

THE CITY OF RICHMOND'S EQUITY AGENDA

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond (further referred to as “City”) recognizes that 2020 was a year of reckoning for our communities, families, cities, and nation; and,

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated our local economy and families, highlighting decades of inequities in health care, housing, education, and access to other resources; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that even though much work has been done to make our city more equitable and inclusive, there is still much work to be accomplished; and,

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges and apologizes for harms it caused in years past, such as redlining, annexation, and erecting monuments to the Lost Cause, that divided our community and broke trust; and,

WHEREAS, the City wants to engage in dialogue with Richmond residents to begin the healing process to ensure a more united community; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that racial inequity is the result of structural racism that is embedded in our historical, political, cultural, social, and economic systems and institutions; and,

WHEREAS, the City’s definition of “equity” is to “empower communities that have experienced past injustices by removing barriers to access and opportunity;” and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes its duty is to remove barriers to ensure greater access to resources and opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, the City understands and appreciates that advancing racial equity not only improves the lives of those who have faced injustice, but also leads to a higher quality of life for people of all backgrounds; and,

WHEREAS, research shows that every region of the country would be financially stronger with racial inclusion. Specifically, the American economy would gain approximately \$2.3 trillion in gross domestic product every year by closing its racial equity gaps in income¹; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that there is an economic and moral cost to racial inequities. Racial equity would have a positive effect in Richmond – for families who are struggling to make ends meet, for the businesses that depend on them as customers, and for places that rely on their well-being; and,

WHEREAS, the City has an opportunity to meet its moment by addressing historic injustices and inequities by working with community and trusted health experts to ensure access to the COVID-19 vaccine, which is one of the keys to economic recovery; and,

WHEREAS, the most recent budget forecast anticipates that the City will experience a deficit in Fiscal Year 2021 and in Fiscal Year 2022; and,

¹ <https://policylink.app.box.com/v/equity-brief>

WHEREAS, to meet additional needs, the City strongly advocates for additional flexible direct aid from the federal and state government to assist with vaccine distribution and to support the needs of our community; and,

WHEREAS, despite budgetary constraints, the City will continue to promote its “Equity Agenda” and find innovative solutions to solve problems, listening to and working alongside Richmond residents; and,

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND

That the Council, in support of the Administration’s priorities and objectives as set forth in this document, hereby identifies the urgent economic and moral duty to promote racial equity and justice and appreciates the collective input to establish a City Equity Agenda to realize the City’s definition of equity.

That the Council hereby joins the Mayor and his Administration in support of a City Equity Agenda and urges other sectors, such as culture, tourism and business, to also promote and support racial equity and justice initiatives in the City of Richmond.

That the Council and Administration recognize that this foundational document is only a starting point and will be a living document to guide the City in its support of all neighborhoods and community members, regardless of race, religion, or who you love.

That the Council supports the following City Equity Agenda priority areas and initiatives, a number of which are also included in the Richmond 300 Masterplan, recognizing that this is not an exhaustive list and that additions will be needed as the City moves forward:

1. Addressing and Preventing Health Disparities

- a. Continue to ensure access to Covid-19 testing, vaccine, and healthcare, especially in communities of color;
- b. Continue to ensure access to masks and sanitizer during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in communities of color;
- c. Support the City’s contact tracing pilot program to provide integrated services to those who test positive for Covid-19;
- d. Create mental/behavioral health and substance use disorder pilot program utilizing RCHD health centers in RRHA communities and continue to partner with RCHD to assist those experiencing substance use disorder;
- e. Support the "Doula Fund" to help close health disparities for Black and Brown pregnant women and their children;
- f. Increase access to healthy, affordable foods and food education for lower income families; and
- g. Establish an evidence-based model for gun violence prevention, approaching it as a public health issue and elevating community voices and experiences, with support

from VCU, VCU Health, Richmond City Health District, and the Richmond Department of Human Services.

2. *Housing as a Vaccine for Poverty*

- a. Continue to provide and advocate for rent and mortgage relief for families during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- b. Implement the Equitable and Affordable Housing Plan, which provides clear pathways to support both renters and homeowners;
- c. Utilize the dedicated funding stream for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to help meet a 10,000 unit need over 10 years – or 1,000 new units of affordable housing per year – partnering with the non-profit and private sectors;
- d. Continue to fund Richmond’s Eviction Diversion Program and expand it to include eviction prevention and education funding;
- e. Implement the Homelessness Strategic Plan and seek guidance from the Homelessness Advisory Council regarding gaps in our current system;
- f. Transfer up to 100 City owned parcels to the Maggie Walker Land Trust over the next four years to help with homeownership opportunities; and
- g. Advocate at the state level for legislative changes, such as inclusionary zoning and stronger building codes, to support housing affordability.

3. *Ensuring Equitable Transit and Mobility for Residents*

- a. Advocate for the City as a member of the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA);
- b. Support the Office of Transit and Mobility and establish resources for office needs;
- c. Create a “Mobility Action Plan” that prioritizes pedestrians’ mobility choices and their safety using an equity lens;
- d. Invest in Complete Streets Projects;
- e. Continue to prioritize Vision Zero initiatives in high-need areas, based on data; and
- f. Paint the Pulse “bus only” lanes red to ensure the safety and timeliness of the Pulse, partnering with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

4. *Building Community Wealth to Combat Economic Inequity*

- a. Work with the Virginia Governor and General Assembly to legalize marijuana and ensure future revenues are reinvested in Virginia’s children;
- b. Work with state leaders to pass automatic expungement legislation;
- c. Continue to invest in city workforce development programs, creating pathways to careers, and the Office of Community Wealth Building’s workforce programs, including the Community Ambassador program;
- d. Continue to support the Richmond Resilience Initiative;
- e. Strengthen City policies and practices and partner with community organizations to create greater reentry support and outcomes; and
- f. Conduct a disparity study in order to identify with particularity the existence of any discrimination suffered by minorities for the purposes of meeting federal

constitutional requirements for the City's use of race-conscious measures to promote greater minority participation in public contracting.

5. *Supporting and Caring for our Children and Families*

- a. Continue to build out the Office of Children and Families;
- b. Begin to construct two schools over next four years: George Wythe and Tech High School;
- c. Continue to support and expand out of school opportunities for youth and community center improvements;
- d. Continue to support the "community connectors" program, which has helped to ensure students are successful in a virtual learning environment;
- e. Create a Youth Advisory Council to advise the mayor and city council;
- f. Advocate for state support for preschool and create a local framework for universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in Richmond; and
- g. Ensure that all Richmonders benefit from robust preparation for careers and college by supporting youth apprenticeship, mentoring, and employment opportunities across the city.

6. *Creating Equitable Climate Action and Resilience*

- a. Continue the work and establish resources to implement RVAgreen 2050 equity-centered Net Zero and climate resilience goals;
- b. Continue to equitably expand access to green space under the leadership of the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, using the Climate Equity Index established by the Office of Sustainability;
- c. Invest more in green infrastructure and use the Envision framework for city infrastructure projects to help mitigate the effects of climate change within the community;
- d. Lead by example and implement a comprehensive plan to transition the passenger and light-duty municipal fleet to zero-emission vehicles and to improve the way the City designs, constructs, maintains and renovates its buildings for enhanced energy efficiency, resilience and renewable energy;
- e. Work with community leaders and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive high performance building policy for private development- creating spaces that are highly energy efficient, healthier, resilient, and powered by renewable energy; and
- f. Continue support of the Department of Public Utility's lead service line replacement program to help homeowners with the cost of replacing lead water service lines running from the water meter serving their property into their homes.

7. *Reimagining Public Safety*

- a. Establish a Marcus Alert System, working with community and state partners;
- b. Create a Civilian Review Board;

- c. Continue to evaluate and implement the recommendations of the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety, such as greater accountability, transparency, and community involvement measures; and
 - d. Continue to advocate for necessary changes at the state level, such as a statewide law enforcement officer misconduct database.
8. *Telling the Real History of Richmond*
- a. Invest in the Shockoe Historical Heritage Campus, to ensure appropriate preservation and memorialization;
 - b. Pursue legislation to ban the display of white supremacist imagery on city property;
 - c. Work with the Richmond History and Culture Commission to ensure the complete history of Richmond is told and commemorated;
 - d. Implement City art installations at City Hall and other City-owned spaces with community input; and
 - e. Reimagine Monument Avenue working with the Richmond community and other partners, such as the Commonwealth of Virginia and the VMFA, to ensure that it is inclusive of all Richmonders.
9. *Strengthening Community Engagement and Trust*
- a. Create an Office of Public Engagement to provide consistent and reliable engagement opportunities for residents and ensure clear and inclusive citywide communications and responsiveness;
 - b. Utilize the new RVA.gov website to increase resident education and understanding of services;
 - c. Provide a digital engagement tool to help residents provide active feedback on City projects;
 - d. Ensure RVA311 has an easy way to access and utilize platform for residents;
 - e. Double the number of Community Ambassadors in the Office of Community Wealth Building from 20 to 40 to ensure the City is connecting with its residents;
 - f. Implement racial equity, diversity, and inclusion training for City staff, to include departmental racial equity action plans, and conduct a City equity study/analysis to ensure the City is removing barriers that create inequities; and
 - g. Share resources, empowering the people in our community who are rich with lived experiences and knowledge and low on resources to help lead solutions.
10. *Utilizing Economic Development to Create Economic Justice*
- a. Establish and support an Office of Equitable Development to facilitate the creation of the more sustainable, beautiful and equitable city envisioned by Richmonders in the master plan;
 - b. Redevelop core areas of the City, prioritizing community benefits, such as green space, affordable housing, and job opportunities for Richmonders;
 - c. Engage residents on economic development community benefits agreements;
 - d. Establish an Equitable Economic Development Scorecard; and

- e. Provide the use of city land through the surplus property process to encourage affordable housing, community building, and economic development projects.