data shows that most who are in the public housing programs are multi-generational program participants. There is little economic mobility/change/transformation for the program participants. Creating a tiered, graduation style approach, partnered with increased financial literacy/competency, allows program 'room' for space to address ethnic diversity in program participation.

City Housing-Follow Up Response

The Concord Housing Department has received a renewal of the Family Sufficiency grant by HUD. The purpose of this grant is to assist families in increasing their income and improving their financial stability. The FSS program is a voluntary program offered to families in HUD-assisted housing who are provided coaching, referred to services and establish a family escrow savings account. Upon completion of the FSS Program, residents receive their escrow funds which can be used for a down payment or other homeownership expenses and self-sufficiency, including homeownership. The Housing Department has been successful in transitioning several families from assisted housing into homeownership.

More clarity is needed on “creating a tiered, graduation style approach”. Public Housing is required to operate under strict HUD rules so more information is needed from CUC on their suggestion. If the meaning of this approach is to move more people out of Public Housing into market-rate homes (rental or ownership), the availability of affordable housing remains a barrier. WeBuild is working to create more inventory but this will take time.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

The Cabarrus Housing Collaborative may be a good start for this conversation. The Collaborative is mapping out transitions between transitional housing, rental housing, and homeownership based on income. There has been discussion of ethnic inclusion within these as well.

d) If community land trusts are the preferred mechanism to help create permanently affordable housing locations, emphasis should be on blending community demographics so as to avoid segregating.

Legal Department Consideration

Not certain if this is aimed at private land trusts or a future City owned land trust. If private, the City can certainly encourage private entities to be inclusive, but cannot require such private landowners to sell, rent or otherwise cater to any specific demographic. If aimed at a future City owned land trust, the City can absolutely adopt policies regarding inclusiveness in sales, rental or other uses of such trust property.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

WeBuild Concord has developed a practice and strategy to develop mixed-income neighborhoods. Three of its current multi-family and density projects are mixed-income. This includes some of its single-family homes. Approximately two-thirds of WeBuild residents earn at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). The other third is in the workforce housing category, up to 110 percent of AMI.

e) Changes to the zoning ordinances to allow for land trusts to build more than just single-family homes in new developments where land becomes available throughout the city.

Legal Department Consideration

Whether any particular zoning amendment meets the requirements of state and federal law is dependent upon the specific language of that ordinance. Legal will need to review any recommended changes for State law compliance.

City Planning Department-Follow Up Response

There are policies in the 2030 LUP for encouraging a variety of housing types throughout the City. Furthermore, the Planning and Zoning Board has discussed allowing different types of housing in an infill setting. We are moving this way with the tiny home/cottage home changes anyway, and we anticipate a deeper dive into how we look at infill, particularly given the sewer situation.

WeBuild - Follow Up Response

Some WeBuild Concord developments have and will influence changes to zoning or policies. The larger issue is the availability of land in other parts of Concord that are affordable and suitable for affordable housing development. Some changes must be made in areas allowing only a single home on multiple acres.

Infrastructure is also an issue for many affordable plots, as they cannot access City sewer or water. WeBuild is assessing the availability of more mixed-use opportunities that may provide density near economic centers.

f) Tax incentives for community land trusts; adding a requirement for the larger developers to donate a portion of their development towards land trust usage.

Legal Department Consideration

Tax incentives for community land trusts. More information/clarity is needed on this recommendation. This would only be legal if there is a state statute allowing such an incentive. Legal is not aware of any such statute in NC. Adding a requirement for the larger developers to donate a portion of their development towards land trust usage. This is likely not legal in NC. Again, unless there is a statute that specifically allows the City to adopt such a requirement, the City cannot force land owners to donate their property for any use.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

This is a recommendation worth investigating. WeBuild Concord does provide tax letters for land donations or equity donations for discounted land. A combination of tax incentives and donor tax relief may be beneficial.

g) Establishment of a policy for ethnic diversity in the communities established by the land trusts.

Legal Department Consideration

The City is free to adopt any policy that it desires. However, if this is referring to privately owned land trusts, a City policy is likely unenforceable against such private landowners. At the present time, the City itself does not have a land trust to which such a policy would apply. Private land trusts would certainly be subject to all state and federal laws regarding anti-discrimination in housing.

WeBuild-Follow Up Response

WeBuild has inclusion and non-discrimination policies. Some public funding does not allow the use of race or gender but uses income-based guidelines. Some private foundations promote racial and ethnic equity but are not well-resourced for construction.

As stated in a previous section, placing more diversity into decision-making roles and promoting tangible partnerships that are led by these populations is equally important.