

Equity Focus Group:

City of Asheville's Fifth Floor Conference Room: November 14, 2016,
12:00 P.M. to 1 P.M.

In attendance:

Vicki Meath (Just Economics)
Joe Fiocola (Neighborhood Advisory Committee)
Blake Essylstyn (Frontwater)
Gene Bower (Housing Authority)
J Hackett (Green Opportunities)
Stephanie Twitty (Eagle Street Market Development Corporation)
Stacy Merten (COA)
Sealy Chipley (Chipley)

Define Equity

- Providing opportunities for everyone based on the realization that everyone has different starting places
- Equity Diversity: in all its forms, racial diversity, socioeconomic opportunities, gender, considerations of diversity,
- Gene: Live in gross inequity every day. The people who are taking the lead on equity. Hear rhetoric and see that there is no equity. Have large employers
- Equity: Living wage jobs + housing affordability. Dealing with the problem. Economic equity, racial equity
- The community meets a lot. Have confused the Liberal agenda with people caring about black people. Get to some point of matrix actions. Grossly misused
- Impediments: willing to talk to people: EG. Ingles or Mission not paying living wage:
- J: Equity: Richmond waws a lot more supportive and diverse, and proactive. Richmond decided to admit the problem, AVL hasn't admitted it has a problem. Liberal politics
- All the money going to events.
- Black people can't talk about black people without also talking about LGBTQ issues
 - People want to work but cannot work:
- When people take stuff seriously, they put it on the budget line
- Exposure to inequity:
 - When talking about economics: Differentiate between wealth and wages. There is a huge racial wealth gap. Need to address wealth gap to who has access to assets.

Suggestions:

- Gene: need a Matrix: Bad stuff and good stuff, and in the middle of the issue is that they can't be addressed
- Be more realistic
- **Work better with partners who are on the ground**
- City should have a good working relationship with the people they work with:
 - **Bountiful cities, Partners unlimited, Residents Council**
 - **Add financial incentives to help these groups: pay them to do it**
- Safe places and safe people: Grow a more diverse population of diverse populations. Need to talk to students about a place in local government
- J: University of Chicago: Wrote a series: Building Cities from Inside Out:
 - Have assessed the needs and values in their communities:
 - Did this inside housing properties

- Did this in mixed use properties
 - What assets did they have?
 - Cities took this into the process: City came into support the efforts:
- What's the Matter with Kansas?
- Stephanie: Black Wealth White Wealth
 - Co-Thinkk Tracey Washington: Particularly around engagement piece: Has assembled organizations around the table. Could be leaders there:
- Just try some stuff: don't need to wait until we have ironed it out and it looks really pretty

Other places we can learn from

Richmond: Midsized city: Richmond City surrounded by five counties. All five counties work together. A biz couldn't construct new buildings at a living wage. There are some creative ways around this

Existing in an old mentality: Need to have new development come here. In order to get your permits. Could be implementing or waiving fees based on the willingness to do this stuff

- Waiver on fees:
- What it feels like: If it were important for the City, they would have spoken up. The poorer people don't have access to this. Their city is not interested in not talking about this.
- New infrastructure
- City could listen to people and manipulating the data to show the results that the City wants to show
 - Need to separate: White women of privilege shouldn't be put in the same category of minority biz
- Durham and Greensboro have good examples with regards to equity:
 - Cities in NC

Major issue: Transit

- City could respond to advanced manufacturing.
 - There are lots of people who live here and could work here
 - Need to have the bus run through Biltmore, PLI, Grove
 - City hasn't been working with Just Economics,
 - The People's Voice on Transportation Equality: Push for Sunday service, Just Economics didn't support bond package...Because
 - Disparities in the bus system
 - Bus Rider Program:
 - Started by the
 - Want all buses to run til 10 PM
- Cant drive the bus system by ridership:
 - Down because it's not available
- Another convo we need: Most of the jobs are in the retail/service industries. They have to work at weird hours. Peaks fast food: Lunch/afternoons. There is no bus when they get off?
 - Gene has ridden a bus everywhere: Had a job with two kids: have to leave kids at home.
 - Access to daycare. Very rigid in terms of availability
- Vicki's last straw: august: public input session: Shuttle system...putting white people and black people on different buses.
- Ingles sponsors a bus for River Arts Tour: You would think if willing to move people around in RAD
 - Would think the City has the desire to work with poor people to jobs:
 - Not in competition. Business is prioritized
- What would those improvements look like?

- Don't need to be mutually exclusive;
- Side effect of getting people together: Using city buses...
 - Identify that we have a problem
 - Prioritize buses so that all people can use
- Blake is concerned who is at the table?
- Stephanie:
 - There are members of the community that say the decisions are not made with input
 - Even while they are saying that, not showing up
 - There are a lot of ideas out there:
- Need crosswalks: Livingston cant even get one!
 - Livingston and Depot. Kids crossing the street
- City: Has decades of not listening to people
 - City can't just say: Now we are going to be diverse
 - City knows the key players
- The food park was also bountiful
- Vicki: How the City takes surveys: put surveys online: who are you reaching out to take surveys?
 - Entering paper surveys: to give the copies of the surveys
 - What data are they relying on?
 - NOT the people
- How are the questions asked?
 - They don't get at the input you want to give?

