



Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Linda Gorton
Mayor

April 16, 2021

Hello everyone,

It has been just six months since we received the final report from the Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice. After a summer full of meetings, the report was compiled by the 70 hard-working members of the Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice and Equality, chaired by Roszalyn Akins and Dr. Gerald L. Smith. The 68-page report includes 54 recommendations that touch all corners of the community.

Since I received the report Oct. 23, 2020, we have been working to implement its recommendations. It has been very important to me to make progress, and I'm proud to report that we have implemented many recommendations. I have attached a Progress Report.

Another way to measure our progress is by tracking the funds we have spent in Fiscal Year 21 to implement the recommendations, plus the funds I have included in my budget proposal for Fiscal Year 22. Altogether, I estimate this funding at \$4.9 million ... *so far*. The specific details are available at the end of the Progress Report (attached).

Lisa Higgins-Hord, University of Kentucky Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement, has spent many hours helping our City Hall team with the implementation. Thanks to Lisa, UK and Dr. Capilouto for its unfailing support of this initiative. I have also attached a letter from Lisa.

To complete the implementation, I have included a new senior aide position in the Mayor's Office in my budget proposal for Fiscal Year 22. This person will be devoted exclusively to completing the implementation.

When I received the report from the Commission back in October, I was determined to put it into action. Despite the pandemic and all of the challenges of the past year, Lexington has made considerable progress in rooting out systemic racism in our community. We still have work to do, but we're off to a solid start.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Gorton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Gorton
Mayor

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I have spent the past month and a half meeting with the Co-Chairs of the Commission of Racial Justice & Equality, Councilmembers, the Vice Mayor, the University of Kentucky, United Way of the Bluegrass and the Bluegrass Community Foundation gathering thoughts and building connections to get this work off a page and make it part of our reality.

I commend the wisdom of the leadership and the dedication of the Commission members who worked diligently in providing us with these recommendations in such a short timeframe. The data, the historical references and the reality of black and brown peoples' lived experiences have jolted our community into realizing this stark and vivid picture of their conditions must be dealt with immediately. It has become the catalyst for change. Digesting these truths is uncomfortable, but it magnifies the issues and highlights the sense of urgency to create solutions now.

The city cannot do this work alone. We are all connected, and the future of Lexington and the results yielded from the recommendations will be determined by how we interact together in the present. How we work together to create solutions will be our legacy.

As I have stated before, we are in an evolutionary time marked with a common purpose to move this set of dynamic and fluid recommendations forward with a clear plan of action. These recommendations are serving as the basis for our work and must not be done in isolation, they must be connected into synergistic spaces that seek change within the black community, which brings us to our next phase.

We are currently in the implementation phase, which requires vision, building a framework and a support structure to scale up the recommendations, all of which are critical to success. It is impossible to create systems in which black families are whole, self-sustaining and thriving without providing a sustainable foundation that builds within its core, key attributes. The consistency of preparation is extremely important, and that is why I am proud of the core team we have identified and I work with weekly to address progress, much of which you will review today.

We also work on building support within city government and our community. We are addressing accountability measures, discussing current and future systems that serve black and brown people, and gathering and beginning to work with committed community partners, who will use their wisdom and knowledge to advance our work. We are also researching significant funding sources to support these efforts. This is the type of strategy it takes to design a long-term commitment and embed best practices

into a reconstructed system. We are not focused on a series of “one and done” conversations or a “checklist” of items. Within these spaces will be creative, sustainable and scalable transformative community partnerships which can be formed to build a more whole and thriving community for all. We are working to enhance human beings’ lives...black lives. This requires an integrated process of immense complexity. We have a significant number of pathways available to make these recommendations a reality. What we are doing now is connecting and coordinating our effort to calculate the future costs of the current decisions.

The University of Kentucky is a committed partner and I am in the process of identifying those internal partners and submitting the plan to President Capilouto. It will include faculty, staff and student expertise to support the capacity building of some of the recommendations. Each person I’ve had a conversation with and has shown interest in participating further in this important work will be contacted in the near future to assist me in building logic models for each recommendation the Mayor has approved. The construction of these logic models will be led by University of Kentucky Associate Professor Dr. Kristina Hains in the College of Food, Agriculture and Environment. She is an expert in designing logic models and I am so happy to have her commitment to work with our community on building these logic models. I will have more details on this in the near future, as well as the identification of additional education partners to discuss their commitment to the work ahead of us.

I want to thank the Mayor for her commitment to this important work. I am unwavering in my charge and a firm believer that serving our community is to secure our future. We are legacy builders because we are designing an exceptional thriving community that will benefit all of Lexington.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Higgins-Hord". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Higgins-Hord
Asst. Vice President for Community Engagement



Our progress to date

Action on Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice and Equality Report Recommendations

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- **A Request for Proposals has been issued for a Disparity and Availability Study whose goal is determining the availability of Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), and Women Business Enterprise (WBE) in the area.**
 - **Proposals have been received, a consulting firm has been selected, and the contract is currently being negotiated. Once an agreement has been finalized, the contract will be recommended to Council for their approval, anticipated by mid-May.**

Economic Opportunity Recommendation #2: Issue a disparity study to determine if there is a disparity between the availability and utilization of MBE Firms.

HOUSING AND GENTRIFICATION

- **A new Department of Housing Advocacy is included in the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget.**
 - **Mission Statement: To develop and implement strategies to build strong and equitable neighborhoods, provide needed guidance, and ensure sustainable growth and development to improve quality of life for Lexington residents.**
 - **Purpose: Recognizing the importance of strong and equitable neighborhoods, the Department of Housing Advocacy and Community Development uses federal, state, and local funding to provide a variety of public service to the community, including Homelessness Prevention and Intervention, Affordable Housing, Code Enforcement, Grants and Special Programs, Historic Preservation, and Community and Resident Services.**

Housing & Gentrification Recommendations

#1: The city must create an Office of Housing Advocate, by ordinance and with permanent funding, to centralize and provide oversight of the full spectrum of housing needs in our community.

#3: The city must put in place mechanisms to keep housing affordable. It is possible to stem the tide of gentrification, while creating more housing opportunity for all Lexingtonians.

#5: The city must financially invest in gentrifying neighborhoods and neighborhoods that are at risk of gentrifying where disinvestment and displacement has occurred, and is occurring.

- **A new Code Enforcement Assistance program is included in the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget.**
 - **This program, which will be managed out of the Commissioner's Office of the Department of Housing Advocacy and Community Development, will be for low-income/eligible homeowners to address and remediate housing violations issued by Code Enforcement.**

Housing & Gentrification Recommendation #2: Changes must be implemented in the Division of Code Enforcement. Our recommendation is the Housing Code of the City of Lexington be re-imagined into a Code Agency that places the health, well-being, and protection of residents (especially the most vulnerable) and neighborhoods as its mission.



- **The City has allocated over \$2 million in local funds and another \$10.1 million in federal funds to eviction assistance programs to aid in eviction prevention. This program is ongoing.**
<https://www.lexingtonky.gov/how-do-i-get-help>

Housing & Gentrification Recommendation #4: The city must allot a portion of the COVID-19 funding toward eviction prevention initiatives.

RACIAL EQUITY

- **The city is working on locating space, training partnerships, and programming for one or multiple Job Training and Community Center(s). The city already offers job training through several partners, and job training is again part of the Mayor’s budget plan for FY 22.**

Racial Equity Recommendation #3: Establish a Job Training and Community Center

- **Proposals have been received and a contract will be awarded in the next few weeks for Diversity and Inclusion workshops for all city employees.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #13: Enhance and establish bias training and evaluation procedures.

- **A full communications plan is currently being developed with the city and the University of Kentucky College of Communication and Information to create a dynamic plan that will remain current, comprehensive, and responsive to our community. The College of Communication and Information at the University of Kentucky is interesting in partnering with the city to build a comprehensive communication plan to share progress and seek feedback, creating targeted campaigns and channels for different segments of the community.**

Racial Equity Recommendation #2: Create and Implement a Multi-Media Communications Strategy Designed to Educate, Inform and Engage the Community on Matters of Racial Equity

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police Transparency Website

- **Council approved in March that body-worn cameras will expand to entire police force. Additional cameras have been purchased, and it is anticipated that they will arrive and be fully deployed across the police force by late summer 2021.** <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/body-worn-cameras>

Law Enforcement Recommendation #3: Officers be required to wear body worn cameras

- **The acquisition of technology that allows for automatic activation of body-worn cameras when a Taser or weapon is drawn is included in the Mayor’s Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #3: Officers be required to wear body worn cameras



- **Police training for de-escalation techniques is ongoing and continuing, especially as it relates to use-of-force incidents.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #5: Reviews of Police de-escalation and use of force

- **Strengthening the current anti-retaliation policy is being included in the pending update to Police policies.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #6: Anti-retaliation policy against complainants

- **Enhancement of information in Police reports, specifically information related to searches where a person was handcuffed but not arrested, is complete, following a Police Executive Order (*an immediate change to an existing policy before it can be formalized*) issued by Chief Weathers dated October 12, 2020.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #8: Enhance information in police reports

- **Information on police business cards [now directs citizens to the Police Transparency website](#) to enhance community relations and communications. That website includes, but is not limited to the following:**

- [Police Public Comment form](#)
- [Police Complaint process](#)
- [What to expect when stopped by police](#)

Law Enforcement Recommendation #9: Enhance Community Relations

- **Professors at Eastern Kentucky University, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Cincinnati have been consulted and asked for recommendations and input on how to improve providing of reports and analysis data.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #10: Police to provide reports and analysis

- **Police Data has been submitted to the [National Use-of-Force Data Collection](#), Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #11: Submit information to the National Use-of-Force Data Collection

- **New Lexington Police officers will be recruited based on recommendations from the publication *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*. This publication, and the Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice & Equality Recommendations, are not only being used in the recruitment and training of new officers, but are also a focus in the ongoing training of current officers.**
 - [Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer](#)
 - [LPD Evaluation of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing](#)



Law Enforcement Recommendation #12: Recruit new officers for the Lexington Police Department and Fayette County Sheriff's office based upon the recommendations from the publication *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*

- **The city is collaborating with other stakeholders and social service agencies to establish a Sobering Center. This Center would provide an option for an alternative to detention for citizens cited for being under the influence.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #16: Sobering Center

- **LPD is reviewing other models with Dean of the University of Kentucky, College of Social Work, in order to be able to effectively and successfully divert 9-1-1 calls related to addiction, mental health, and homelessness to professionals outside of law enforcement. Police are already working with [New Vista and their Community Outreach team](#) to utilize those resources as appropriate.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #15: Establish 911 Diversion Plan-Pilot

- **Bias Training for Police has been enhanced.**
 - **The bias training module has been updated.**
 - **The training was submitted to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council and approved to teach.**
 - **The training will be utilized during the next new hire recruiting class.**

Law Enforcement Recommendation #13: Enhance and Establish Bias Training and Evaluation Procedures

RELATED PROGRESS OUTSIDE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Mayor's Office is in the process of developing a permanent Racial Justice Commission.
- The city's [Eviction Prevention/Utility Assistance Program](#) is ongoing.
- [Mayor's COVID-19 Mobile Neighborhood Testing Program](#)
- [UK/LFUCG COVID-19 Mobile Vaccine Clinic](#)
- [Renaming of Henry A. Tandy Centennial Park](#)
- [Creation of the Safety NET Program](#)
- Council has allocated the funding of \$300,000 to make repairs to [the Palmer Building](#) in order to issue a new Request for Proposals after the RFP in last fall to sell the building to possible interested agencies returned no proposals.
- The city will collaborate with [New Vista to engage with their Crisis Outreach Team](#) in a Pilot Program
- Increased funding for Human Resources for minority recruitment is included in the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget.



These investments allocated and proposed in the community from the city, with the cooperation of the Council, have been over \$4.9 million to date.

Money Allocated Previous to Mayor’s Proposed Budget

- \$2 million in local funds for Eviction Assistance Program
- \$500,000 allocated for Disparity Study
- \$122,237 in local funds to purchase body cameras for officers that did not previously have them
- \$120,000 allocated for Diversity Training Program

Money in Mayor’s Proposed Budget

- \$20,000 increase in LFUCG Minority Recruiting Efforts
- \$80,000 in personnel funding for new Racial Equity position in Mayor’s Office
- \$25,000 in professional services for Mayor’s Office Commission initiatives
- \$602,694 for five Neighborhood Resource Officers, 1 sergeant, and vehicle expenses
- \$1 million increased allocation to Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- \$229,921 for two positions to create Department of Housing Advocacy
- \$200,000 for Code Enforcement Assistance Program