



PROJECT

UNITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

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**MESSAGE FROM
OUR TEAM LEADERS**



MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM LEADERS

Unity is the greatest aspiration for any society.

This great endeavor is about ensuring that, in Tuscaloosa, there is always a light of equity, justice, and togetherness to shine on the darkness of apathy, injustice, and division. Over these past months, I've learned so much about the community in which we live, work, and play. I've come to realize that although we may differ in race, color, or creed, there is UNITY in our *strength*, UNITY in our *diversity*, and UNITY in our *trust*. In this ever-changing world--full of chaos across the land- there is still HOPE and that hope is found in those people who actually care about the betterment of their communities and other people.

With that being said, we could not have traveled this course without amazing Project UNITY team leaders, subcommittee members, and support staff. Thank you for your willingness to share your time, expertise, and experiences in order to build a better and stronger community. It is your concerted efforts and actionable recommendations that will fuel the torch of Unity for generations to come.

As always, WE are listening, learning, and adapting.

LaParry Howell

Project Team Leader

LaShonda Kemp

Deputy Project Team Leader





MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM LEADERS

We know that a highly engaged community contributes to a healthy and safe community.

With this common goal in mind, the Chief's Commission on Community Policing continues to support the Tuscaloosa Police Department's prioritization of building strong, two-way relationships with the public as one of the best ways the department can serve the community. We recognize the value of public participation and citizen involvement – and hope that it promotes trust while reinforcing the shared belief that everyone benefits when the department succeeds.

In the past year, the Tuscaloosa Police Department has made great strides in its renewed effort to focus on community policing. For the Chief's Commission and the Tuscaloosa Police Department, the appointment of a Deputy Chief of Community Policing in September 2020 has been the most significant of these efforts.

The ongoing work of the Chief's Commission on Community Policing has made significant recommendations that will help bridge real and perceived divides between law enforcement and our citizens. The Chief's Commission looks forward to its continued partnership with the Tuscaloosa Police Department in the months and years to come.

Severn "Sebo" Sanders
Project Team Leader

Scott Holmes
Deputy Project Team Leader





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project Unity Team Leaders, Members, & Support Staff would like to take a moment to recognize the many individuals and organizations that have shared their work, experiences, dreams, and fears with us in hopes that we can help build a more compassionate, responsive, and equitable community.

"If you see something that is not right, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it "

- John Lewis

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PROJECT UNITY



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PROJECT UNITY

“Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.”

~ Margaret Mead

2020 was a profound year in our nation's history and for the Tuscaloosa community. While we grappled with the unprecedented effects of COVID-19, we also navigated waves of racial, social, economic, disparities magnified by the extrajudicial murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery.

After weeks of conversations between dozens of concerned citizens and city hall, it became clear that honest dialogue and citizen-centered action were the only paths forward for Tuscaloosa.

The result of those conversations is Project Unity.

Project Unity is a citizen-led, community collaboration initiative dedicated to a common goal-- to reduce inequities within Tuscaloosa's underserved communities. It consists of two independent but synergistic committees: the Mayor's Alliance for Advancement and Opportunity and the Chief's Commission for Community Policing.

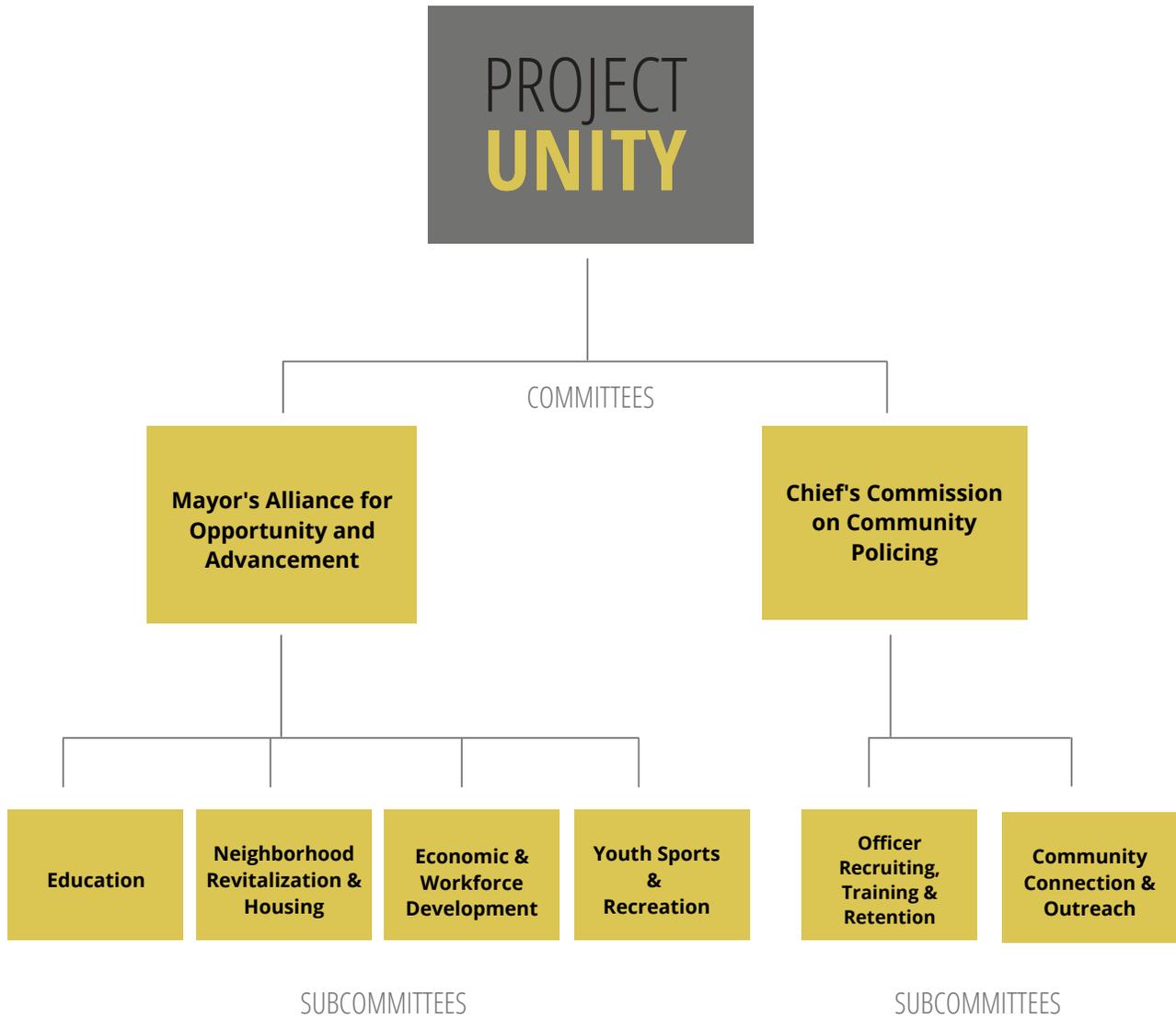
The Mayor's Alliance for Opportunity & Advancement, which has a larger scope, targets four areas of disparity within Tuscaloosa's community: educational, economic, housing, and recreational. Each of these four areas is developed into a subcommittee that directs its efforts into improving outcomes in that specific area.

The Chief's Commission on Community Policing, with its more narrow focus, centers on the Tuscaloosa Police Department and aims to address real and perceived gaps in policing, officer recruitment, training, and retention. It is divided into two subcommittees: Community Policing and Officer Recruitment, Training, and Retention. Again, like the Mayor's Alliance subcommittees, these two subcommittees are created to improve outcomes in their respective area.

Over the past months, Project Unity's subcommittees have worked diligently to craft considerate, compassionate, viable recommendations to move Tuscaloosa forward.

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PROJECT UNITY



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PROJECT UNITY

MAYOR'S ALLIANCE FOR OPPORTUNITY & ADVANCEMENT

ABOUT

The Mayor's Alliance for Opportunity & Advancement or Mayor's Alliance, for short, is half of Project Unity. It consists of four aligned subcommittees: Economic & Workforce Development, Education, Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing, and Youth Sports & Recreation. Its goal is to alleviate the conditions that contribute to inequity and to improve outcomes for underserved individuals and communities.

MISSION

The mission of the Mayor's Alliance is to enhance educational, economic, housing, and recreational opportunities while reducing crime, poverty, and blight that disproportionately impacts the underserved communities in Tuscaloosa

SUBCOMMITTEES

The Mayor's Alliance includes four subcommittees: Economic & Workforce Development, Education, Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing, and Youth Sports & Recreation

COMPOSITION

The Mayor's Alliance has a minimum of 40 members divided into 4 subcommittees. Each subcommittee is comprised of a minimum of 10 members. Also, Tuscaloosa City Council members serve ex-officio on the Mayor's Alliance.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be a participant of the Mayor's Alliance, the person must reside in the City of Tuscaloosa; and/or have expertise in the respective subject matter.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

There are seven operating principles that represent the minimum standard for meetings and member participation. First, all meetings must comply with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Second, all documents must comply with Alabama public records Law. Third, all members must complete ethics training. Fourth, a simple majority will be considered a quorum to conduct business. Fifth, decision-making should be by consensus of those in attendance. Sixth, regular attendance is strongly encouraged to ensure consistency in the subcommittee's deliberations. Finally, all members must maintain 80% attendance.

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PROJECT UNITY

CHIEF'S COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY POLICING

ABOUT

The Chief's Commission on Community Policing or Chief's Commission is steered by citizens to facilitate relationships with the Tuscaloosa Police Department and increase police responsiveness to the diverse populations they serve. This work is enabled through two subcommittees: Community Connection & Outreach and Officer Recruitment, Training & Retention.

MISSION

The mission of the Chief's Commission is to sustain positive, lasting bonds between the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the communities they serve while enhancing recruiting, training, and retaining the most qualified and diverse workforce

SUBCOMMITTEES

The Chief's Commission has two subcommittees: Community Connection & Outreach and Officer Recruitment, Training & Retention.

COMPOSITION

The Chief's Commission is composed of a minimum of 16 members divided into 2 subcommittees. Each subcommittee is comprised of a minimum of 8 members. Also, Tuscaloosa City Council members are ex-officio members of the Chief's Commission. Finally, initial terms will be staggered with no member able to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

ELIGIBILITY

Members of the Chief's Commission must reside in the City of Tuscaloosa; and/or have expertise in the complementary subject matter. Additionally, a member of the Chief's Commission must complete the Tuscaloosa Police Department's Citizen Police Academy and complete an officer ride-along twice annually.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

There are seven operating principles that represent the minimum standard for meetings and member participation. First, all meetings must comply with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Second, all documents must comply with Alabama public records Law. Third, all members must complete ethics training. Fourth, a simple majority will be considered a quorum to conduct business. Fifth, decision-making should be by consensus of those in attendance. Sixth, regular attendance is strongly encouraged to ensure consistency in the subcommittee's deliberations. Finally, all members must maintain 80% attendance.

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**PEOPLE OF
PROJECT UNITY**



Photo courtesy of Tuscaloosa News

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

"Be strong, be fearless, be beautiful. And believe that anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you."

~ Misty Copeland

Once the need for Project Unity was determined, the next and most important task was finding the people to conceptualize, lead, and support the project to fruition. From the beginning, it was understood that Project Unity is a citizen's initiative. This means the people *are* Project Unity and their needs, perspectives, and knowledge is at the center of all decisions, discussions, and recommendations. It is their individual and collective passion and vision that brings the initiative to life. Therefore, it was important to invite some of Tuscaloosa's best and brightest minds to participate as subcommittee team leaders, members, and support.

The subcommittee team leaders are City of Tuscaloosa employees that have considerable professional experience in their respective areas. As team leaders, they are responsible for facilitating the subcommittee meetings as well as providing overall support for their subcommittee's final recommendations.

The subcommittee members were invited to participate based on their demonstrated expertise and/or community involvement in one of the six subcommittee areas. It was also paramount that the subcommittee members represented a diversity of thought and lived experience, and presented a willingness to serve.

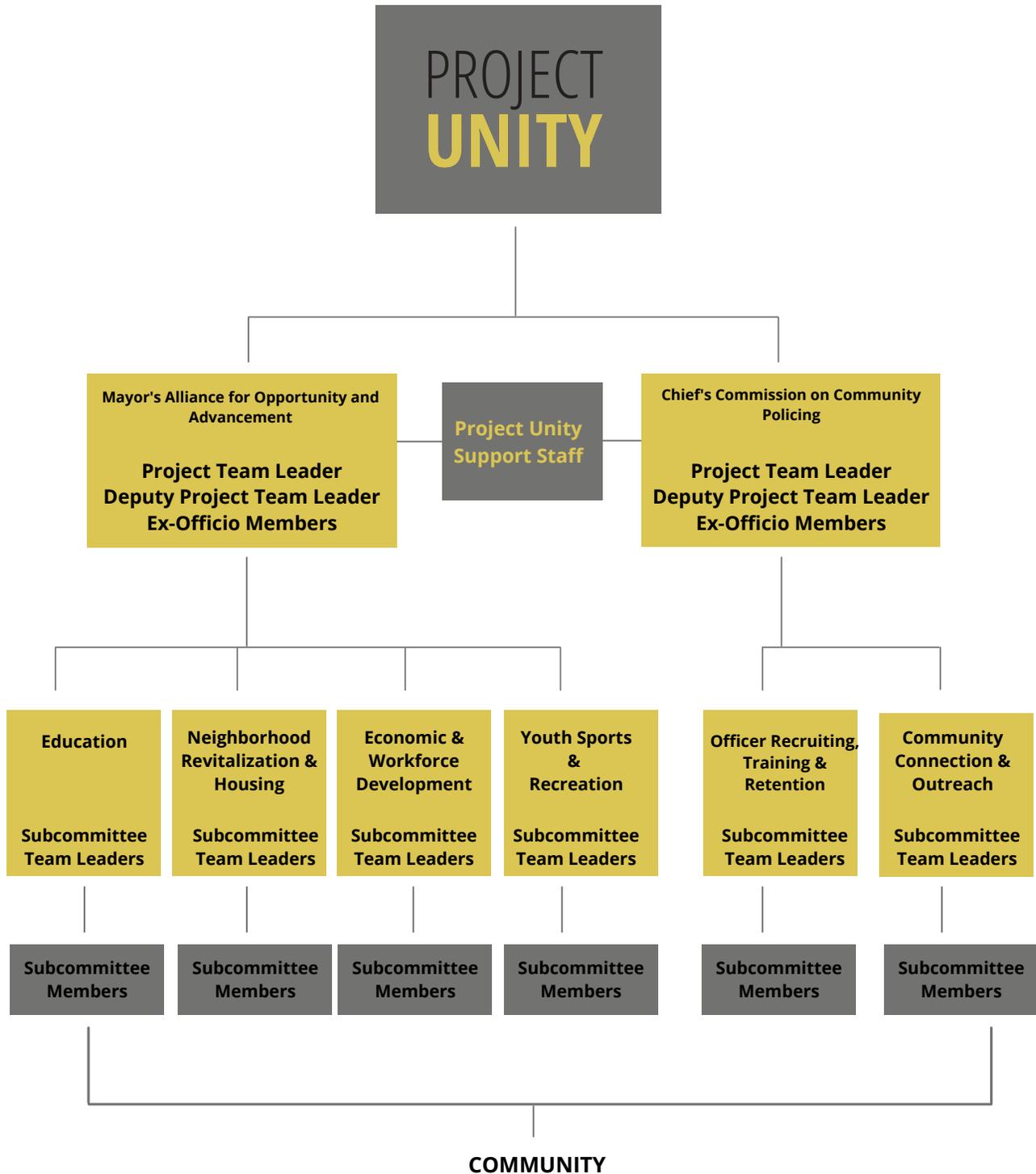
The Project Unity support staff are City of Tuscaloosa employees that provided strategic, administrative, and technical support for the six subcommittees as well as the Mayor's Alliance and Chief's Commission project team leaders. These employees were selected based on their current job function and comprehensive expertise.

The following section introduces the organizational structure of Project Unity as well as listing the initiative leadership, subcommittee membership, and support staff.

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

PROJECT UNITY COMMITTEES

MAYORS ALLIANCE FOR OPPORTUNITY AND ADVANCEMENT

LaParry Howell- Project Team Leader

Lashonda Kemp- Deputy Project Team Leader

Severn “Sebo” Sanders- Ex-Officio

Scott Holmes- Ex-Officio

CHIEF’S COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY POLICING

Severn “Sebo” Sanders- Project Team Leader

Scott Holmes- Deputy Project Team Leader

LaParry Howell- Ex-Officio

LaShonda Kemp- Ex-Officio

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

MAYOR'S ALLIANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Brendan Moore- Subcommittee Team Lead

Audrey Buck- Subcommittee Team Lead

Dr. Erik Johnson University of Alabama, Culverhouse College of Business

Issac McCoy- Stillman College, School of Business

Jason Moore- Shelton State Community College

Jim Page- The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

Joshua Shahib- University of Alabama, The EDGE

Dr. Karen Thompson-Jackson- Temporary Emergency Services

Michele Coley- Allstate

Mildred Hooks- People Optimum Consulting

NaTa'sha Black- The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

Thomas Dedrick- Raymond James

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

MAYOR'S ALLIANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

EDUCATION

Carly Standridge- Subcommittee Team Lead

Stephanie Taylor- Subcommittee Team Lead

Alexis Wilson- Community Service Programs of West Alabama

Isaiah Harper, Jr.- Tuscaloosa City Schools

JacQuan Winters- Kristen Amerson Youth Foundation

Dr. Janet Sherrod- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Dr. Jessica Constant- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Jill Beck- University of Alabama, School of Social Work

Katherine Waldon- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Qadeem Ali Hassan- Student

Ronald Range- Shelton State Community College

Sabrina Thomas- Tuscaloosa's One Place

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

MAYOR'S ALLIANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION & HOUSING

Heather Hill- Subcommittee Team Lead

Brendan Moore- Subcommittee Team Lead

Chris Hall- Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

Daphne Curtis- Realty South

Dora Drake- City of Tuscaloosa

Ellen Potts- Habitat for Humanity of Tuscaloosa

Jerry Carter- NAACP Tuscaloosa

Jessica Alexander- Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

Karen Burklew- Alabama Power

Mark Sullivan- Retired, Synovus

Patrick Kennedy - Sealy Management Company

Richard Henry- Druid City Properties

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

MAYOR'S ALLIANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

YOUTH SPORTS & RECREATION

Terrance Young- Subcommittee Team Lead

Princess Norwood- Subcommittee Team Lead

Lillie Leatherwood (Retired)- Subcommittee Team Lead

Chris England- Alabama House of Representatives

Daniel Pruet- Brown House Law Group

Danielle McInerney- Big Brothers Big Sisters

Pastor David Gay, Jr.- Whatley Health Services

Demario Pippen- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Eric McAlpine- Cintas

Gary Minor- Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority

Harold Bishop- Pfizer

Jeff Knox- YMCA of Tuscaloosa

Kim Turner- Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

LaKeda Smith- Benjamin Barnes YMCA

Tanika Rice- Benjamin Barnes YMCA

Tiffini Grimes- University of Alabama, Athletics

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

CHIEF'S COMMISSION SUBCOMMITTEES

COMMUNITY CONNECTION & OUTREACH

Severn "Sebo" Sanders- Subcommittee Team Lead

Cassius Lanier- Lanier Automotive

Jerome Elliot- Tuscaloosa County School System

Jheovanny Gomez- Jalapeno's Mexican Grill

LaShelle Spain- Big Boy Entertainment

Scotty Hollins- Blueprint Tuscaloosa

Shanna McIntosh- University of Alabama, School of Social Work

Dr. Teresha Jones-Hamilton- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Tripp Rogers- The District Room

OFFICER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING & RETENTION

Steve Rice- Subcommittee Team Lead

Jake Johnston- Subcommittee Team Lead

Andrea Gregg- Hope Grows Center for Counseling

Cliff Dorsey- Tuscaloosa Charter Service

Dennis Conner- Tuscaloosa City Schools

Harrison Taylor- Former Tuscaloosa City Council President

Hudson Cheshire- Browne House Law Group

Mary Bailey- Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

Tripp Powell- Community Corrections

Will Adams- Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

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PEOPLE OF PROJECT UNITY

SUPPORT STAFF

PROJECT UNITY SUPPORT TEAM

- Margaret Jones Desjarlais**- Unity Liaison
- Stacey Cooper**- Administrative Support
- Cristy Gilliam**- Administrative Support
- Dakota Whitten**- Information Technology & GIS Support
- Janna O'Neal**- Information Technology & GIS Support
- Lauren Hocutt**- Information Technology & GIS Support
- Wes Jarnigan**- Information Technology & GIS Support
- Richard Rush**- Communications
- Alex House**- Communications
- Donald Malone**- Communications
- Sarah Bridger-Gilmore**- Communications
- Chad Hobbs**- Legal Support
- Kim King**- Legal Support
- Katy Metcalfe**- Financial Support

3

TIMELINE



3

TIMELINE

2020

JUN

- 6/3 Peaceful Protest - Government Plaza
- 6/6 Peaceful Protest - Snow Hinton Park
- 6/7 Community Prayer Rally
- 6/7 Peaceful Protest - Government Plaza
- 6/10 Chamber update call
- 6/19 Pastor Matthew Wilson
- 6/19 Judge Dennis Steverson
- 6/19 City Facebook Town Hall
- 6/24 Councilor Almond and Rev. Hubbard
- 6/24 Ransey O'Daniel
- 6/29 Reverend Vernon Swift
- 6/29 Reverend Dr. Cammon, Rev. Schmitt Moore, Rev. Leander Jones, Rev. Thaddeus Steele, Rev. Tyshawn Gardner

JUL

- 7/2 Curtis Travis
- 7/2 Councilor Odom
- 7/9 Met w/LaParry Howell & LaShonda Kemp
- 7/10 City Facebook Town Hall
- 7/10 Rev. Tyshawn Gardner
- 7/15 Marvin Lucas
- 7/15 Mildred Hooks
- 7/15 Rep. Chris England
- 7/15 Ebony Rice & Quadeem Hassan
- 7/15 Judge Ricky McKinney
- 7/17 Michele Coley
- 7/17 Paul Rollins, Jr.
- 7/17 Katherine Waldon
- 7/22 Discuss subcommittee members
- 7/27 City high school & middle school principals
- 7/27 Elder Gregg Morris
- 7/27 Tripp Powell
- 7/30 Pastor David Gay, Jr. (LaParry and LaShonda attended for Mayor)
- 7/30 Rev. Paul Sanders (LaParry and LaShonda attended for Mayor)
- 7/30 Chris Hall (LaParry and LaShonda attended for Mayor)

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TIMELINE

2020

AUG

- 8/3 Judge Jannik
- 8/3 Juvenile court judges and intake officers
- 8/3 Eric McAlpine
- 8/3 City Facebook Town Hall
- 8/11 Project Unity presentation to Council
- 8/12 Erica Grant
- 8/13 Hays Webb
- 8/13 Facebook Live w/Ransey O'Daniel
- 8/25 Staff update

SEP

- 9/9 Staff update
- 9/24 Zoom with SEEd (Social Equity Education)
- 9/25 Staff roundtable
- 9/30 Project Unity Kickoff Meeting

OCT

- 10/1 Roxie Chambers
- 10/1 **Project UNITY Subcommittee meetings began**
- 10/6 Staff update
- 10/20 Staff update

DEC

- 12/1 Staff update
- 12/3 Education subcommittee
- 12/10 Crime Response team - University Manor walk through
- 12/18 Crime Response team debrief

JAN

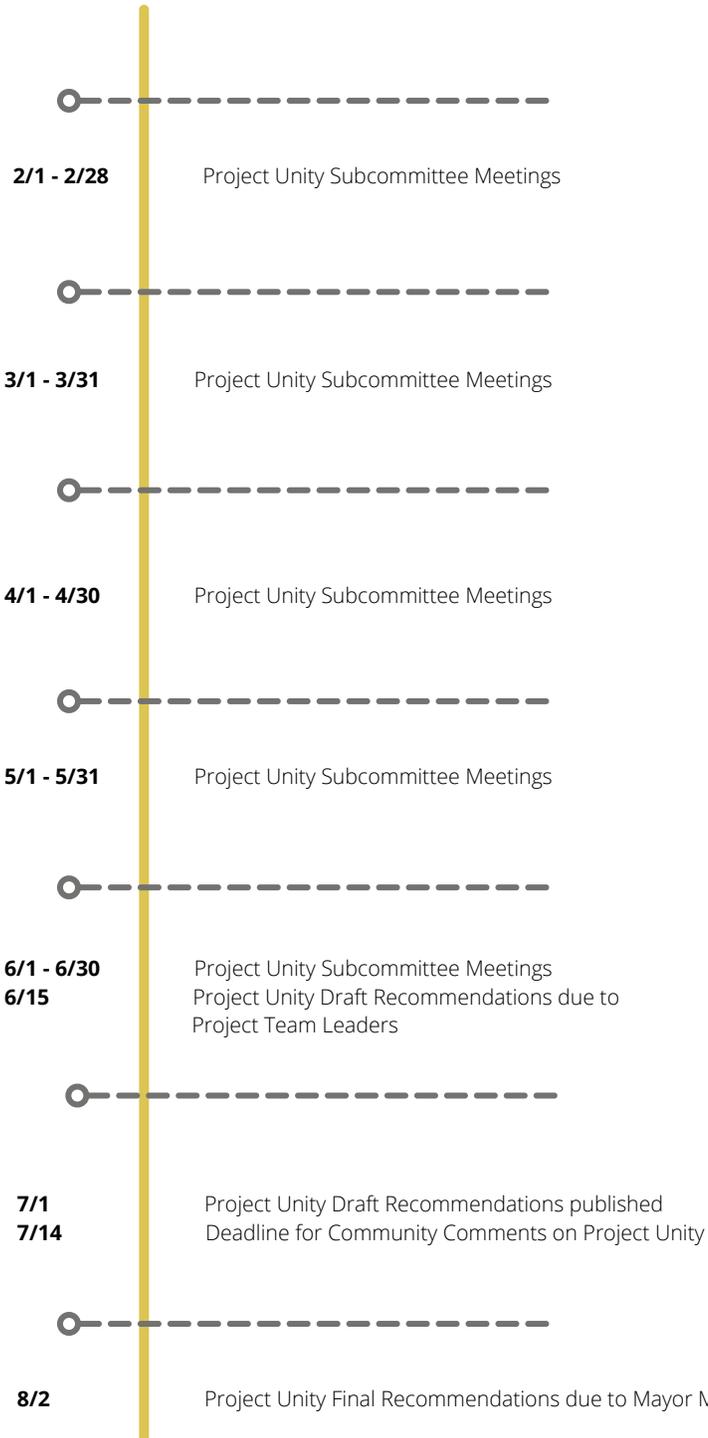
2021

- 1/7 Discuss Project Unity website
- 1/13 Crime Response team follow up
- 1/26 Staff update

3

TIMELINE

2021



FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG

4

**MISSIONS, GOALS, &
OBJECTIVES**



4

MISSIONS, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

At the start of Project Unity, the subcommittee team leaders were tasked with creating guidelines for their respective teams. These guidelines would act as a "North Star" for each subcommittee over the following months. The resulting mission statements, priorities, goals, and objectives provided the foundation for each subcommittee's bold and actionable recommendations.

EDUCATION

MISSION

The City of Tuscaloosa's subcommittee on Education will provide resources and action ideas that value commitment, collaboration, and community in order to create a student-centered culture. We will work to create a safe and healthy learning environment that nurtures the whole child, while promoting not just student achievement but academic, social, and personal success for the good of EVERY child, their families, and the entire Tuscaloosa community.



PRIORITIES

1. Research ways to improve access to early learning and school readiness programs in underserved communities
2. Promote college and career readiness by working with the Tuscaloosa City Schools to equip students with real-world experience, knowledge, and skills to be successful after graduation
3. Develop a strategy to increase parent involvement and accountability
4. Find ways to increase the availability of technology resources in the underserved communities
5. Recommend to the Elevate Tuscaloosa Advisory Committee and City Council that the Gateway incorporates a digital media center

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthening academic and instructional programming to support student needs, talents, interests, and cultural diversity
2. Establishing collaborative partnerships that support academic and instructional programming
3. Finding additional ways to inform and engage parents in their child's academic, instructional, and social-emotional learning experiences
4. Finding resources and implementing programs to support the encourage development of the whole child through social and emotional learning
5. Creating a city-wide process to leverage community partners to support students' needs, interests, and talents
6. Building a system for identifying, gathering, and analyzing current and existing data, as well as identifying possible gaps in data to develop more meaningful programs
7. Recommend to the Elevate Tuscaloosa Advisory Committee and City Council that the Gateway incorporates into its mission a digital media center with an emphasis on education

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

MISSION

The City of Tuscaloosa Economic and Workforce Development Subcommittee innovatively drives to advance unbiased and shared prosperity for all citizens, no matter the race, age, gender, or ethnicity by growing sustainable jobs, supporting businesses of all scopes, creating great places to live, and work, and helping all citizens achieve self-sufficiency.

Investments recommended by this subcommittee will seek to improve the health and well-being of neighborhoods and businesses, increase the quality of life, and reduce inequities.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Continuing to attract and retain businesses, with an emphasis in West Tuscaloosa
2. Providing information and resources for startups and expanding small businesses through community partnerships
3. Providing technical and targeted financial assistance for businesses, in particular disadvantaged business owners by creating, modifying, and expanding existing policies
4. Researching and potentially identifying funds for grants to support initiatives such as Invest and/or Innovate Tuscaloosa
5. Preparing our workforce to meet the demands of current and emerging industries through community partnerships within schools, the community, and industry leaders
6. Focusing major public-private development projects to maximize long-term public benefits including housing, jobs, and economic development, and open space
7. Providing the City's workforce system with access to training that meets the needs of the future
8. Decreasing the digital divide for low-income households
9. Promoting long-term economic growth throughout Tuscaloosa
10. Revitalizing commercial corridors in economically disadvantaged communities
11. Targeting Industrial Sectors promoting shift work needs and opportunities for retail and commercial growth



NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION & HOUSING

MISSION

The City of Tuscaloosa's subcommittee on Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing will strive to advocate for decent and affordable housing and to endorse and support the revitalization of blighted and substandard housing in all neighborhoods.

PRIORITIES

1. Promotion to increase and maintain an adequate supply of quality affordable housing to meet the various needs of households
2. Increase the community's ability to access and/or maintain affordable housing
3. Promote neighborhood revitalization and livability
4. Identify development partners to address impediments to the production of affordable housing units



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Creating safe and sustainable neighborhoods
2. Drastically reducing homelessness through prevention and intervention of counseling and network assistance and by data collection of homeless persons/households
3. Producing and/or preserving an adequate supply of ownership and rental housing that is safe, healthy, and affordable to people of all income levels, races, ages, and suitable for their various needs
4. Promote housing literacy for renters and homeowners
5. Identifying and inviting development capacity from among the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to help with neighborhood revitalization
6. Reducing blight nuisance issues

YOUTH SPORTS & RECREATION

MISSION

The City of Tuscaloosa’s subcommittee on Youth Sports and Recreation will provide boys and girls of all backgrounds an environment that builds confidence, develops character, and helps them acquire skills needed to achieve their fullest potential in becoming productive, community-minded responsible adults.



PRIORITIES

1. Promotion to increase and maintain youth sports and recreational activities to achieve the needs of the community
2. Promote Community/Neighborhood and overall City Involvement & Participation
3. Identify community stakeholders and/or partners to restore and implement programs and services for our youth
4. Increase and sustain the community’s ability to have access to resources and programs catering to our youth
5. Recommend to the Elevate Tuscaloosa Advisory Committee and City Council that Benjamin Barnes be transformed into a premier athletic center

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Promoting the development of programs and policies to advance health awareness, the spirit of achievement, and cultural bridging of entrenched societal values
2. Promoting the recognition of the contribution of sport and physical education in economic and social development by encouraging the building and restoration of sports infrastructures
3. Strengthen cooperation and partnerships between all individuals and groups, including family, school, clubs/leagues, local communities, youth sports association, and decision-makers as well as the public and private sectors, to make sports and physical education available to all
4. Developing programs that serve the needs of the youth which will assist them in personal development, establish a personal environmental ethic, and explore life-long vocational and avocation activities
 - a. The program should use positive interactions with youth and adult role models to help young people develop a concept of self, attitude of self-assurance, and a positive self-image
5. Remedying the existing youth sports and recreational activities throughout our underserved communities

CHIEF'S COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY POLICING

MISSION

Sustain positive, lasting bonds between the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the community while enhancing recruiting, training and retaining the most qualified and diverse workforce.

PRIORITIES

1. Work to increase and maintain a highly trained and diverse workforce
2. Promote community/neighborhood and overall City involvement and participation
3. Participate in meaningful dialogue that can inform department decisions on community policing efforts
4. Research and generate new ideas and report informed recommendations related to crime prevention, intervention, training and response effectiveness



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. The commission seeks to forge and strengthen relationships between citizens and the Tuscaloosa Police Department. Commission members will work in their neighborhoods, churches, or other organizations to gather suggestions and note any concerns regarding crime and public safety. Likewise, members will assist the department in educating Tuscaloosa residents about law enforcement goals and other crime and safety matters.
2. Finding resources and implementing programs that encourage police-community interactions
3. Reviewing portions of recruit and ongoing training programs and making recommendations on future training to ensure officers police with compassion, empathy, integrity, and honed communication skills.
4. Creating a process where board members act as a two-way conduit between the community and police department to convey concerns
5. Collecting and providing insight into police “blind spots” regarding activities and attitudes of the public from the areas they represent
6. Building a system for identifying, gathering, and analyzing current and existing data, as well as identifying possible gaps in data to develop more meaningful outreach efforts
7. Identifying pockets of the community where trust in law enforcement has eroded and make specific recommendations for ways to establish positive relationships

5 RECOMMENDATION MATRIX



5

RECOMMENDATION MATRIX

The Project Unity recommendations have been organized into a matrix to provide a quick reference for all of the recommendations. First, the recommendations are grouped by their estimated implementation time frames. Additionally, the matrix shows the subcommittee(s) that proposed and/or supported each recommendation. Some recommendations have been endorsed by multiple subcommittees. This is denoted by an "X" underneath the acronym of the subcommittee. For instance, the recommendation, "Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement & Opportunity" has an intermediate time frame and is recommended and/or supported by the Education, Youth Sports & Recreation, and Community Connection & Outreach Subcommittees.

Below, a matrix key is provided as a guide.

Matrix Key

Implementation Time Frames

-  Short- Term Implementation Time Frame
Short-Term: 1-2 years
Color description: Light golden yellow
-  Intermediate Implementation Time Frame
Intermediate: 3-5 years
Color Description: Mid-toned mustard yellow
-  Long- Term Implementation Time Frame
Long- Term: 5+ years
Color description: Dark tan yellow

Subcommittee Acronyms

- EDU-** Education Subcommittee
- EWD-** Economic & Workforce Development
- NRH-** Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing
- YSR-** Youth Sports & Recreation
- CCO-** Community Connection & Outreach
- RTR-** Recruitment, Training, & Retention

Project UNITY Recommendation Matrix

Recommendation	Time Frame	Subcommittee					
		EDU	EWD	NRH	YSR	CCO	RTR
Establish a mentorship program that would pair all identified Tuscaloosa school students with a mentor	Short- Term	X					
Create gun safety programs to familiarize K-12 students with the dangers of firearms	Short- Term	X				X	
Revive and revamp the Tuscaloosa City Schools STARS Academy, TAPS and HELP Programs and collaborate with PRIDE of Tuscaloosa	Short- Term	X					
Develop a checklist or offer refresher training to help teachers and school staff identify students who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences	Short- Term	X					
Identify funding sources to support therapy for children and family members who have witnessed or experienced traumatic or violent events	Short- Term	X					
Review and assess academic and career tech opportunities for Tuscaloosa County Juvenile Detention Center and develop a re-entry program	Short- Term	X					
Hold discussions with Tuscaloosa City Schools officials to determine feasibility of keeping school facilities open past traditional school hours	Short- Term	X					
Establish partnerships with various agencies to identify at-risk children prior to pre-K for placement in mentorship, early intervention, and DYAO programs	Short- Term	X			X		
Host workshops that would serve as a "one-stop shop" for conflict management and resolution training for families	Short- Term	X					
Create the "Miracle Mile" for West Tuscaloosa	Short- Term		X				
Close the Digital Divide	Short- Term	X	X				
Invest in growing Tuscaloosa's Workforce Development Programs	Short- Term	X					
Support Economic Development	Short- Term		X				
Develop a Workforce Housing Plan	Short- Term	X	X				
Increase Awareness for Dual Enrollment	Short- Term	X	X				
Develop an Economic Development Plan	Short- Term		X				
Revamp the "Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation" to implement SAHDIP	Short- Term			X			
Strengthen property maintenance enforcement practices	Short- Term			X			
Address overall neighborhood nuisance issues through code enforcement	Short- Term			X			
Establish Homeowner Façade and Neighborhood Cleanup Programs	Short- Term			X			
Build a Neighborhood Association Development Program	Short- Term			X			
Expand housing literacy for renters and homeowners	Short- Term			X			
Address shortage of availability of rental units to receive tenants with HUD subsidies	Short- Term			X			
Create Partnership Pathways with higher education institutions, community and civic organizations	Short- Term				X		
Create Communications Plan for Tuscaloosa youth activities	Short- Term					X	
Create City of Tuscaloosa Youth Council	Short- Term					X	X
Create Youth Commission	Short- Term					X	
Continuous meeting of the full Commission, as subcommittees as needed	Short- Term						X
Create Deputy Chief of Community Policing	Short- Term						X
Adopt ordinances mandating unbiased policing, banning the use of chokeholds, & requiring officers to report misconduct and protect against retaliation	Short- Term						X
Expand outreach programs to Hispanic community	Short- Term						X
Strengthen youth outreach and engagement programs	Short- Term	X				X	X

Project UNITY Recommendation Matrix									
Recommendation	Time Frame	Subcommittee							
		EDU	ENR	NRH	YSR	CCO	RTR		
Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement & Opportunity	Intermediate	X			X	X			
Hire full time social workers to employ at each school with the Tuscaloosa City school system	Intermediate	X							
Expand Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	Intermediate	X	X						
Create a Pro Start-up Community	Intermediate		X						
Enhance Transit Services	Intermediate	X	X	X	X				
Implement Innovation Initiatives	Intermediate		X						
Create dedicated funding source for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and Workforce Housing	Intermediate		X	X					
Create Strategic Affordable Housing Development Implementation Plan (SAHDIP)	Intermediate			X					
Identify and removing affordable housing zoning barriers	Intermediate			X					
Infrastructure planning that will promote growth in Low to Moderate Income and Workforce Income Housing	Intermediate			X					
Develop and maintain a Housing Resource Matrix	Intermediate			X					
Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement & Opportunity	Intermediate	X			X	X			
Establish Youth Engagement Bus Route	Intermediate				X				
Invest in Boys and Girls Club	Intermediate				X				
Establish Gateway as center STEM, E-sports, and digital investments for youth	Intermediate	X			X				
Position Tuscaloosa Police Department as Key Partner in youth outreach engagement and investment	Intermediate	X			X	X			
Create mental health support infrastructure to adequately support persons facing mental health trauma through police and court interactions	Intermediate					X			
Create programs that allow local youth interaction with government and civic leaders	Intermediate	X				X	X		
Identify additional revenue sources to fund Police and Fire Pension Fund and improve benefits for the Tuscaloosa Police Department	Intermediate						X		
Invest funds in Citywide broadband installation	Long- Term	X	X						
Increase housing opportunities through increased investment in Housing Rehabilitation Program	Long- Term			X					
Reconstruct the Benjamin Barnes YMCA	Long- Term	X			X				
Create strategic plan to develop a public safety training facility	Long- Term						X		
Create a competitive and separate pay plan for the Tuscaloosa Police Department	Long- Term				X	X	X		

6

RECOMMENDATIONS



6

RECOMMENDATIONS

"I like to think of ideas as potential energy. They're really wonderful, but nothing will happen until we risk putting them into action."

~Mae Jemison

The Project Unity recommendations included in this report are a result of months of collaboration, discussion, and thought. Each subcommittee was responsible for coalescing its members' discussions into actionable recommendations. After the draft recommendations were presented to the public and to the Project Unity membership as a whole. The recommendations are divided by the subcommittee: Education, Economic & Workforce Development, Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing, Youth Sports & Recreation, Community Connection & Outreach, and Recruitment, Training, & Retention.

6

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

“Economic growth doesn’t mean anything if it leaves people out.”

~Jack Kemp

The Economic and Workforce Development Subcommittee (EWD) labored to ensure that our vulnerable populations can actively participate in Tuscaloosa's current and future economy and equitably benefit from the quality of life improvements. For the EWD, this work included seeking ways to remove historical barriers to accessing capital, encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship, defining pathways to higher education and employment, and finally, retaining and promoting a local workforce that is prepared for the opportunities of today and tomorrow.

The International Economic Development Council defines economic development as " the intentional practice of improving a community's economic well-being and quality of life." This summarizes the EWD's approach to economic and workforce development. In the spirit of collaboration, subcommittee members sought to provide a roadmap for industry, government, and varied community stakeholders and organizations to work in concert and create a Tuscaloosa that is the best city to live, work, and play.

Create the “Miracle Mile” for West Tuscaloosa

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Industrial Development Authority, Tuscaloosa Transit Authority, The EDGE, Diverse Business Council, various small businesses

The idea of a "Miracle Mile" is not a new concept to economic and urban developers across the United States. In the 1920s, Los Angeles' Wilshire Boulevard became the first recognized ideation of the "Miracle Mile" concept, which is the intentional development of businesses and services along a specific corridor. Over the years many cities have replicated this model, including Stockton, CA; Long Island, NY; Coral Gables, FL; and Las Vegas, NV to name a few.

The EWD recommends reimagining this concept in West Tuscaloosa, where small, innovative businesses and service providers can reinvest and spur the growth of West Tuscaloosa.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Development of Miracle Mile

The EWD advocates the creation of the Miracle Mile in West Tuscaloosa to include the following components:

- a. Location Identification**
- b. Infrastructure and technology plan**
- c. Identification of Transit accessibility**
- d. Identification and recruitment of missing services**

Close the Digital Divide

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	internet providers, Infrastructure and Public Services Department, Information Technology Department, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa Public Library, Gateway, Tuscaloosa City Schools

The Digital Divide refers to the growing gap between those who have access to technology, namely a computer and the internet, and those who do not. Populations most negatively affected by the digital divide are largely low-income persons, the elderly, rural and disabled. The economic effects of COVID-19 brought Tuscaloosa's own digital disparities to light, especially as children and youth began to return to school, and many employees began to work from home. In 2021, when learning activities, job applications, and even work are overwhelmingly digital, not having access to a computer and the internet put individuals and families at a disadvantage.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

- 1. Potential Partnership with service providers of technology and infrastructure for education, quality of life, and underserved communities. For example, Small Town Rural (STR)**
- 2. Partnership with local schools**
- 3. Increase the Tuscaloosa Public Library's capabilities and efforts with internet access, allowing the library to expand its service to each community**

Invest in growing Tuscaloosa's Workforce Development Programs

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	West Alabama Works, Tuscaloosa City Schools, Department of Labor, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, West Alabama Regional Planning Commission, Industrial Development Authority, Shelton State Community College, various businesses across Tuscaloosa

During the Economic and Workforce Development Subcommittee meetings, members emphasized wanting to capitalize on the success of existing programs and services. Workforce Development is one of those key areas the EWD wanted to continue to expand. Tuscaloosa is home to a regional epicenter of higher education and industry as well as a key component of regional growth, West Alabama Works. In order to continue the keep our current and future economy moving forward, the EWD recommends investing in the expansion of the workforce development programs.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Expand outreach and marketing to non-traditional students

The EWD recommends expanding the outreach and marketing efforts of West Alabama Works and other workforce development programs to target various populations. Some focus demographics are:

- a. **Non-traditional students-** students that are homeschooled, enrolled in a GED program, or an adult learner
- b. **Underemployed-** persons working part-time and not enrolled in a program of study
- c. **Unemployed-** persons entering the workforce from stays in an institution, persons recently laid-off
- d. **Older workers-** persons over the age of 50 that may be seeking a job change, supplemental retirement income, or cannot find work due to stagnant experience
- e. **Single parents, recipients of WIC, TANF, or SNAP benefits**

Expanding outreach and marketing to non-traditional students will require creativity in its methodology to reach the desired audience. For instance, to reach single parents, especially mothers experiencing underemployment or unemployment, West Alabama Works could set up interviews or market at doctor's offices.

2. Nurture Partnerships for Job Training

The EWD recommends researching new partnerships for workforce development and supporting existing partnership networks. In particular, EWD seeks to:

- a. **Grow West Alabama Works Partnership to expand reach and programs**
- b. **Continue to develop programs with TCS for workforce training**



Supporting Economic Development

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Industrial Development Authority, The EDGE, University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College

Support for Economic Development looks many different ways. For the Economic and Workforce Development Subcommittee, support is synonymous with creating accessible, uncomplicated, and generally appealing financial assistance to businesses in need.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EWD recommends the following actions to support economic development:

- 1. Identify grant opportunities for economic development and/or minority business development**
- 2. Develop funding options to stimulate small businesses**
- 3. Pooling of federal and city funding**
- 4. Create a profit share model**
- 5. Readily available funding for small business owners and entrepreneurs**

Develop Workforce Housing Plan

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development, Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Alabama Housing Finance Authority, Office of Community and Neighborhood Services, Urban Development Department, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission

Communities across the U.S. are facing a crisis in affordable housing. This long-standing issue has been magnified by the COVID -19 pandemic. According to the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller National Home Price NSA Index, housing prices increased by an average of 9.5% from November 2019 to November 2020. At the current rate of purchase, the supply of single-family homes for purchase will be exhausted in a few months. If the trend continues, a significant percentage of eligible homebuyers will be priced out of homeownership. Of these homebuyers, it lack of affordable housing will disproportionately affect younger people and African Americans. Additionally, Tuscaloosa has experienced a decrease in available and affordable multifamily housing options as well. During the discourse in the Economic and Workforce Development subcommittee meetings, access to affordable, quality housing was one of the main concerns voiced by economic and industrial leaders. If the trend is not reversed immediately, Tuscaloosa will no longer be able to attract or retain industry.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Workforce Housing- Coordinate a Workforce Housing Plan

The EWD recommends building upon the findings and recommendations of the 2018 Housing Study commissioned by the Office of Community and Neighborhood Services. This Workforce Housing Plan will provide supplementary guidance that targets a growing segment of Tuscaloosa's economy. This plan will include engage industrial leaders within Tuscaloosa and potentially assist in crafting industrial housing incentive packages.

2. Identify areas that have the infrastructure and schools for diversity of housing

The EWD recommends compiling key criteria for potential workforce housing and utilizing the Framework Comprehensive Plan to identify areas that are poised for development.

Expand Entrepreneur Ecosystem

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Tuscaloosa City Schools, The EDGE, Small Business Development Center, Small Business Administration

Starting a business or becoming an entrepreneur entails understanding and dealing with many issues--legal, financing, sales, marketing, intellectual property protection, liability protection, human resources, and more. But, despite the steep learning curve, interest in entrepreneurship is at an all-time high. To maximize the economic potential in our community, we must expand the entrepreneur ecosystem to ensure all small businesses have a chance of success.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Target and promote youth entrepreneurship

The EWD endorses the development of infrastructure and programming to promote youth entrepreneurship. Examples of outreach and programming for youth include:

- a. Supporting industry mentorships through Future Business Leaders of America and/or creating a middle/high school mentorship program for Tuscaloosa city youth
- b. Sponsoring Youth Entrepreneurship Days like Lemonade Day/ Community Coffee
- c. Creation of a Tuscaloosa Teenpreneur Festival that has youth vendors on Government Plaza (similar to Druid City Arts Festival, but with only youth-owned businesses and makers)
- d. Partner with Tuscaloosa City Schools to identify teens that have small businesses and connect those students to mentors, funding, etc.
 - Utilize Tuscaloosa City School surveys and guidance/school counselors to assist with student entrepreneur identification

2. Solidify small business network, especially for microbusinesses, disadvantaged entrepreneurs

The EWD recommends supplementing the existing small business support network by creating focused programs that provide access to services for start-ups, microbusinesses, sole proprietors, and disadvantaged entrepreneurs. At a minimum, these services should include

- a. Access to attorneys, training, patent guideline workshops
- b. Creation of a Start-up Studio, which will be a boot camp for creating a business from concept to launch
- c. Website and design assistance

3. Create diverse funding types that are transparent and accessible funding

The EWD recommends creating funding sources for small business owners and prioritizing transparency and accessibility. To achieve this, EWD supports

- a. Provide fair and equitable access to funding
- b. Funding specifically for minority and women-owned businesses
- c. Small business “Pop-ups”, “Shark Tank”, and “Micro Grant” opportunities focusing on innovation but are grounded in sound business practices. Examples:
 - Small Business Relief Fund
 - Food Trucks to Brick and Mortar

4. Identify needs for diverse business interests

The EWD endorses the identification of gaps in current offerings for diverse business interests. In this instance, diverse business interests represent a wide cross-section of industries and business types. For instance, based on the number of emerging restaurants, catering companies, and other food and beverage businesses, there may be a need for Tuscaloosa to develop a commercial kitchen incubator or some hybridization of such.

Create a Pro Start-up community

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Tuscaloosa City Schools, United Way of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa Community Foundation, Character Council of Tuscaloosa,

Preparing Tuscaloosa's economy for current and future growth means forecasting emerging trends in industry. The gig economy is one of these rising economic trends. A gig economy is distinguished by temporary, flexible independent contractors or freelance work as opposed to full-time employees. As more businesses become decentralized and digital, the stronger the gig economy becomes.

Another current and persistent trend is the increase in entrepreneurship, in particular, start-ups. While the term is often used to describe tech/digital companies, start-ups can refer to any business that is in its infancy of development. In order for Tuscaloosa to compete regionally and nationally, the EWD recommends the City adopt a pro-start-up and gig economy approach to economic development.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

- 1. Advocate for policy change to reduce barriers for economic development**
- 2. Identify the opportunities within the Gig economy**

Increase Awareness for Dual Enrollment

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, Shelton State Community College, University of Alabama, Stillman College

The success of the dual enrollment programs created by ELEVATE Tuscaloosa warrants the expansion of the programs to include as many children and youth as possible.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Reach Middle School/ High School Students before senior year

The EWD recommends promoting dual enrollment as a viable option for Tuscaloosa City School students as soon as possible.

- a. Representatives from each college university begin visiting classrooms talking about dual enrollment as early as sixth grade
- b. Students that complete dual enrollment courses are celebrated by the district, the college/university, and their home school faculty and staff
- c. Encourage current or past dual enrolled students to talk about the process and experience with classmates to demystify the ordeal

2. Reach the Average Student

The EWD recommends that dual enrollment program managers/representatives encourage all academically viable students to participate in the program. To this end, the EWD encourages universities/colleges to develop an audit course specifically designed to prepare/orient high school students to the dual enrollment program. Additionally, transportation remains a deterrent to some students participating in the program. To alleviate this barrier to participation, EWD supports universities/colleges or Tuscaloosa City Schools developing a closed-route that transports dual enrollment students from their respective high schools to the colleges' campus and back again.

3. Work closely with Guidance Counselors/Post-Secondary Counselors

The EWD recommends City and University/College staff working closely with guidance counselors to adequately promote dual enrollment. This partnership will be able to educate school faculty, staff, families, and students on the potential benefits of participation.

Enhance Transit

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Mayor's Alliance for Opportunity and Advancement
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Transit Authority
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County Commission

One of the reasons transit systems succeed is because they act as an economic development driver. An entire region can benefit from transit for multiple reasons. First, a healthy transit system helps reduce congestion and road maintenance costs due to fewer cars being on the road. Second, the amount of parking diminishes due to fewer drivers. Third, studies have shown property near transit lines benefit from increased property values due to improved mobility options. Finally, quality public transit can also create jobs and keep dollars circulating in the local economy. (Why Transit Matters: The Effects on Economic Development 10/4/2013)

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EWD firmly believes that improving Tuscaloosa's public transit is a crucial component of Tuscaloosa's economic success. The EWD supports the efforts of the Tuscaloosa Transit Authority and recommends the below actions to enhance the Transit's current and future offerings

- 1. Increase awareness and reduce barriers to access**
- 2. Utilize ongoing Transit Study results to prioritize decision-making**
- 3. Collaborate with universities, local governments, and employers**



Implement Innovation Initiatives

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Industrial Development Authority, The EDGE, Small Business Resource Center,

Innovation districts facilitate the creation and commercialization of new ideas and support metropolitan economies by growing jobs in ways that leverage their distinct economic attributes. These districts build on and revalue the intrinsic qualities of cities: proximity, density, authenticity, and vibrant places. Given the proximity of many districts to low-income neighborhoods and the large number of sub-baccalaureate jobs many provide, their intentional development can be a tool to help connect disadvantaged populations and underserved communities to employment and educational opportunities.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EWD recommends embracing innovation as a tool of economic development and when coupled with the other recommendations, an instrument to foster equity. To accomplish this, EWD endorses:

- 1. Partnership/ engagement with the Alabama Innovation Commission (Innovate Alabama) on Innovation Initiatives**
- 2. Creation of an Innovation District- Identify Potential Properties**

Develop an Economic Development Plan

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Regional Planning Commission, Industrial Development Authority, Tuscaloosa City Schools, University of Alabama, Shelton State Community College, Stillman College, Non-Profit Council of Tuscaloosa, Diverse Business Council

When planning for economic development, the goal is to create and maintain a strong, vibrant local economy. The economic development plan will supply a comprehensive overview of the economy, sets policy direction for economic growth, and identifies strategies, programs, and projects to improve the economy.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EWD recommends the creation of a comprehensive Economic Development plan. At a minimum, the plan must address the following:

- a. Reflective of post-pandemic shifts
- b. Must be intentional and city-specific

In addition, the plan must utilize the following best practices in the development of its recommendations, objectives, goals, strategies, and/or tactics:

- a. Must prioritize and incorporate input from community panels reflective of each community
- b. Must be comprehensive in nature and utilize engagement best practices to ensure quality feedback and engagement
- c. Effectively position the plan to utilize federal funding, grants, and opportunity zones
- d. Must identify and balance community wants and needs with overall city economic development
- e. Must incorporate panel driven with representatives from each community

6 EDUCATION

“The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”

~Herbert Spencer

During the course of its meetings, the Education Subcommittee sought to use education as a means to advance equity by creating opportunities to support youth and families. To know is to be empowered and empowerment fuels change.

The Education Subcommittee brought together educators of all sorts--authors, executive directors, school administrators, teachers. These individuals let their years of personal and professional experience as students, then as teachers of children, adults, and families in this community be their North Star.

While discussing the pressing issues facing education in the Tuscaloosa community, common themes began to develop: mental health and development, social support for families, and academic support for children. These themes became the basis of the actionable recommendations provided by the Education Subcommittee.

The Education Subcommittee hopes that the recommendations found hereafter will improve the lives of Tuscaloosa's children and family for years, and even generations, to come.

Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education, Youth Sports and Recreation, and Community Connection and Outreach
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, youth-centered non profits, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, Juvenile Detention Center, United Way of West Alabama, Family Counseling Services

The Education subcommittee in conjunction with the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends the establishment of a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity.

The full recommendation can be found in the Youth Sports and Recreation sub-section of the Recommendations.



Establish a mentorship program that would pair all identified Tuscaloosa City Schools students with a mentor

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, youth-centered non-profits such as Big Brothers Big Sisters Tuscaloosa's ONE Place, Boys and Girls Club, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, Juvenile Detention Center, United Way of West Alabama, Family Counseling Services

Mentoring is a powerful tool that can positively affect the lives of underserved children and youth. According to mentoring.org, studies have consistently demonstrated that children and youth with mentors are 55% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school, 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, 90% are interested in becoming a mentor, and 130% more likely to hold leadership positions. The EDU subcommittee believes that creating a mentoring program for all Tuscaloosa City School students could have a multiplier effect on positive outcomes for our children and youth.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EDU subcommittee recommends the creation of a city-wide, longitudinal mentorship program for Tuscaloosa City schools students. At a minimum, the mentorship program will incorporate the following components:

- 1. Mentors will be expected to maintain a relationship with the child from kindergarten through high school graduation**
- 2. Prioritization of children and youth with an incarcerated parent/guardian, in foster care, experiencing absenteeism, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and other behavioral or environmental concerns**
- 3. Potential Matches could be made with the assistance of Tuscaloosa City School administrators, guidance/school counselors, church officials, existing youth service organizations, etc.**

Create gun safety programs to familiarize K-12 students with the dangers of firearms

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education, Community Connection and Outreach
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity, Tuscaloosa City Schools, DCH Regional Medical Facility

The increase in gun violence across the nation and in Tuscaloosa is a cause for concern. In an attempt to prevent intentional and/or accidental injury or death, the Education subcommittee recommends the creation and implementation of a developmentally appropriate gun-safety program.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EDU subcommittee endorses the following criteria in the adoption and/or design of a gun safety program for Tuscaloosa's youth:

- 1. Curriculum must adaptable to K-12, be developmentally appropriate, and based on empirically well-performing education programs**
- 2. Free firearm safety kits should be made available to all participants**
- 3. Prioritization of non-violent response and de-escalation tactics included in the curriculum**



Hire enough full-time social workers to employ one at each school within the Tuscaloosa City school system

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Department of Human Resources, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools

School social workers play an integral part in the operation of any school. Social workers are liaisons between the student, the home, and the community. As they help guide student's academic success, they simultaneously balance supporting administration and provide numerous mental health, behavioral, and crisis interventions for students and their families. The emergence of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, highlighted the critical role social workers play in fostering healthy environments for students in--and out of school. During the course of the Education subcommittee meetings, the membership became aware that some schools share social workers. Due to COVID-19, the mental health concerns of youth and their families have been exacerbated by the persistence of the virus within our communities. Now, more than ever, we need social workers.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The Education Subcommittee recommends increasing the employment of social workers within Tuscaloosa City Schools to ensure that each school has at least one full-time, dedicated, on-campus social worker.

- 1. Social workers should only be assigned to one school for the duration of a full academic year**
- 2. The social workers from each school should meet regularly to share ideas, common concerns, and solutions**

Revive and revamp the Tuscaloosa City Schools STARS Academy, TAPS and HELP Programs and collaborate with PRIDE of Tuscaloosa

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools

Educators and members of the Education subcommittee have reported positive results from some of the now-defunct programs listed. A frank discussion will be necessary to learn why some of these programs stalled and address the barriers, if any, to revive them. The Education subcommittee prefers to not reinvent the wheel, but rather to utilize program structures already in place when possible.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EDU subcommittee recommends reinstating these programs to assist our children and youth facing behavioral and emotional barriers to participation at their home school. As such, EDU seeks:

1. Conversation with Tuscaloosa City School Superintendent and Staff

The EDU subcommittee endorses a candid conversation with Tuscaloosa City School Board and Staff to discuss the aforementioned programs.

- a. Understanding the barriers that students face without these programs
- b. Understanding the rationale that eliminated the programs
- c. Active collaboration with the Tuscaloosa City Schools on viable, programmatic partnerships to benefit the children and youth affected by the closure of these programs
- d. Exploration of alternative programming and their comparative advantages and opportunities

2. Identify opportunities for collaboration with PRIDE of Tuscaloosa

The EDU subcommittee recommends engaging with PRIDE of Tuscaloosa to identify programs, projects, or events that are aligned with the mission of Project Unity for collaboration

Develop a checklist or offer refresher training to help teachers and school staff identify students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Family Counseling Service, Tuscaloosa City Schools- Social Work Services, Indian Rivers Behavioral Health

Children who experience or witness violence in the home or community, unstable family dynamics, food insecurity, etc. are more likely to develop mental health, substance abuse issues, or engage in criminal behavior. Identifying and seeking support for these children early is crucial to their future well-being.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EDU subcommittee endorses the creation of educational aids for teachers and school staff in relation to the identification and support of student survivors of adverse experiences. The recommended education aids include:

- 1. Pocket cards and magnets**
 - a. These items will be a handy on-the-go reference for teachers and staff.
- 2. Quarterly refresher training**
 - a. In-person and virtual options

Identify therapeutic options for children and family members who have witnessed or experienced traumatic or violent events

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Family Counseling Service, Tuscaloosa City Schools- Social Work Services, Indian Rivers Behavioral Health, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa Police Department, Tuscaloosa Fire, and Rescue, Community Unity, 100 Black Men, Nation Pan-Hellenic Council Fraternities, DCH Regional Medical Center

Tuscaloosa's disturbing increase in violent crime, especially gun violence among young Black men, there is a slew of silent victims--children and their families. Oftentimes, children and families experience anger, denial, depression, anxiety, and as a result, begin to engage in harmful and/or retaliatory behaviors. In the most unfortunate situation, the cycle of violence continues. To end the cycle and reclaim the lives of our children, friends, and neighbors, the Education Subcommittee recommends the establishment and implementation of trauma-informed therapy and restorative justice programs for victims and perpetrators of violent crimes, their children, and family members.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The EDU subcommittee endorses the establishment and implementation of trauma-informed therapy and restorative justice programs for victims and perpetrators of violent crimes, their children, and family members. The subcommittee recommends that the program includes the following components:

- 1. Free and/or low cost therapeutic care**
- 2. Use of trauma informed methodologies and best practices with all parties**
- 3. Hospital Intervention**
 - a. Respond to gunshot and violence-related trauma situations
 - b. Work with survivors of violence during their stay
 - c. Intervene in conflicts and aim to prevent further violence
 - d. Work with emergency department staff
 - e. Reach out to community members at risk of being involved in future violence
 - f. Work with family members of survivors of violence to promote hope and healing
 - g. Connect individuals impacted by violence with community resources

2. Crime Scene/Court Intervention

- a.** Perform similar responsibilities as with Hospital Intervention
- b.** Respond to gunshot and violence-related trauma situations

3. Youth Intervention

In addition to the responsibilities in Hospital and Crime Scene/Court Interventions, Youth interventions will include:

- a.** Consent from parent and/or guardian
- b.** Use developmentally appropriate techniques
- c.** Work with facility and staff of the home school
- d.** Work with volunteers, mentors, role models if involved in extracurricular activities

4. Prioritization of the identification and training of Black men and women as peer support/ community network for victims and their families

5. Inclusion of children and family members experiencing other traumatic events such as incarcerated immediate family members, sudden loss of a loved one, homelessness due to natural disaster or fire

Conduct a review and assessment of academic and career tech opportunities available for residents of the Tuscaloosa County Juvenile Detention Center and develop a re-entry program to minimize academic and social regression

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Juvenile Detention Center, the Dannon Project, Tuscaloosa City Schools, Department of Justice

Incarcerated teens should receive the best possible educational opportunities and be in a position to re-enter school at the same grade level once released. The Education Subcommittee supports institutional focus on rehabilitation and growth rather than punishment. Consider modeling after or forming a chapter of The Dannon Project.



Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Conversation with Director of Juvenile Detention Center and Staff
2. Joint identification of barriers to re-entry of incarcerated teens and the subsequent development of workable solutions

Reinvest in the Gateway to transform the facility into a venue for children to experiment with technology-related interests

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education, Youth Sports and Recreation
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Gateway

The Education subcommittee in conjunction with the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends reinvestment in the Gateway to transform the facility into a venue for children to experiment with technology-related interests



The full recommendation can be found in the Youth Sports and Recreation sub-section of the Recommendations.

Hold discussions with Tuscaloosa City Schools officials to determine feasibility of keeping school facilities open past traditional school hours

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa City Schools
Potential Partnerships:	Various non-profits throughout Tuscaloosa

Schools are generally within walking distance of most neighborhoods where lack of transportation may be a hindrance to participation in after-school and weekend programs that could make use of this space, such as LIFT Alabama, The Bridge, and Five Horizons. The Education Subcommittee would like to support more weekday programs held during the evening hours between dinner and bedtime.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Collaborative support for existing after-school programs and weekend programs.

Establish partnerships with various youth services agencies, health care providers, juvenile court staff, DHR, and other agencies to identify at-risk children prior to pre-Kindergarten for placement in mentorship, early intervention, and DYAO programs

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Alabama Department of Human Resources, Pediatricians

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Invest in early intervention programs to serve a greater number of children

Host workshops for conflict management and resolution training for youth and families

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, Tuscaloosa's ONE Place, mediators and facilitators

Conflict resolution is a skill that must be strengthened and developed. With increases in violence across our country and community, it could be considered an essential life skill. The Education Subcommittee recommends incorporating dedicated lesson plans into the Tuscaloosa City School curriculum beginning in Pre-K and continuing through graduation. In addition, the Education Subcommittee endorses the inclusion of parents/guardians in an annual conflict resolution workshop as a part of the Student/Parent Acknowledgement.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

- 1. Identification and selection of content provider**
- 2. Requirement of conflict resolution course completion for access to some social services such as rental and utility assistance, District Attorney's Office's Second Chance program, Municipal Court fee waiver opportunities, etc.**

Invest funding into city wide broadband installation

Implementation Time-frame:	Long-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Education, Economic and Workforce Development
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Local cable and internet providers, City of Tuscaloosa-Information Technology Department

In the event of another natural disaster or unforeseen event, our community must ensure that our youth, families, schools, and service providers maintain uninterrupted access to its digital learning, case files, etc. To this end, the Education Subcommittee recommends the investment of funding into city-wide broadband installation.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

- 1. Define underserved communities/areas within Tuscaloosa**
- 2. Identification of underserved communities/areas within Tuscaloosa**
- 3. Create Scope of Work for installation of city-wide WIFI with special emphasis on the previously identified underserved areas**

6

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION & HOUSING

"We have failed to fully appreciate how deeply housing is implicated in the creation of poverty"

~Matthew Desmond

There is no community program, project, or initiative that can truly seek to promote equity, opportunity, or advancement without addressing housing. Having a place to call home is a critical element of identity development, basic shelter and security is a psychological need. Studies have repeatedly shown the correlation between quality, stable, and affordable housing and improved academic performance in children and youth, long-term economic stability, improved health outcomes, increases in neighborhood purchase power and quality, and decreases juvenile crime rates.

Armed with this information, the Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Subcommittee (NRH) spent months identifying Tuscaloosa's barriers to affordable and equitable housing and uncovering unaddressed issues that stagnate neighborhood revitalization. The NRH was comprised of long-time community and housing advocates, ranging from non-profit housing developers to social activists. During the meetings, members began to craft the outlines for significant neighborhood revitalization and housing programs and initiatives that will have an impact on generations to come.

Create dedicated funding source for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and Workforce Housing* (\$2.5 - \$3 million annually)

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate to Long-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, other local housing developers, community foundations and non-profits

The Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Subcommittee (NRH) recommends the creation of a dedicated permanent funding source for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and Workforce Housing. The NRH subcommittee established a need to promote the development of multiple housing types in all areas of the City to address access to housing for LMI and Workforce population. According to the City of Tuscaloosa’s 2018 Affordable Housing Study, a significant portion of the City’s population is cost burdened meaning that they are paying over 30% of their income towards housing expenses. A major barrier to affordable housing development is simply the cost of development, which includes land acquisition, infrastructure, building materials, etc. As a result, affordable housing for LMI and Workforce population is difficult to produce without some type subsidy.

Furthermore, it should be also noted that to achieve an increase in affordable housing units, it is imperative that the current affordable housing stock for the City’s LMI and Workforce population be maintained. The Affordable Housing Study identified that the majority of Tuscaloosa’s housing was built prior to 1980. In addition, local affordable housing providers have identified that there is a high demand for rehabilitation that would take several years to address with funding that is currently available. The NRH Subcommittee also identified that the household incomes of the City’s LMI and Workforce population make it difficult to address the rehabilitation needs without some type of subsidy.

A dedicated permanent funding source will allow the City to be in a better position to have a greater impact on increasing and maintaining affordable housing. In addition, this dedicated funding source will allow for a greater leveraging of existing programs that support housing to include HOME, CDBG, low income housing tax credits, Housing Choice Voucher Program, etc.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Permanent and dedicated City of Tuscaloosa Investment in Housing

The NRH recommends the creation of a dedicated funding source for Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and Workforce Housing.

- a. **The subcommittee recommends a minimal annual funding of \$2.5 - \$3 million annually**
 - This funding amount is recommended by local housing providers to leverage with other funding sources in effort to address the current housing shortage in the aforementioned categories.
- b. **Eligible uses of funds** would include land acquisition, infrastructure, housing rehabilitation to include homeowner and multi-family, neighborhood facade improvements, neighborhood cleanup, and other construction related costs that support the development and/or maintenance of LMI and Workforce housing in critical areas.
- c. **Leverage seeking mechanisms will be utilized.** This fund would not be a sole funder of any project and would require appropriate leveraging that models the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC).
- d. **An application process would be developed to apply for funding.** This will be a competitive process that will evaluate the project, how well funding is leveraged, and the project's alignment with the City's priorities and goals



Strategic Affordable Housing Development Implementation Plan (SAHDIP)

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa-Office of Community and Neighborhood Services, Urban Development Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Subcommittee, and other community stakeholders

The NRH Subcommittee understands that it is necessary to develop a tool to guide investment of City resources in LMI and Workforce Housing. In order to ensure a more targeted approach in allocating City funding, a Strategic Affordable Housing Development Implementation Plan (SAHDIP) is required. This implementation plan's purpose is to develop housing production goals over the next ten years to include timelines, partners, specific action steps, and funding approaches. The SAHDIP's approach will incorporate the findings from the 2018 Affordable Housing Study and Framework to include targeted areas for growth, revitalization, priority development zones, and opportunity areas for rehabilitation.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Data-based implementation strategies for effective and efficient housing development

The NRH recommends the development of a Strategic Affordable Housing Development Implementation Plan (SAHDIP)

- a. The development of this plan would serve as a guide in the implementation of LMI and Workforce housing priorities throughout the City. This plan would be critical in providing guidance for the City's Housing funding allocations (This includes the City's local, state, and federal funding)

Revamp the “Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation” to implement SAHDIP

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa- Office of Community and Neighborhood Services, Urban Development Planning Division, Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing Subcommittee, and other community stakeholders

The SAHDIP will require oversight in its implementation. The City has an existing Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation whose function is to facilitate the development, acquisition and improvement of housing in the City of Tuscaloosa. The NHR Subcommittee recommends revamping the Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation to provide oversight in the implementation of SAHDIP.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Revamp the “Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation” to implement SAHDIP

The NRH recommends the City of Tuscaloosa reconvene the Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation to oversee the management and operability of the SAHDIP. Additionally, this body would advise the City’s elected officials on the allocation of non-federal funding to support housing

To achieve this, the NRH endorses:

- a. **Amendment of the articles of incorporation to update the function and composition of membership to implement SAHDIP**

Strengthen property maintenance enforcement practices

Implementation Time-Frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa-Office of Community and Neighborhood Services, Urban Development- Inspections Division, Urban Development- Planning Division

The 2018 Affordable Housing Study identified that there is a great deal of aging housing concentrated in our vulnerable areas of Tuscaloosa. The NHR Subcommittee understands that developing an approach to maintaining and/or revitalizing Tuscaloosa’s neighborhoods is critical in addressing LMI and Workforce housing. In addition, the subcommittee also understands that a holistic approach is needed in order to improve existing housing conditions to include not only identifying the problem, but also identifying resources to solve the problems.

Throughout the subcommittee’s review of affordable housing, it was clear that challenges exist in maintaining affordable housing. This is due to a host of issues to including the availability of household funds, access to financing, and property maintenance education.

Furthermore, the subcommittee also acknowledged that some of the property with maintenance issues is rental property and requires recommendations to address this issue as well.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Establishing a comprehensive property maintenance ecosystem

The NRH recommends developing a property maintenance system that incorporates national best practices, technology, data and education

- a. **Bolster Technological and Data based methodology**
 - Community Blight System
 - Use data and technology to track code compliance trends and more efficiently target compliance efforts.
 - Focus enforcement efforts – prioritize enforcement efforts on “worst of the worst” or things that are a threat to neighborhood safety, crime, or further disinvestment.

b. Utilize a cooperative compliance model

- Code Enforcement Officers would provide wrap around services with inspections and issuance of code violations to include how to address the problems and comply with the codes.

c. Develop a housing maintenance education program

- This will include the development of literature and other resources as a preventative tool.
- Collaborate with housing providers to partner in the implementation of the program.

d. Develop and enforce a plan to address vacant properties with absentee landlords to correct code violations

- In particular, to address repeat code violation offenders who might address the bare minimum on their property, which often leads to more code violations.



Address overall neighborhood nuisance issues through code enforcement to include, but not limited to unauthorized home businesses and advertisements on trees, streets, fences, etc.

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa-Urban Development- Inspections Division, Urban Development- Planning Division, Infrastructure and Public Services Department

Nuisances can greatly affect the whole neighborhood by potentially contributing to blight, discouraging reinvestment, and consume police and other city services. In addressing neighborhood revitalization, the NHR Subcommittee deemed it necessary to strengthen the City's approach in dealing with two particular reoccurring issues to include unauthorized home businesses and flyer advertisements

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The NRH endorses addressing overall neighborhood nuisance issues through code enforcement to include, but not limited to unauthorized home businesses and advertisements on trees, streets, fences, etc. This recommendation will include:

- a. Address nuisance issues that arise from businesses operating illegally out of the home**
 - Unauthorized home businesses could be operating in an area that it is not zoned for which can cause neighbors to be negatively impacted. This can include increased traffic in the neighborhood, noise pollution, exterior presence of supplies and vehicles, etc.
- b. Address nuisance issues that arise from unsightly clutter of advertisements in neighborhoods**
 - Flyers and other signs are often posted on utility poles, fences, and various other fixtures. This can contribute to litter or blight in a neighborhood.

Increase housing opportunities through increased investment in Housing Rehabilitation Program

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate to Long- Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa-Office of Community and Neighborhood Services

Rehabilitation of housing is essential to neighborhood revitalization. The Affordable Housing Study identified that there is a great deal of aging housing concentrated in our vulnerable areas of Tuscaloosa. Losing affordable housing units can be detrimental to our community as there are already limited opportunities for a lot of families. Emergency Home Repair is a solution to not only improve our neighborhoods, but also stabilize families with suitable living environments.

The City of Tuscaloosa currently has a high demand for LMI homeowner rehabilitation with limited funding available. One of the main sources operating current homeowner rehabilitation is Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which is able to address 10-15 houses annually. Homeowners, however, are currently waiting long periods of time to have issues addressed which often leads to other repair issues developing on the property.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Fortify Housing Rehabilitation Program

The NRH recommends leveraging housing rehabilitation as a cost-effective and immediate means to maintain and increase housing opportunities within Tuscaloosa.

- a. Address aging housing stock through setting priority zones based on crime areas, code violations, and aging housing.**
 - The priority is to maintain/promote affordability and health and safety. SAHDIP would guide for implementation of housing rehabilitation program.
- b. This program is also designed to provide remediation support for the previous recommendation of code enforcement.**
 - Properties that lack the financial resources or access to financing would be eligible to apply to this program.
- c. The NRH recommends the identification and annual allocation of dedicated non-federal funding from the City of Tuscaloosa for housing rehabilitation.**
 - This funding would be leveraged with other funding sources to address the growing need.

Establish Homeowner Facade Program and Neighborhood Cleanup

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Community Neighborhood Associations, City Councilors, Non-profit community developers, non-profit organizations

The preservation of housing and neighborhoods is vital in maintaining the availability of affordable housing. The appearance of our neighborhoods plays an important role in the perception of the quality of our community. A tool that can assist with preserving the quality of Tuscaloosa’s neighborhoods and housing is a homeowner façade and neighborhood cleanup program. This allows for funding to be utilized to improve exterior areas of housing which will provide a positive impact to not only our neighborhoods, but the entire city by ensuring the continuation of visually unified, attractive residential neighborhoods.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Develop program guidelines and eligibility

The NRH recommends developing program policies and procedures to ensure proper management of the Homeowner Facade Program and Neighborhood Cleanup.

- a. **This program will be targeted in underserved areas to provide facade improvements to include exterior paint, replacement of rotten wood, etc.**
- b. **This program will also coordinate cleanup of nuisances to include tires, etc.**
- c. **The goal of this program is to concentrate funding in one area at a time to achieve noticeable improvements.**
- d. **SAHDIP would serve as guide for implementation**

2. Funding required for proper implementation

The NRH recommends the identification and annual allocation of dedicated non-federal funding from the City of Tuscaloosa for these programs

Build a Neighborhood Association Development Program

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Office of City Attorney, Various Neighborhood Associations, unincorporated subdivisions and neighborhoods, Alabama Secretary of State

Empowering neighborhoods and their residents is important in maintaining housing and revitalization. The purpose of neighborhood associations is to bring together residents from a section of the city who share common goals and want to create a place to meet other residents, share concerns, offer solutions, and create a greater sense of community. Benefits of neighborhood associations include the following:

- Cleaner, safer, healthier neighborhoods
- Creates communication networks with local government, businesses, and other groups with the goal of creating partnerships
- Provide means of communicating with neighbors
- Collaboratively work together to reduce and prevent crime through crime prevention programs
- Encourage the exchange of ideas in an effort to promote cooperative action.
- Solve problems that exist or arise within the neighborhood

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Develop program guidelines and eligibility

The NRH recommends developing program policies and procedures to ensure proper management of the Neighborhood Association Development Program. The goal of the program will be to:

- Provide neighborhoods with technical assistance for setup of a neighborhood association**
- This could serve as a tool to empower neighborhoods to collaboratively make decisions to protect, preserve, and promote their community.**

Identify and remove zoning barriers as it relates to affordable housing

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Urban Development- Planning Division, Planning and Zoning Commission, Tuscaloosa Housing Finance Corporation

Housing affordability has become a high-profile issue in recent years as sustained economic growth has pushed up housing prices in cities across the nation. Tuscaloosa’s housing prices, according to the Affordable Housing Study, are increasing and are above pre-recession levels. In addition, the same study identifies that 70% of people working in Tuscaloosa commute in from outside of the City suggesting that there might not be an adequate supply of housing. In fact, the need for more affordable housing units is currently being experienced across the U.S. One of the greatest challenges identified by housing developers and providers are costs associated with the regulatory requirements of housing construction.

Local governments are realizing that restrictive zoning and outdated land-use regulations can suppress housing supply and drive up housing costs. The reduction of regulatory barriers that limit the market’s ability to build small, lower cost homes on expensive land can offer the approach needed to address the shortage of affordable housing.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Develop zoning that promotes affordable housing

The NRH endorses the development of zoning that facilitates access and availability of affordable housing. The NRH seeks to accomplish this through:

- a. Implement opportunities to build smaller format housing products that LMI families, entry-level members of Tuscaloosa’s workforce, local college graduates and other moderate income households could afford to purchase.
- b. Update the zoning ordinance to include and define a wide range of housing types – duplexes, triplexes, accessory dwellings, tiny houses, and other housing solutions, allowing development of these housing types BY RIGHT where appropriate and removing regulatory barriers that increase cost of housing development.
 - These alternate housing types wouldn’t be allowed in all single-family residential zones, but would be appropriate in some existing zones with smaller minimum lot sizes, etc.

- c. Revise regulations to support and encourage redevelopment
- d. Adjust nonconforming use standards.
- e. Eliminate or revamp time-consuming regulatory processes (PUD, etc).
- f. Re-write regulations to make sure redevelopment fits into the existing context or planned context and that the procedural path for redevelopment is streamlined
- g. Administrative adjustment procedure to allow for minor adjustments to dimensional and certain development and design standards
- h. Alternative compliance provisions for parking and landscaping and other standards.



Infrastructure planning that will promote housing growth in the areas of Low to moderate income and workforce income housing

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate to Long-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Infrastructure and Public Services Department, Office of Community and Neighborhood Services, Urban Development

Affordable housing production is a critical need across the country. As many localities continue to explore ways to encourage housing development, many are looking at various opportunities that might jump start the effort. In addition to addressing potential regulatory barriers that increase housing production costs, many communities are looking at ways to further supporting housing. Development costs are the main driver of housing prices. As a result, it is important to determine potential opportunities by the City to lower development costs to encourage more development of LMI and Workforce Housing. Infrastructure cost sharing represents a way the City can encourage and support affordable housing development.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The NRH recommends infrastructure planning that will promote housing growth in the areas of Low to moderate income and workforce income housing.

1. Apply Framework's methodology to direct infrastructure investments

Using the growth priorities and annexation plan within Framework, the City has guidance for making decisions about expanding boundaries through annexation and planning infrastructure investments to support growth.

a. Growth priority areas:

- Priority infill and redevelopment – where infill and redevelopment growth is encouraged. Areas may be served by utility infrastructure today but may need upgrades
- Primary Expansion area – land outside the city where provision of utility service exists or could be provided based on infrastructure in the area today.
- Secondary Expansion area – areas that could support extension of wastewater utility service in the near or mid-term
- Future Service/Expansion area – wastewater utility extension could occur in the long-term.

b. Water and wastewater expansion should be informed by the following assumptions:

- Typically the cost of establishing new public utilities for development is borne by the developer
- There should not be an assumption that annexed land will receive utility service or access services
- The availability and timing of utility service is dependent on many factors and will be determined on a case-by-case basis
- Modeling may be conducted to assess the impacts of proposed improvements on the infrastructure system
- There should be no future city wastewater utility extensions within unincorporated areas.



Develop and maintain a Housing Resource Matrix

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term to Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Community Housing partners, developers, West Alabama Coalition for the Homeless

Tuscaloosa consists of great social service agencies whose focus is to serve our vulnerable populations. These agencies are tasked with addressing the growing need for services in the Tuscaloosa community. In addition, it is often difficult for citizens to navigate how to access the services that are available to them. Developing a centralized resource with this information updated frequently will allow for easier citizen access. The Housing Resource Matrix will serve as a guide to provide renters, homeowners, landlords, and community organizations with information on the resources available in the City of Tuscaloosa to address housing and other social service needs. This guide can also be utilized as a tool to provide a more coordinated effort in delivering services and encourage more partnerships with service providers.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The NRH recommends establishing a centralized housing resource to promote awareness of available services, avoid duplication, and to more effectively leverage community resources.

1. Determine Scope of the Housing Resource Matrix

This would provide renters, homeowners, landlords, and community organizations with information on the resources available in the City of Tuscaloosa to address housing needs.

2. Responsibility for maintenance

This service is currently a scattered effort in the community, but this recommendation involves centralizing the maintenance of this matrix under the roof of the City of Tuscaloosa. An appropriate housing of this matrix should be in the Office of Community and Neighborhood Services where the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Assessment, a tool that connects citizens to services, is currently housed.

3. Coordination among organizations

Development and maintenance of this matrix will involve coordinating with the Continuum of Care, Housing Providers, Ministerial Alliance, Human Services Providers, etc.

4. Recommendation requires added position that can be funded by a combination of federal and general fund dollars.

The NRH recommends that the City of Tuscaloosa identify and provide an annual allocation of non-federal monies to ensure proper staffing for initiative.

Expand housing literacy for renters and homeowners

Implementation Time-Frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa-Office of Community and Neighborhood Services

While accessing the housing needs of Tuscaloosa, it became evident that in addition to increasing the housing supply, housing education services are equally important. During the NRH's evaluation of housing and related needs, it was identified that barriers exist with renters and buyers having adequate credit and income to qualify for housing. Furthermore, it was also identified that post purchase and rental counseling was also critical as a preventative measure to avoid foreclosure and eviction where possible. HUD Certified Housing Counselors are important to accessing and maintaining housing in that they provide the critical housing education that can help alleviate the aforementioned barriers. A HUD Certified Housing Counselor can provide assistance with preventing foreclosure, buying a home, protecting your credit, and other housing related issues. These services are available to tenants, homeowners, homeless, and homebuyers.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The NRH recommends the expansion of Expand housing literacy for renters and homeowners to increase community- wide housing stability

1. Leverage City of Tuscaloosa Housing Counseling Programs (HCP)

The NRH endorses increasing the availability of HUD Certified Housing Counseling Services. This will include hiring and maintaining a full time permanent staff of HUD certified Housing Counselors.

- a. The HCP will be a critical affordable housing tool to assist our citizens in acquiring or maintaining affordable housing. Citizens will have access to Pre-Purchase Counseling, Post Purchase Counseling; Pre-Rental, Post Rental Counseling, Rent Delinquency Counseling, Mortgage Default Counseling, Consumer Education, Budgeting & Money Management, Fair Housing, and several other Counseling choices.

2. Develop appropriate educational materials for distribution through various channels and audiences

- a. Development of web-based materials in the subject matter of financial literacy and budgeting as this is becoming an emerging need.
- b. Development of housing education to include financial literacy for students and their families
- c. Enhance fair housing education throughout the City to citizens, landlords, lenders, and realtors. This is critical piece in educating all parties on the rules, which is a tool in maintaining and acquiring housing.

Address shortage of availability of rental units to receive tenants with HUD subsidies

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing
Lead Organization:	West Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (WACH)
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, Alabama Apartment Association, local landlords

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocates housing subsidies for rental units to the Tuscaloosa community annually. Rental unit subsidies are provided to address those that are cost burdened by housing expenses and are very low income individuals or families. These subsidies are critical for many to maintain housing that would otherwise not be affordable for their household. Voucher programs (i.e. Housing Choice Vouchers), a housing subsidy administered by the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, allows for participants to select their own housing with the requirement that it meet HUD's guidelines. A challenge experienced with Vouchers is identifying units to participate. At the time of this recommendation, there was a 64% success rate for clients with vouchers finding units to rent. Furthermore, other agencies providing rental assistance have identified challenges in finding units for their clients.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The NRH recommends a collaborative approach to housing subsidized tenants.

- 1. Establish relationship building forums with housing service providers and landlords to address barriers.**
- 2. The West Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (WACH) will establish and coordinate these forums**

6

YOUTH SPORTS AND RECREATION

“Participation in competitive youth sports ‘spill over’ to occupationally advantageous traits that persist across a person’s life.”

~Kevin Kniffin, PhD

“ What is it like to be a youth in Tuscaloosa?”

This is the primary question that drove the work of the Youth Sports and Recreation (YSR) subcommittee. In answering this question, the YSR began to look at the current sports offerings of the Tuscaloosa area. Quickly, the subcommittee realized that the scope of the subcommittee had to be widened to capture the thousands of Tuscaloosa children and youth that have no interest in sports or other physical activity. To that end, the YSR focused its efforts on the whole youth: mental, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee was composed of local and regional leaders in the non-profit, education, healthcare, and sports industries. The common thread among the members was their years of experience in youth-focused activities and their commitment to the success of each and every child. Armed with that passion, the YSR set out to ensure that no child's zip code or socioeconomic status, would determine their ability to participate in engaging and enriching recreational programming.

This subcommittee targeted its recommendations on reducing traditional barriers to access, strengthening the community's youth infrastructure, increasing participation from children and youth, and identifying and empowering youth-centered individuals and organizations.

It is the hope of the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee that these weeks of active dialogue and the resulting recommendations are just the beginning of a new, exciting chapter for Tuscaloosa's youth.

Establish a City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement & Opportunity

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama, Industrial Development Authority, YMCA of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, United Way of West Alabama

It is becoming a common practice for a municipality to have a department or division that solely focuses on youth. Cities like Los Angeles, CA; Boston, MA; Louisville, KY; Seattle, Washington; Avondale, AZ; Durham, NC; Euless, TX have already incorporated a youth services division or department into their operations with relative success. Of Alabama's top five municipalities (Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa) only the City of Birmingham has created an organizational unit dedicated to youth. With roughly 18% of its population under the age of 18 and as the home of three higher education institutions--The University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College--Tuscaloosa must allocate the resources to meet the needs of this growing population.

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee (YSR) recommends the creation of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity within the City of Tuscaloosa.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The YSR recommends that the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity (DYAO) contain certain operational and programmatic elements.

Organizational/Operational Components

Administration Unit: This unit will govern the operation of the city-sponsored youth programming as well as the overall management of department and external stakeholder engagement. includes the operation of the program and the internal and external management of the department.

Advocacy: DYAO will act as a youth advocate within legislative conversations and assertively reorient the narrative of youth engagement towards youth-centeredness versus problem-oriented. Additionally, DYAO will push for youth representation and centeredness in conversations about policy development, orient systems to be more responsive to youth and cultivate youth voices to advocate for themselves.

Community Engagement and Education: DYAO will provide training and technical assistance opportunities to individuals and organizations, increase community awareness of the work of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity, solicit community input on direction, goals, objectives, and programming, facilitate a youth-oriented city and community infrastructure/culture, and help build community and organizational capacity to facilitate positive environments and interactions for youth. This area will also include the creation of the communication plans, campaigns, and promoting the work of DYAO and its partner organizations.

Research and Community Assessment: DYAO will research financial and programmatic opportunities, as well as compile data from programs, organizations, and community members, and support youth-centered research endeavors. Also, DYAO will continually assess the greater Tuscaloosa community to determine departmental direction, goals, objectives, and programming.

Program and Project Design and Development: DYAO will ideate, design, and facilitate the process, policy, and practice development for city-sponsored programs as well as co-create and collaboratively implement partnership programs and projects.

Strategic Planning and Partnership Development: Identify and work with partner organizations to define local and individual strategies and outcomes for youth in Tuscaloosa, provide supervision and support for the policy, program, and project implementation and adoption, and provide ways for like-minded organizations to collaborate undeterred.

Six Programmatic Points

The YSR recommends establishing a six-point program focus for the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. The six programmatic points will be Civic Responsibility and Engagement, Education, Economic and Workforce Development, Holistic Wellbeing, Juvenile Justice, and Youth Sports and Recreation.

Civic Responsibility and Engagement

Civic responsibility is often defined as the active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good. According to Youth.gov, "Civic engagement involves "working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Civic engagement includes both paid and unpaid forms of political activism, environmentalism, and community and national service. Volunteering, national service, and service-learning are all forms of civic engagement."

Studies have shown a positive correlation between youth community engagement and increases in future income and employment, higher reported levels of self-confidence, gains in empathy, decreases in reports of depression.

There are four constructs of civic engagement that should be utilized to develop Tuscaloosa's civic engagement programs.

FOUR CONSTRUCTS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic Engagement

Working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community.

Civic Action
Civic Commitment or Duty
Civic Skills
Social Cohesion

- **Civic Action**, or participation in activities such as volunteering or service-learning to help better the community (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009)
- **Civic Commitment or Duty**, or the willingness to make positive contributions to society
- **Civic Skills**, or the ability to be involved in civil society, politics, and democracy
- **Social Cohesion**, or a sense of reciprocity, trust, and bonding to others

"Four constructs of civic engagement", Youth.gov

Examples of current and potential civic programs include the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama's Forerunners, creation of a City of Tuscaloosa Youth Council, development of in-school and/or after-school civic education and engagement programs for elementary, middle, and high school students, and establish mentorships- "Adopt an Official/ Councilor" programs for children and youth to engage with local and regional leadership.

Education

The educational point of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity will focus on academic enrichment for school-aged children and youth. It will incorporate educational partnerships between the City of Tuscaloosa and its educational partners. Note that a partner organization could work with DYAO on a variety of foci. For example, Tuscaloosa City Schools can be an educational, economic, youth sports, and holistic well-being partner.

Examples of current educational programs include Mayor's Cup for Pre-K, Career and College Ready Dual-Enrollment Scholarships, Pre-K Initiative, Summer Learning Academy, and the Saban Center. Potential partnerships can include summer scholarships for youth, similar to the program implemented by Davenport, Iowa, or a Kids Pass, where children and youth purchase a summer pass to attend various educational programs throughout a season for one low price.

Economic and Workforce Development

Youth economic and workforce development has been a national focus for several years. Locally, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools, and various employers have worked together to ensure that the city's youth are prepared to enter into the workforce and compete locally, regionally, and nationally. The City currently offers the Hope Summer Jobs Program as its singular youth employment initiative.

The YSR believes that the City can expand its efforts in youth employment to also include elementary, middle school, and college-aged students. For example, the City can sponsor a Municipal Scholars Program for college-aged students to intern and co-op with the City of Tuscaloosa. For our younger and younger students, the City can spear a standardized developmentally appropriate education that focuses on the world of work. In addition, YSR recommends fostering entrepreneurship through programs like Lemonade Day/ Community Coffee Day as well as sponsoring a Teen/ Youth Incubator at the EDGE.

Holistic Wellbeing

YSR recommends incorporating a point concentrated on improving mental, emotional, physical, and social health outcomes in Tuscaloosa youth. It is estimated that one in six children aged 6 and up have at least one treatable mental health disorder. As well, it is recognized that negative well-being influences behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, disruptive behavior in classrooms, and poor academic achievement.

To combat this, YSR recommends having on-staff social workers that partner with community partners to address the needs of child and youth participants. Also, the Holistic Wellbeing point will actively support the needs of LGBTQIA and non-English speaking youth.

Juvenile Justice

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee understands that delinquency and criminal acts are an unfortunate reality for some of our youth. According to Youth.gov, juvenile justice processes operate under the principle that youthful offenders (juveniles) are inherently different from adults. To that end, justice systems and organizations that interact with youth should be focused on rehabilitation, self-determination, reintegration, and social and educational supports.

The YSR recommends creating a juvenile re-entry program. In addition, YSR supports the creation and implementation of conflict resolution courses for all school-aged children and their parents and/or guardians. Also, YSR is a proponent of Violence Trauma Therapy, where children and youth exposed to violent crimes (such as eyewitnesses, or as immediate family members of victims or perpetrators of violent crimes) can receive free or low-cost therapy sessions.

Youth Sports and Recreation

The YSR recommends that the sixth point of programming for the DAYO focuses on the coordination and support of youth sports and recreation within Tuscaloosa city. This point encompasses team sports, as well as performing arts and other recreational activities. Under this component, DYAO will manage the coordination of the youth sports calendar, youth partnerships, Youth Bus route, and provide Gateway support.

Organizational Chart

The YSR recommends organizing the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity similarly to the organizational chart provided below.



Create Partnership Pathways with higher education institutions and civic organizations to provide mentorship for youth activities

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, various non-profit and civic organizations such as National Panhellenic Council, Jack and Jill, 100 Black Men, etc.

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends creating documented, objective, and standardized processes for the City of Tuscaloosa investment into youth-centered institutions and organizations. Developing partnership pathways provide structure and uniformity to the collaboration process, which allows organizations to make a deep dive into key areas but also creates clear expectations and collaborative measures of success. It is the belief of the YSR that such processes will increase collaboration between the City of Tuscaloosa, community organizations, and the Tuscaloosa community at large. An anticipated added benefit of creating partnership pathways is an increase in partnerships from new organizations, which could lead to greater innovation.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Define the six points of partnership

The YSR recommends that the points of partnership mirror the Six Programmatic Points of the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. These are the areas of focus for any youth-centered collaboration between the City of Tuscaloosa and community organizations or institutions.

These points are:

1. Civic Responsibility & Engagement
2. Education
3. Economic & Workforce Development
4. Holistic Wellbeing
5. Juvenile Justice
6. Youth Sports & Recreation

2. Define the type of partnership pathways

The YSR recommends creating partnership pathways to provide a framework for the City of Tuscaloosa's interaction with and organization and the role the city will play in the implementation of the program or project.

The types of pathways are as follows:

Sponsor- The City of Tuscaloosa will be a financial contributor to the implementation of specific programs and/or activities.

Developer- The City of Tuscaloosa will co-design a program/ project.

Contributor- The City of Tuscaloosa will provide in-kind contributions to the program or a project such as a facility space, research, data, or volunteer hours.

Lead Agency- The City of Tuscaloosa will finance, manage, and oversee the implementation of a non-profit collaborative project.

Support- City of Tuscaloosa will write a letter of support for viable programs, projects, and grant applications.

3. Create a process for proposal approvals and collaboration that is codified and demystified

The YSR recommends establishing a defined proposal process that includes an evaluation rubric and clearly defines its financial and programmatic priorities.

4. Consolidate Youth-oriented partnerships into one department/contact

The YSR recommends that all youth-centered partnerships be housed within the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity. This will prevent confusion about where organizations should go for programmatic or financial assistance. Currently, youth programs and initiatives are subsidiary considerations and components of other departments with separate missions, goals, and objectives. This will also reduce the administrative burden on City Staff when working on projects that are outside the scope of their traditional job functions and duties.

5. Establish diverse funding mechanisms and transparent processes for funding

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the identification of dedicated City of Tuscaloosa funding for youth-centered organizations. In addition, the funding application should be flexible to reduce the administrative burden for organizations. For example, expanding funding cycles from 1 year to 3 years, having a rolling application/funding cycle, or the creation of a comprehensive application for General Funds, Grant Funds, and DYAO funding.

Create Communications Plan for Tuscaloosa Youth Activities

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	KIDS Life Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports, Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority Doctor's offices, Tuscaloosa County Health Department, Department of Human Resources, Tuscaloosa Public Library, Weaver Bolden Library, Maude Whately Health Services, Gateway Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, Tuscaloosa Transit Authority, Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, volunteer organizations, and youth-centered non-profits, and religious organizations.

A recurring theme during the Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee meeting was the lack of knowledge by the target demographic about the variety of current programs and events offered by various organizations and clubs through the city of Tuscaloosa. Members discovered that oftentimes events are planned based on the initial response to a "feeler" or through constituents asking for certain events or programs. However, during the event/program the turn-out is consistently less than the organization anticipated. Additionally, organizations regularly highlighted the need for dedicated marketing funds as budget cuts have required organizations to reduce their extraneous expenses to preserve program operations.

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends that a communications plan for Tuscaloosa's youth activities is developed and that it is maintained as an independently funded, neutral, and informational dashboard for all youth-centered activity.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Youth Activities Campaign

The YSR recommends the development of a youth activities campaign to initiate the comprehensive youth services communications plan/ community engagement.

One of the greatest deterrents to participation is the lack of awareness of current youth activity offerings. In addition, citizens are deterred from participation because they do not know the benefits of participating and/or having a membership to an organization besides what the membership does for their individual families. For instance, many organizations offer scholarships, which are funded by memberships. Urging Tuscaloosa to participate in local organizations via membership, donation, and youth participation is a way to improve public health, build community/relationships, and help a friend/neighbor.

This campaign will require comprehensive media engagement via radio, television, billboards, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snap Chat, YouTube), advertisements in magazines, and interactive events.

Additionally, seeking out mutually beneficial partnerships for collaboration, information posting, and promotion will be crucial to the effectiveness of the campaign.

2. The Tuscaloosa Youth Website

YSR recommends the creation of a dedicated website for all youth-centered activities within Tuscaloosa. The subcommittee recommends, at minimum, the following elements.

1. Full Website

- a. Lead Agency:** City of Tuscaloosa Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity
- b. Contributing Agencies:** All area youth-centered organizations, including for-profit businesses that are sponsoring youth-oriented enrichment activities, not entertainment.
- c. Implementation timeline:** The website turnaround should be less than 180 days.

2. The website will include its own URL, web name, and will have the following features

- a. Mobile-Friendly**
- b. Accessible to all users**
- c. Well-formatted content**
- d. Browser consistency**
- e. Effective navigation**
- f. Visuals and descriptions**

3. An ArcGIS map that allows citizens to categorically view available youth activities.

- a.** Suggested filters and sorts by age, gender, organization, type of activity, cost, and location.
- b.** Map symbols will link directly to the organization's website and will show the physical address of the organization

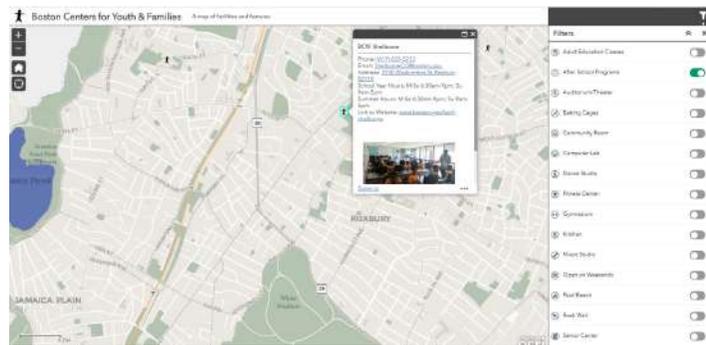
4. The website will include a monthly calendar of events, a directory of contributing agencies, links to contributing agency websites, links to registration pages for activities and/or organizations.

5. The website will also link to the Youth Bus Route page

6. Website will be updated weekly, information from contributing agencies to send that information over to the appropriate staff person at the Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity
7. In addition to youth service activities, the website will also provide information about the upcoming events, city-sponsored programs that are youth-oriented.

3. Marketing Stipends for Youth Organizations

Additionally, the YSR subcommittee recommends direct payments to individual organizations for marketing. This marketing budget would be used solely for marketing organizations and will allow them to tailor their messaging to reach underserved community youth. Underserved youth are young persons that are underrepresented in their current registrants or traditionally have been underrepresented. Marketing should only be approved if the organization is marketing directly to underserved and/or underrepresented populations, or minority, LGBTQIA, non-English speaking youth. Subsequent funding will be conditional based on the organization demonstrating a quantifiable increase in participation in the target demographic over the previous year.



PARENT PORTAL
All the information you need in one place!
 Welcome to the PARENT PORTAL! Here you will find policies, waivers, and other necessary forms for the department. Please reach out to us if you need help or have an idea for programs!

Create City of Tuscaloosa Youth Council

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education, Community Connection & Outreach
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the creation of the Tuscaloosa Youth Council to empower our city's youth to make substantial changes in the current and future trajectory of Tuscaloosa. Throughout the YSR meetings, youth participation and engagement have been paramount in discussions. The subcommittee agrees that it is important to listen to our youth and have them voice their wants, needs, and concerns. The YSR would like to expand on the role of youth from informing decisions to actively crafting policy and developing programs to push Tuscaloosa's youngest citizens forward.

The YSR recommends that the Tuscaloosa Youth Council is a youth-led decision-making body that centers youth, informs city government, and helps re-orient its programming, activities, and funding priorities towards the real needs of youth.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Diversity of Youth Members

The YSR recommends the intentional inclusion of a generous cross-section of youth. It is imperative that the Tuscaloosa Youth Council engages the best and brightest students/youth but also includes youth of various levels of academic achievement, youth from historically marginalized communities, such as non-English speakers, varying physical abilities, identities, familial status. Also, it is paramount that the youth members include students from public, private and home-school school and those participating in the GED.

One of the greatest deterrents to participation is the lack of awareness of current youth activity offerings. In addition, citizens are deterred from participation because they do not know the benefits of participating and/or having a membership to an organization besides what the membership does for their individual families. For instance, many organizations offer scholarships, which are funded by memberships. Urging Tuscaloosa to participate in local organizations via membership, donation, and youth participation is a way to improve public health, build community/relationships, and help a friend/neighbor.

2. Levels of Implementation

The YSR recommends creating varying levels of implementation for civic engagement among all Tuscaloosa city school-aged children and youth. Levels will be based on elementary, middle, and high school categories and feature developmentally appropriate activities and opportunities. This will also include a KIDS in Council program, Mock Council, and Field Trips to City Hall.

- a. **Little Leaders**- Elementary level, school-based quarterly concentrations on citizenship and civic responsibility. This level should consider school-wide service projects to foster collaboration among the students
- b. **Junior Council**- Middle School level, a school-based implementation that focuses on citizenship through service. Each school will develop a service and/or community-based project to solve a pressing issue.
- c. **Tuscaloosa Youth Council**- High school level, the extracurricular implementation that centers on citizenship, policy development, civic engagement, and collaboration. Each council will create a policy agenda for implementation and/or create a city-wide youth-oriented service project.

3. Member Eligibility, Selection, and Benefit

The YSR recommends establishing criteria for member eligibility and standards for selection. At a minimum, membership will be open to all area students residing within Tuscaloosa city limits and enrolled in a high school curriculum. This will include public, private, homeschooled and those enrolled in a general equivalency course. Additional criteria could include a GPA requirement, requiring a reference letter from a teacher, counselor, or school administrator.

The selection of members should be as objective as possible, including the possibility of a blind application process with no identifying information for potential members.

The YSR also recommends providing an educational stipend or scholarship for active participation.

4. Council Structure and Organization

The YSR recommends the Tuscaloosa Youth Council mimic the organization and structure of the City of Tuscaloosa City Council. This will include relevant council committees, having youth councilors serve by the district. Additionally, the Tuscaloosa Youth Council should have at least one advisor, possibly from the Youth Commission.

5. City Council/ Youth Council Collaboration

The YSR recommends active collaboration with associated governing bodies to include the Tuscaloosa City Council and the Tuscaloosa Board of Education. YSR suggests the creation of an annual or quarterly collaborative town hall, which would feature members from each organization.

Also, the YSR recommends a district project collaboration between each Youth Councilor and their City Councilor. This would be an excellent way to promote solidarity between the councilors and provide hands-on mentorship for the youth councilor.



Establish Youth Engagement Bus Route

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa Transit Authority and youth service non-profits

Transportation is a critical obstacle to increasing youth participation in available sports and recreation activities. Each member of the Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee cited transportation as a crucial element in determining the types and frequency of activities offered.

In Tuscaloosa, access to public transportation is limited to Monday through Friday from 5 am-6 pm. For youth in lower-income households, there may not be access to a reliable vehicle or there may be one vehicle for a number of family members or shared among separate households. In addition, Tuscaloosa has inconsistent sidewalks within several lower-income communities, which makes walking difficult, if not dangerous for those youth participants. Having access to a safe- city-wide youth-only bus route would be a game-changer for youth, their families and the organizations that serve them.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Bus Route

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends a closed bus route that runs from elementary, middle, high schools to major youth activities then home. The suggested age for participation is 8-15 years old.

2. Safety

The YSR recommends a monitored bus with physical monitors. Youth bus monitors will be verified via background checks and will undergo training and certifications in CPR and First Aid, de-escalation, and conflict resolution training. Bus monitors will be on the bus to ensure that youth are on the right bus and bus riders are respectful to each other at all times.

During the bus route only approved persons will have access. The only approved persons are bus drivers, monitors, and youth representatives from the member organization. Tuscaloosa Police Department, Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue, and EMT for emergency situations only.

3. Administration

The YSR recommends the automation of the youth bus route. This will include a web application, website, and mobile app. These applications will be used to track bus routes for the route administrators, non-profits and parents/guardians.

Reconstruct the Benjamin Barnes YMCA

Implementation Priority:	Long Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	YMCA of Tuscaloosa County, YMCA Men's Club, Stillman College, Shelton State CA Fredd Campus, University of Alabama, Alabama Power, Mercedes Benz

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee recommends the reconstruction of a new Benjamin Barnes YMCA facility.

History of the Benjamin Barnes YMCA

The need for a Negro branch of the YMCA was expressed by the community in 1953. A membership drive was inaugurated with a "Kick-off" dinner in the auditorium of Industrial High School on January 2, 1953. A goal of 500 members was established by the organizing committee. In October 1953, a petition was presented to Mr. J. Oviatt Bowers, President of the YMCA requesting a Negro Branch of the YMCA of Tuscaloosa.

The Benjamin Barnes Branch to serve the Negroes of the County was organized in January 1954, with Mr. Robert L. Glynn as Chairman. Mr. Robert J. Smith was employed as Executive Secretary and began work July 1, 1954. The first floor of the Masonic building was leased and an open house was held in November 1954.

In July 1955, the Christ Lutheran Church property was purchased for a new Branch building for \$16,500 including 2 buildings and a fence. The property known as the Alston Home is located between 18th and 19th streets facing 30th Avenue. Rather than demolish the Alston Home the group decided, based on the excellent condition of the structure, to use it as a temporary recreation building for Negro youth in the area and also house the Negro branch of the library and a Junior Welfare Clinic. In June 1956, the Barnes Branch moved into the Alston Home. In 1960 the funds necessary to construct a new facility for the Barnes Branch were available. In January 1961, the branch moved into its new building that was completely paid for at that time. The Warner Foundation gave \$42,000 towards the cost of this \$105,000 building.

The new building included a general-purpose room, club, craft, and game rooms as well as a gymnasium, office, and kitchen. In 1961 classes were offered in Home Making Made Easier, typing and shorthand, square dancing, slimnastics, and bridge for adults. Youth classes included various forms of dance, tumbling, bridge, and tennis. There were clubs for students of all ages. (History and pictures Courtesy of the Tuscaloosa Virtual Museum)



Benjamin Barnes Branch YMCA, 1961. Photo courtesy of YMCA of Tuscaloosa

Over the decades, due to the prevalence of fitness-only gyms, and decline in homeownership in the surrounding areas, membership at the Benjamin Barnes YMCA has declined and consequently maintenance of the building has suffered. Throughout the years, BBYMCA has utilized grants and other funding sources to address its arising needs. In the last nine months alone, the BBYMCA has invested close to \$200,000 into the building to ensure safety and positive experiences for members and participants. However, this is not sustainable or cost-effective.

Benjamin Barnes YMCA by the Numbers

Program Data: Program name, program description, number of children/youth served, participation numbers for each program for last three years.

Afterschool: Y afterschool programs provide a safe, nurturing environment while also offering creative and engaging ways for kids to stay active and connected after school hours. We know safety is top-of-mind for parents now more than ever. You can rest assured knowing your child's well-being is the Y's first priority.

2018-2019 88
 2019-2020 91 Virtual Camp 74
 2020-2021 88

Summer Camp: At YMCA Summer Day Camps, kids build friendships and learn new skills through adventure and exploration, all while discovering the Y's values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

2019 142
 2020 106
 2021 115

YMCA youth sports programs encourage and promote healthy kids, families and communities by placing a priority on family involvement, healthy competition and sportsmanship. The emphasis is on participation over winning. Learning to play as a team and individual development produces fair play and mutual respect for others.

Basketball:

2019 N/A
 2020 N/A
 2021 82 (Winter)
 2021 195 (Summer)

Baseball:

2019 N/A
 2020 N/A
 2021 144 (including those registered through PARA)

Membership Units: Numbers, any demographic information about BBYMCA members. Past 3 years.

2019 189 – as of 12/31/2019
 2020 196 – as of 12/31/2020
 2021 120 – as of 6/15/2021
 • Increased rates for the first time in 30+ years on 4/1/2021

Membership Usage: Usage of the Facility by members for amenities

2019 - 124
 2020 - 92
 2021 - 1508 as of 6/15/2021

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Location

The YSR subcommittee recommends that the location of the Benjamin Barnes Branch of the YMCA (BBYMCA) remain within West Tuscaloosa. With over six decades of investment into the children and families in West Tuscaloosa, the BBYMCA is a lasting symbol of community in an area that has withstood years of disinvestment and blight.

2. Potential Properties

The YSR subcommittee requested an inventory from the City of Tuscaloosa's Urban Development Department and the Office of City Attorney of available land and/or facilities that match the anticipated organizational needs.

For the BBYMCA, a potential site should meet the majority of the following requirements:

1. **Visibility**
2. **Public Area that is accessible for pedestrians, vehicles, and public transportation**
3. **Access to connecting amenities**
4. **Supports 30-40 square foot facility**

At the time of the publication of the recommendation, the following potential properties were identified (in preferential order):

1. Pecan Grove-Recommendation from Barnes Branch Advisory Committee

Location evaluation

Strengths: Across from Stillman, access to families (residential area), access to amenities (Riverwalk expansion), size of the lot, still located within West Tuscaloosa

Considerations: Raw land, increased construction cost, more secluded, effects of construction on residents

2. Dragons Way

Location evaluation

Strengths: Similar location to current BBYMCA, access to elementary and middle school students, nostalgia due to proximity to current BBYMCA, could connect new and old locations

Considerations: Narrow street, construction effects on Central Elementary and Westlawn Middle

3. Stillman Heights Valley-Recommendation from YMCA CEO

Location evaluation

Strengths: Busy street, adjacent to Stillman Heights and Stillman College, size of the lot

Considerations: Geographical features of the property (hill), diminished visibility, narrow street

4. McDonald Hughes- Recommendation from Councilor Howard

Location evaluation

Strengths: Across from Maude Whatley, Tuscaloosa Career and Technical Academy, Shelton State Community College- C.A. Fredd Campus, large lot for construction, proximity to the park

Considerations: Confusion about building ownership, the public perception that BBYMCA is no longer in existence, conflating the legacy of Benjamin Barnes and McDonald Hughes

5. Reconstruction on existing location- Recommendation from Councilor Howard

Location evaluation

Strengths: known location

Considerations: Demolition at the spot of construction, relocation of services during construction, smaller parking lot-must park in the church parking lot at times, narrow street

3. Scope of Work

The YSR subcommittee recommends the construction of a new Benjamin Barnes YMCA that meets the minimum specifications as mutually agreed upon and approved by the YMCA of Tuscaloosa Board of Directors and the City of Tuscaloosa.

4. Transportation

The YSR subcommittee recommends the purchase of buses to replace the currently outdated models and secure or build storage for the buses to decrease incidents of vandalism.

5. Operations and Maintenance

The YSR subcommittee recommends the development of long-term operations plan to outline the operational and programmatic practices of the Benjamin Barnes Branch YMCA and the long-term maintenance of the facility. The City of Tuscaloosa and the YMCA of Tuscaloosa must sanction the operations and maintenance plan via a memorandum of understanding or written agreement.

Key considerations for agreement:

1. Organizational responsibility for maintenance of the facility. This will include an outline of the responsibilities of each organization and the terms (Number of years, percentage of financial support, etc.)



New Benjamin J Barnes Family YMCA Recommendations

Scope of Work from YMCA of Tuscaloosa

A new facility to best serve the needs of youth, families, and seniors in the West Tuscaloosa area would need:

I. To be situated on 3-4 acres to provide a

- 35,000-40,000 sq foot facility
- Parking for 15-20% of total membership (industry standard)

II. High traffic area on or near public transportation routes

III. Near single family housing and multi-unit housing

- I.E. Population Dense

IV. FACILITY

- i. Classrooms for After School and Summer Camp Programming
- ii. Double Gymnasium for sports, special events, youth and adult activity
 - Includes small concession area
 - Outdoor window as well preferred
- iii. Wellness Center
- iv. Dedicated Group Exercise Studio
- v. Aquatic Center
 - 6-Lane 25 yd
 - Handicap Accessible
- vi. Multi-purpose center
 - Summer Camp
 - Community Gathering
 - Meeting Space
- vii. Childwatch
 - For Children while parents exercise
- viii. Adult Locker Rooms
- ix. Youth and Family Locker Rooms
- x. Family Bathroom
- xi. Office and Administrative Space

II. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- After School Programming
- Summer Day Camp
 - Plus Specialty Camps
 - Youth Sports
 - Healthy Cooking
 - STEM
 - Summer Learning Gap
 - Food Program
- Youth, Adult, Senior Health and Wellness
- Youth Sports
- Youth and Adult Swim Lessons
- Water Exercise
- Aquatic Safety Programming
- Health Equities/Community Health and Chronic Disease Mgt
- Life Skills Training– how to get a job; interview skills; fill out a form; check book; etc.
- YMCA Youth in Government (YIG)
- YMCA Achievers Mentoring Program



Photos Courtesy of YMCA Tuscaloosa

Invest in Boys and Girls Club

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends financial and operational support investments into the Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama.

History and Background Information for Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama

Celebrating 60 years of service in 2021, Boys & Girls Clubs of West Alabama is dedicated to helping children and teens, especially those who need us most, reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. We have positively influenced tens of thousands of young lives.

Opening in 1961, the organization began as the Tuscaloosa Boys Club, providing a safe place for underprivileged young boys to go instead of hanging out on the streets. Over the years, we have grown in number and in service, welcoming all youth ages 6-18. Our mission has shifted from just keeping kids safe to a more ambitious and impactful goal: guiding and equipping children and teens on their path toward lifelong success. Through innovative programs and with the support of skilled and caring staff, our members are succeeding in school, living healthy, and giving back.

As of the school year 2021, BGCWA operates two standalone units in Tuscaloosa and Greensboro and three school sites—Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary and Southview Elementary in Tuscaloosa, as well as Hale County Middle School. Our Clubs are located in underserved communities where we provide a safe, positive and engaging environment managed by trained Youth Development Professionals. Our YDPs implement life-enhancing programs and character development experiences which focus around our four priority outcome areas: Academic Success, Healthy Lifestyles, Character & Leadership Development, and Teen Programming.

It is proven that children who are engaged in meaningful, supervised activities while not in school have better school attendance, earn better grades, and are more likely to attend college. BGCWA is more than just a safe haven for at-risk children and teens. Clubs daily help members embrace possibility and demonstrate how good life can be when young people are nurtured, inspired, and encouraged to reach their full potential. Through BGCWA, children are given the tools and opportunities needed to experience their own great future.

2020 PROGRAM DATA



DEMOGRAPHICS



OUR MISSION: To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

972

Members enrolled in 2020



“I started coming to the Club when I was 6. I like to make friends here now, and I know that all of the staff are happy to see me. I think all kids should come here!”
—*Keenan, Age 7*

2 standalone Club units

3 school-based Club sites

496 youth impacted by outreach programs

25 dedicated Youth Development Professionals on staff

100% of BGCWA members report they expect to graduate from high school.

85% of Club members report they are currently learning at BGCWA.

7,200 learning kits provided to community youth to support at-home learning.

12,334 free meals served onsite and via pickup to ensure access to nutritious food.

812 Connection Calls to check on families and members during the COVID-19 crisis.

ETHNICITY



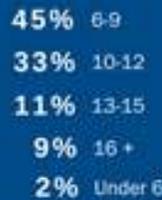
50%

MALE

50%

FEMALE

AGES



“The Boys & Girls Club is an amazing place to be because I feel very welcome and they are basically like my family.”
—*Keenan, Age 12*

OUR DOORS OPEN WHEN KIDS NEED US MOST.

OUR DOORS OPEN FOR ALL KIDS AGES 6-18.

Infographics Courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Facility Improvements

- a. The YSR recommends a combination of retrofitting and renovations at the Jaycee Park location of the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama.

Retrofitting and renovations include:

ADA compliant Retrofitting

Façade Improvements

Interior Painting and Furnishings

Update Art room, bathrooms, laundry area, intercom system, and security area

Furniture needs to be age-appropriate and provide a welcoming environment

The club needs to have an open concept to improve safety and accessibility

Interior lighting needs to be retrofitted for LED bulbs

The gym needs a scoreboard and bleachers in order to have a sports program

- b. The YSR subcommittee recommends the construction of a new Teen Center at the Jaycee Park Location that meets the minimum specifications as mutually agreed upon and approved by the Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors and the City of Tuscaloosa.

2. Technology, Academic, and Enrichment Investments

The YSR subcommittee recommends the installation of updated computer equipment and academic/ enrichment resources

- a. **Technology**

New computers, video system, and upgraded wi-fi needed in order to keep up with current technology need

- b. **Education**

Learning Center needs to include a Career Training Center focusing on culinary arts, hospitality, technology, cosmetology, and health care training.

- c. **Enrichment**

Sports programs including volleyball, E-sports, theatre, photography, gym, recording studio, and dance studio

3. Transportation

The YSR subcommittee recommends the purchase of buses to replace the currently outdated models and secure or build storage for the buses to decrease incidents of vandalism.

4. Operational Support

The YSR subcommittee recommends funding for operational support to increase qualified staff to accommodate increases in youth enrollment with Boys and Girls Club.

5. Operations and Maintenance

The YSR subcommittee recommends the development of long term operations plan to outline the operational and programmatic practices of the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama and the long-term maintenance of the facility. The City of Tuscaloosa and the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama must sanction the operations and maintenance plan via memorandum of understanding or written agreement.



Current Facilities

Photos courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama



Examples of New Facilities

Photos courtesy of Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Current Transportation



Updated Transportation



Photos courtesy of
Boys & Girls Club of West Alabama

Create Youth Commission

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	City of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa City Schools, youth centered organizations

Key Elements of the Recommendation

The Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee recommends the establishment of the Youth Commission, which would be the continuation of the Youth Sports and Recreation Subcommittee and other individuals and non-profits across Tuscaloosa.

1. Composition of Youth Commission

Member organizations represent at least one of the Six Points of Youth Development:

- a. **Civic Responsibility and Engagement**
- b. **Education**
- c. **Economic and Workforce Development**
- d. **Holistic Well-being**
- e. **Juvenile Justice**
- f. **Youth Sports and Recreation**

Council must include youth representative [possibly Tuscaloosa Youth Council president]

2. Mission and Scope of the Commission

The YSR recommends that the scope of the Youth Commission be limited to school-aged children residing within Tuscaloosa city limits.

Establish Gateway as center of STEM, E-sports, and digital investments for youth

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Gateway, City of Tuscaloosa, STEM consultants

The Youth Sports & Recreation and the Education Subcommittees advocate for substantial financial investment in the Tuscaloosa's Gateway. The Gateway, with its digital format and programming is a unique offering in West Alabama. As technology advances, the Gateway is poised to effectively contribute to closing the digital divide and ensuring that Tuscaloosa's children and youth are well equipped to participate as 21st century global citizens.



Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Reconfiguration of space

The YSR recommends renovations to Gateway to allow a more educational and collaborative experience for users. This may include the creation of a dedicated e-sports/gaming space.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

2. Expand programming to reflect current and future digital trends

The YSR recommends creating educational, entertaining and accessible programs

a. Tech Corps to teach youth coding, gaming, etc.

3. Breakdown barriers to technology

The YSR recommends free to low-cost equipment rental programs and an upcycling of older computers/equipment to schools and non-profits

4. Invest in up-to-date technology

The YSR recommends creating a technology/equipment fund to ensure Gateway users have access to the latest equipment and technology

5. Construction of mobile/satellite Gateway facility in west Tuscaloosa

The YSR recommends creating a mobile and/or satellite Gateway in west Tuscaloosa to provide equitable access to digital activities

Position Tuscaloosa Police Department as a Key Partner in youth outreach, engagement, and investment

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Youth Sports & Recreation, Education, Community Connection & Outreach
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa Police Department, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa City Schools

The Youth Sports & Recreation Subcommittee believes that children and youth need exposure to law enforcement in non-threatening, safe, and neutral environments. As both youth and police officers have preconceived notions of the other demographic, it is imperative that our community creates several opportunities to challenge those perceptions and build relationships. The YSR recommends the Police Athletic League be the center of youth engagement, outreach and investment for the Tuscaloosa Police Department.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Evaluation of the current scope and mission of the Police Athletic League

The YSR recommends an opportunity evaluation of the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the Police Athletic League. The goal of the evaluation is to determine opportunities for collaboration between the TPD, PAL, and community organizations.

YSR recommends evaluating the following aspects of the organization

- a. **Leadership**
- b. **Programs and Projects**
- c. **Levels of Participation**
- d. **Strengths**
- e. **Considerations**
- f. **Opportunities for engagement and support**

2. Develop youth-centered programs and project in partnership with Tuscaloosa Police Department and Police Athletic League

The YSR subcommittee recommends the creation of a mentoring program to promote positive interactions between youth and Tuscaloosa Police Department

- a. **Implement Bigs in Blue in conjunction with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of West Alabama**

6

COMMUNITY CONNECTION & OUTREACH

"Police can't be successful if they're not viewed as legitimate by the community, and a community will not be safe if the police are not engaged in a respectful, constitutional partnership with the community."

~Lori Lightfoot

The Chief's Commission's Community Connection and Outreach Subcommittee (CCO) spent its time analyzing and discussing the multi-faceted ways to build trust and create genuine and respectful connections between the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the citizens they serve.

The CCO was comprised of leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors--spanning from education administrators to restaurant owners. Together, they chose to focus on ways the many ways to re-orient the Tuscaloosa Police Department towards service and connection. To that end, the efforts would center on building supports and fostering relationships with youth, persons facing mental health concerns, communities of color, and non-English speakers.

Continuous meeting of the full Commission, as subcommittees as needed

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach, Recruiting, Training, and Retention
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Various community members across Tuscaloosa metro area

The Chief's Commission has seen immediate results with the hiring of the Deputy Chief of Community Policing and the passage of ordinances banning chokeholds, mandating unbiased policing, requiring misconduct reports, and protecting those who come forward. Based on these initial successes and the high level of participation, the Chief's Commission recommends that the full Commission: Community Connection & Outreach and Officer Recruitment, Training & Retention continue to meet. The Commission believes that the initial successes of the Commission can be capitalized through sustained dialogue and action.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Periodic Reporting and Recommendations

The Chief's Commission recommends the full Commission continue to issue quarterly reports and ad-hoc recommendations to the Mayor and Police Chief. The quarterly reports and recommendations will also be presented to the Tuscaloosa City Council's Public Safety Committee.

2. Identify the criteria for members of the commission

The Chief's Commission recommends the review of the current criteria for membership to the Chief's Commission. There may be additional community voices that would bring value to the Commission and its recommendations.

3. Identify the criteria for members of the commission

The Chief's Commission recommends the review of the current criteria for membership to the Chief's Commission. There may be additional community voices that would bring value to the Commission and its recommendations.

Creation of Deputy Chief for Community Policing

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach, Recruitment, Training & Retention
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa City Schools, Tuscaloosa Municipal Court, Juvenile Detention Center, Dannon Project, Alabama Department of Corrections, Northport Police Department, Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office, NAACP, local churches, temples, and mosques, and civic organizations.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

Tuscaloosa Police Department appointed Severn "Sebo" Sanders to the newly created Deputy Chief of Community Policing position on September 25, 2020.

Adoption of ordinances mandating unbiased policing, banning the use of chokeholds, & requiring officers to report misconduct and protecting them from retaliation

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach, Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	

Key Elements of the Recommendation

Ordinances adopted via Tuscaloosa City Council on September 29, 2020

Creation of a mental health support infrastructure to adequately support persons facing mental health trauma through police and court interactions

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Tuscaloosa Municipal Court, Alabama Department of Public Health, Indian Rivers, Tuscaloosa County Courthouse

The CCO recommends the creation of a mental health infrastructure that facilitates the proper support and dignified and appropriate treatment of individuals facing mental health challenges as they interact with the Tuscaloosa Police Department. The Tuscaloosa Police Department frequently interacts with individuals with mental illness, responding to 612 mental health calls and 198 suicidal calls within the last year. To this end, The Tuscaloosa Police Department has created a Community Mental Health Officer Program and expanded that program over the last few years. In addition, the Tuscaloosa Police Department has emphasized and developed its internal peer support groups to address mental health issues among Tuscaloosa Police Officers. Recently, Mayor Maddox has announced the creation of a Municipal Mental Health Court Task Force. We commend the City and applaud these steps.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Increased collaboration between the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the West Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (WACH) in support of homeless persons facing mental health challenges

The CCO recommends the active participation of the Tuscaloosa Police Department in Tuscaloosa's Continuum of Care known as the West Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (WACH). This participation includes:

- a. Addition of the Tuscaloosa Police Department to the Board of Directors, and general membership of WACH
- b. Identification of Tuscaloosa Police Department personnel to be the point of contact and organizational representatives in WACH programs including supporting the referral network, supporting community initiatives, providing WACH member education and providing key information about TPD interactions with persons facing homelessness and mental health issues.

Expansion of outreach programs to Hispanic community

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, Hispanic Service Providers, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, local businesses, and churches

As Tuscaloosa's Hispanic and Latinx community grows, it is imperative that Tuscaloosa Police Department fosters positive interactions and facilitates a culture of trust. Our Hispanic and Latinx friends and neighbors are vital members of the Tuscaloosa community. The CCO recommends that the Tuscaloosa Police Department create programs that overcome the language barrier and promote cultural competency.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Increased dedicated programming for Hispanic/ Latinx community

The CCO recommends the implementation of quarterly Hispanic Town Halls to empower Hispanic/ Latinx community members to voice concerns about policing, and the unique challenges faced by their respective communities. In addition, the CCO recommends creating outreach programs that celebrate the varied cultures of our Hispanic/Latinx community by working with organizations and individuals to culturally appropriate messaging

2. Ensuring language accessibility for Spanish speaking community members

The CCO recommends inclusive marketing and communications from the Tuscaloosa Police Department that provides information in Spanish for the accommodation of Spanish-speaking residents. This includes ensuring that all current and future documents, fliers, brochures, etc. have a Spanish language translation available.

Strengthening youth outreach and engagement programs

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach, Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Department of Youth Advancement and Opportunity, Tuscaloosa City Schools, United Way of West Alabama, youth-centered non-profits, National Police Athletic League, Inc., Alabama Power, various religious organizations

Distrust for police officers begins at a young age. Therefore, to counteract this, it is imperative that the Tuscaloosa Police Department creates programs that begin to provide targeted, positive interactions with youth as early as possible. Founded in 1995, the Police Athletic League (PAL) has been instrumental in forming life-long relationships between Tuscaloosa's youth and the Tuscaloosa Police Department. In strengthening TPD's youth outreach and engagement programs, PAL should take on a more prominent role as the clearinghouse for TPD's youth engagement initiatives. If PAL can sufficiently strengthen its programs and services, it may begin to build trust and forge positive relationships with adult family members as well. This could begin to weaken the cycle of distrust between the community and the Tuscaloosa Police Department.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Police Athletic League

The CCO recommends the revitalization of the Tuscaloosa Police Athletic League (PAL) as the center of youth engagement for the Tuscaloosa Police Department. This includes researching and benchmarking successful Police Athletic Leagues across the country for programming and implementation best practices. Secondly, PAL must form partnerships with key community stakeholders and youth-centered organizations in order to increase its impact. Third, all youth-centered programs and services will have an external evaluation component to ensure that the programs and services are being maximized and are meeting their intended goals and objectives.

2. Tuscaloosa Police Department Junior Cadet Program

The CCO recommends the creation of the Tuscaloosa Police Department Junior Cadet Program. This program will teach Tuscaloosa's youth about the role and responsibilities of police officers, much like the Tuscaloosa Police Department's Citizen's Academy. The curriculum would be age and developmentally appropriate. In addition to educating youth about law enforcement, it could act as a workforce development pathway for future law enforcement officers.

A supplemental programmatic element of the Junior Cadet program could be offering mediation training, effectively creating a "peace corps" of youth ambassadors to promote non-violence and effective conflict resolution among their peers.

3. Routine Traffic Stop Program for youth

The CCO recommends starting the Routine Traffic Stop Program for youth to educate youth on what to expect during a routine traffic stop and to empower youth to make informed choices in the event they are stopped by law enforcement. Additionally, the program will give youth a behind-the-scenes look at the responsibilities of police officers during a traffic stop.

Creation of programs to allow local youth for interaction with government and civic leaders

Implementation Time-frame:	Intermediate
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Community Connection & Outreach, Youth Sports & Recreation, Education
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama,

The CCO believes that Tuscaloosa youth should be provided opportunities to engage with the people that serve them. Studies have shown that youth civic engagement increases future participation by youth, decreases juvenile delinquency, and increases academic performance. This recommendation is in support of and supplemental to the recommendations created by the Education and Youth Sports and Recreation subcommittees.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Creation of Junior City Council

The CCO recommends the creation of a Junior City Council. This youth-centered organization will mirror the work of the City of Tuscaloosa City council. However, its primary focus will be on youth issues. The Junior City Council will consist of Tuscaloosa city high-school students and will meet consistently to exchange dialogue and create policy for youth.

2. Creation of Young Leadership Tuscaloosa

The CCO recommends the formation of Young Leadership Tuscaloosa. It is similar to the Forerunners program sponsored by Leadership Tuscaloosa and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama in that it targets holistic leadership development in school-aged students. However, Young Leadership Tuscaloosa will include students from rising freshman through rising seniors.

6

OFFICER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING & RETENTION

“True Leadership lies in guiding others to success. In ensuring that everyone is performing at their best, doing the work they pledged to do and doing it well.”

~Unknown

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, in 2019, all law enforcement agencies across the United States were facing a crisis in recruitment. In the document, it details that "multiple social, political, and economic forces are all simultaneously at play in shaping the current state of recruitment and retention". Of these forces, the public image of law enforcement, generational differences, hiring process challenges, and challenges in civil non-service recruitment are identified as key contributors to difficulties in substantial recruiting efforts.

Over the past decade, policing has endured increased scrutiny due to the simultaneous surge in internet access, the rise of the smartphone, the emergence and dominance of social media. During the spring and summer of 2020, the murders of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and the subsequent string of global protests shone an unavoidable spotlight on policing in the United States. Yet still, law enforcement remains one of the country's most dangerous professions. In 2018, the fatal injury rate was 14 per 100,000 workers. In addition, high suicide rates among police officers persist. In response to these forces, events, and times, law enforcement across the country will have to work even harder to attract and keep the best and brightest. As other municipalities and law enforcement agencies adapt their organizational policies and hiring practices to compete nationally, Tuscaloosa must follow suit. has an excellent recruitment program that is currently being improved upon to increase its reach into all communities to create a police department that better reflects the demographics of the city it serves.

Creation of a strategic plan to develop a public safety training facility

Implementation Time-frame:	Long-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Recruitment, Training, and Retention
Lead Organization:	Tuscaloosa Police Department
Potential Partnerships:	Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, Community Oriented Policing Services, Department of Justice, benchmarking of law enforcement agencies

It is imperative that the Tuscaloosa Police Department maintains a cutting-edge public safety training curriculum and training facilities. As best practices emerge, culture changes and technology advances law enforcement must remain current in order to continue to effectively protect and serve its citizens. The Tuscaloosa Police Department exceeds state standards for training, additions to the program such as the new de-escalation simulator will make it a top program regionally. While the quality of the program is unquestionable, the training facilities have lagged. Space at the current firearms training range is tight and encroaching commercial and residential development is limiting. In addition, there is a need for dedicated space for driver training, and a dedicated home for the de-escalation simulator. Knowing that funding in the near term will be difficult, the Recruitment, Training, and Retention Subcommittee recommends the creation of a strategic plan to develop a public safety training facility to be constructed in stages when local, state, and federal funding become available.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Creation of Public Safety Training Facility Strategic Plan

- a. The RTR recommends the creation of a strategic plan that addresses the specific training needs of the Tuscaloosa Police Department. At a minimum, the specifications for the plan will incorporate:
 1. Driver training
 2. Firearms training range
 3. Space for de-escalation simulator
 4. Financial forecasting and facilities plan for long-term maintenance and operation of the facility
 5. Incorporation of environmentally sound, green, and/or sustainable construction practices
- b. The plan must have distinct and flexible construction phases which allow for adaptable implementation (open for local, state, and federal funding)
- c. The strategic plan, and any subsequent architectural/engineering and/or construction must have documentation of adequate and verifiable solicitation of minority, women-owned or disadvantaged businesses.

Creation of a competitive and separate pay plan for the Tuscaloosa Police Department to help recruit and retain the best officers

Implementation Time-frame:	Long-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Recruitment, Training & Retention
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	

Through its sustained dialogue, the RTR discovered that retention is further hampered by the current compensation plan for the Tuscaloosa Police Department. The existing plan is compressed and is an inefficient model for remunerating police officers. Currently, the Tuscaloosa Police Department's personnel is included within the City of Tuscaloosa Pay Plan. Within Tuscaloosa's pay plan, there are 50 pay grades and the Tuscaloosa Police Department's positions are housed within grades that in comparison to the adjacent civilian positions, do not adequately reflect the inherent dangers and physical, psychological, and mental demands of being a police officer. The RTR believes that this is a significant obstacle to recruitment and retention.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Identify external consultant to craft compensation plan

The RTR recommends an independent entity to investigate the current compensation structure of the Tuscaloosa Police Department and construct a sample compensation plan and pay structure.

2. Open discourse of the findings of the compensation plan and pay structure

The RTR recommends an open and transparent discourse on the findings and recommendations of the compensation plan and pay structures. The RTR would like to work in tandem with city councilors, consultants, and internal partners to ensure that the results of the compensation plan are sound, financially prudent, and meet the needs of the current and future Tuscaloosa Police Department.

Identify additional revenue sources to fund Police and Fire Pension Fund and improve benefits for the Tuscaloosa Police Department

Implementation Time-frame:	Short-Term
Project UNITY Subcommittee(s):	Recruitment, Training, & Retention
Lead Organization:	City of Tuscaloosa
Potential Partnerships:	Police and Fire Pension Fund Task Force

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in online sales, municipalities continue to struggle with generating revenues to address aging infrastructure, expand services, and keep pace with the rapidly escalating cost of living. In Tuscaloosa, an overhaul to the Police and Fire Pension Fund (PFPF) is long overdue. However, the additional stressors to already strained revenue sources will have an indelible impact on the PFPF. The ability to competitively compensate police officers is a crucial component in recruitment and retention.

One way communities have successfully offset this is to implement public safety impact fees. Public impact fees are a one-time fee assessed by local governments on property developers to balance the impact the development and its residents will have on the existing infrastructure and public safety facilities. These fees can be instrumental in ensuring adequate infrastructure capacity and public safety resources.

The RTR believes recognizes that retaining officers is difficult for departments nationwide, but until the Tuscaloosa Police Department's benefits package is improved, it is impossible to address other issues that affect officer retention. As the subcommittee on recruitment, training, and retention began meeting it became clear to us what the City has already acknowledged, the Police and Fire Pension Fund is detrimental to retaining Tuscaloosa police officers.

Key Elements of the Recommendation

1. Implement public safety impact fees

The RTR recommends the implementation of public safety impact fees as an additional revenue source to address the current stagnated Police and Fire Pension Fund and improve benefits for the Tuscaloosa Police Department.

The RTR will work with the Police and Fire Pension Task Force to identify other viable funding resources for compensatory purposes.

7

**COMMUNITY
COMMENTS**



7

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Project Unity opened up the draft recommendations for community feedback. The following pages include the comments solicited from the greater Tuscaloosa community. Each citizen's contribution provided key insight into the final recommendations.

LaParry T. Howell

From: Zach Yates <ztyates@crimson.ua.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 2:49 PM
To: Unity
Subject: Project Unity Idea/Questions

CAUTION: External email.

Hi my name is Zachary Yates and I am a PhD student in the Department of Geological Sciences at UA. This will be my first year as a PhD student but my 3rd year in Tuscaloosa (Completed MS here as well). I am interested in becoming a mentor for K-12 students enrolled in Tuscaloosa City Schools.

I think it would be great to have one or more students to mentor and give advice to/tutor for the next four years of my PhD.

I would love to get more details regarding Project Unity and how I (and possibly other graduate students) could get involved and contribute.

Please don't hesitate to contact me via email or cellphone.

Thank you,

Zachary Yates
(276) 979-6371

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitofrms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitofrms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 8, 2021 8:55 AM
To: Webmaster, Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Christine Clark

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Christine Clark
ADDRESS	38 Southmont Drive, 38 Southmont Drive, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35405
EMAIL	alabamatherapy1@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 614-0415
MESSAGE	The youth with whom I work need volunteer opportunities. Local businesses are either unwilling or are unable (due to insurance limitations) to allow teenagers to volunteer at their organizations. I have much more success with ending the school to prison pipeline when I have community resources that include volunteer and assisted employment opportunities for youth ages 13 up. I would be willing to assist in any outreach to generate volunteer opportunities. If the City government had any mechanism to make volunteer

opportunities available with local businesses more palatable, it would be extremely helpful and appreciated.

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitofrms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitofrms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 2:04 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Jenny Ryan

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Jenny Ryan
ADDRESS	1401 18th Ave E, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35404
EMAIL	jenryanlaw@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 393-9148
MESSAGE	<p>You need some black teens involved in this. The city is missing out on what it needs in some areas of the city to keep teens engaged and off the streets in the evening and early morning hours. PALS is great, but it isn't enough. We need more substantial mentor programs and they need to be easier to find and identify.</p> <p>My understanding is that the JUSTICE program through TOPS is over because the grant expired. There was some good stuff happening in that program with paid mentors working with kids as they returned from</p>

placements. Something similar should be there to help that population. But kids need to be a part of coming up with solutions rather than just adults. And you can't call it Department of Youth Services! DYS is where kids get sent off. They certainly don't want to be involved in a city program called DYS.

LaParry T. Howell

From: Tanika Rice <tanikaminorrice@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 2, 2021 4:35 PM
To: Unity
Cc: Matthew Wilson
Subject: Benjamin Barnes Advisory Council Recommendation
Attachments: rendering.jpg; Benjamin Barnes Advisory Council Recommendation .docx

CAUTION: External email.

Project Unity Sports and Recreation Committee,

The Benjamin Barnes Advisory Council submitted a recommendation to the Committee in April 2021. We have recently viewed the Project Unity draft of possible locations for the new Benjamin Barnes Facility. The Benjamin Barnes Advisory Council is recommending the Pecan Grove site (Across from Stillman College) as the preferred site of a new Benjamin Barnes YMCA. Also, we have attached a sample rendering of what we hope the new building would look like.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Barnes YMCA Advisory Council

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 8, 2021 11:59 AM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Audrey Jackson

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Audrey Jackson
ADDRESS	1750 40th Avenue #S-4, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	audreyjjackson@yahoo.com
PHONE	(212) 053-9379 x19
MESSAGE	We, the tenants, of Creekwood Village need our community leaders to interact with the Property Managers and/or Property Owners to address property concerns! Yes, it's private property and that's where the problem is. Police & Council persons can NOT address issues on private property so what are we tenants to do? We presently do not have a Manager of the property, just an Assistant Manager that isn't readily available. Please tell me or direct me in how we are to address issues of concern. Our area is becoming an all

out hang out for outsiders due to being on private property without management. We could also use another speed bump or two in 40th Avenue and some street lights! This is a very nice area for many of us seniors to live due to the convenience of the stores in very close proximity! Please think us that are being law abiding caring concerning citizen that just want a peaceful neighborhood instead of placing us in the same boat of those with criminal & uncaring behaviors!! I also wish TPD would Patrol the area in a feasible manner as it did once before!!

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 8, 2021 12:17 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Andrea Murray

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Andrea Murray
ADDRESS	4072 Cherrystone Circle, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	dreachood@yahoo.com
PHONE	(205) 799-1182
MESSAGE	Recruit neighborhood ambassadors to bridge the gap between city officials and citizens, as well, keep neighborhoods informed of what other areas are doing well.

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:17 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - D. Cook

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	D. Cook
ADDRESS	14442 Griffin St, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35405-9698
EMAIL	djuannacook@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 454-8005
MESSAGE	Park and out door walking area for 69 South

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2021 7:41 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Feedback Form for Community Policing & Recruitment, Training, and Retention Draft Recommendations - Jennifer Waters

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Feedback Form for Community Policing & Recruitment, Training, and Retention Draft Recommendations

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Jennifer Waters
EMAIL	jkmiller6@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 344-0084
FEEDBACK	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The formation of an independent citizens review board that would review all complaints filed against officers and any officer involved shooting or death of a person in police custody.2. An easier and more transparent process for filing complaints against TPD.3. The recording, maintenance, and public publication of demographic data (race, age, gender, etc.) of traffic stops.

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 11, 2021 5:39 PM
To: Webmaster, Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - George Stephens

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	George Stephens
ADDRESS	1806 2nd Ave NE, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35406
EMAIL	gcstephens@crimson.ua.edu
PHONE	(205) 361-9843
MESSAGE	Move all bars to a centrally located entertainment district downtown.

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:36 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - John Earl

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	John Earl
ADDRESS	101 Old Hackberry Lane, Apt 804, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	earl_john@mac.com
PHONE	(205) 310-4007
MESSAGE	It's very bad policy to tase naked people and bad optics too. Can there be a policy that using physical restraint on naked people, rather than using a taser, be used?

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitofrms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitofrms.com>
Sent: Friday, July 9, 2021 12:03 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Audrey Jackson

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Audrey Jackson
ADDRESS	1750 40th Avenue S-4, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	audreyjjackson@yahoo.com
PHONE	(205) 342-2472
MESSAGE	Hi, In my sincere opinion, I see the need of all leaders to come to communities and just survey them with what you see, first! Then find a way to somehow engage with the tenants to hear their concerns. There are communities that feel looked over & not cared about due to many actions of non residents of those communities! Surely you aren't babysitters but I believe many to have undiagnosed mental issues, homelessness, lack of education and on the edge! That can cause unwanted

criminal behaviors in many neighborhoods! It seems that we are alone with no one to go to for improvements of any form. Please don't look over those living peacefully and abiding of the law due to the actions of those select few! We truly need more Patrolling and non stop as before when feasible! Yes, others may not speak up or out but I am being that voice for those that have zero clue as to whom to speak with or uncomfortable speaking or just have given up on progress! I am a senior citizen hoping for better which appear to just a shot in the dark as usual! Please represent everyone and be concerned and have a sense of compassion for everyone! Yes, some of feel that our communities aren't a matter of concern & needed progress!!

Sincerely,
Audrey Jackson

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitofrms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitofrms.com>
Sent: Friday, July 9, 2021 12:16 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Audrey Jackson

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Audrey Jackson
ADDRESS	1750 40th Avenue #S-4, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	audreyjjackson@yahoo.com
PHONE	(205) 342-2472
MESSAGE	It is always said that when you see something, say something! How does that work upon residing on private property and being told certain things are the responsibility of management whereas management isn't readily available! The police can only do drive throughs sometimes & before they exit the complex those t gc at you called on are at whatever again. Sometimes it seems that calls aren't taken seriously!! Just hoping for the presence of officers more to drive the non residents & any criminal activities out!!! If no

one here can be of service to help for the better. please direct us to whom we need to speak with..

Audrey Jackson
AJ

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitofrms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitofrms.com>
Sent: Saturday, July 10, 2021 10:07 AM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Audrey Jackson

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Audrey Jackson
ADDRESS	1750 40th S-4, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	audreyjjackson@yahoo.com
PHONE	(205) 342-2472
MESSAGE	<p>I am seeing from my perspective that Citizens & Police Officers are jittery & jumpy in a fear of their lives, neither trusts the other. Citizens are beginning to look beyond the uniform & only see a Citizen trying to abuse/harm them due to a uniform of power. When anyone feels threaten, they shall go into some type of survival mode which is dangerous to both involved. We know that there has been decades of abusive behavior for some never with any accountability therefore if that is never ever acknowledge how can you bridge the gap of mistrust! At a police stop all don't comply</p>

because they have broken the or have something, they are in fear of being brutalized or physically harm seriously. I believe videos on You Tube of encounters of Officers & Citizens can be used as a tool to grasp a bit of what is truly going on! I am not no where near a professional and I watch the videos all the time myself and even I can see where escalation of the situation was not necessary. Yes, I am grasping at straws & may be over reaching in suggestions but things could be so much better with the effort & commitment of everyone!

Sincerely
Audrey Jackson
AJ

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 8, 2021 3:25 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Detective Thomas

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Detective Thomas
ADDRESS	2812 first street east, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35404
EMAIL	uniteddetective@yahoo.com
PHONE	(205) 633-0934
MESSAGE	More community meeting to try to get the citizen more involved and report crime. Once this virus goes away!

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 4:16 PM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Susan Lollar

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Susan Lollar
ADDRESS	1729 3rd Ave, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	susanbaeder@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 394-4860
MESSAGE	I submitted this idea to Project Unity, the Mayor's assistant, the Mayor, my council woman, and my representative (who informed me to contact my local government; mayor, council person, etc. with my valid issue). There needs to be an accountability position or office set up to provide yearly background checks on police officers. If this is not an option, then routine psych exams with qualifications, similar to other regular scheduled/routine trainings or examinations. This line of work is strenuous and taxing and there is absolutely no reason individuals should not be monitored in this

manner. The environment lends itself to a pack mentality that could be detrimental to outsiders or people they feel are "subordinate" for lack of a better word. I am being tactful here.

LaParry T. Howell

From: notifications@cognitoforms.com on behalf of City of Tuscaloosa
<notifications@cognitoforms.com>
Sent: Monday, July 5, 2021 9:57 AM
To: Webmaster; Unity
Subject: Give Us Your Feedback - Jeff Walker

CAUTION: External email.

City of Tuscaloosa

Give Us Your Feedback

[View full entry at CognitoForms.com.](#)

Entry Details

NAME	Jeff Walker
ADDRESS	315 24th Street East, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
EMAIL	hascoljw@gmail.com
PHONE	(205) 246-7905
MESSAGE	Our police and fire need training on autism with a yearly refresher course. Autism is a unique disability that covers a wide range. This would go along with the mental health initiatives. I will be glad to help with this.

8

CONCLUSION



Shelton State Community College
Escalante, Alabama

Central High School
Escalante, Alabama
DAVE MICHAEL CASE

COMPANY SWITCH

8

CONCLUSION

It is the hope of Project Unity that the recommendations presented here find fertile ground to grow and blossom into fruitful opportunities for our community and its future generations. Our subcommittees have sustained dialogue during one of the most difficult periods in recent history and we hope that this work adequately conveys our passion and love for our friends, neighbors, and community. We hoped to balance offering enough information to detail our calls to action with making space for our larger community to discuss, debate, and advocate for actions that feel right to them. We offer these recommendations as the starting point, the spark to ignite lasting change.

As always, we are listening. We are learning.

**"At the end of the day,
it's not about what you
have or even what
you've
accomplished...it's
about who you've made
better. It's about what
you've given back"**

- Denzel Washington