



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 – 5:30 PM

AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - A. Approval of March 14, 2023 Minutes - *Jill Murray, City Clerk*
 - B. Approval of May 9, 2023 Minutes - *Jill Murray, City Clerk*
 - C. Approval of September 12, 2023 Minutes - *Jill Murray, City Clerk*
4. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. Sustainability Update - Caitlyn Gendusa, Public Works Superintendent for Sustainability and Mike Huffman, Stormwater Division Manager
 - B. Historic Preservation Update - Alex Hunt, Planner 1
 - C. Comprehensive Plan Update - John Connet, City Manager
 - D. 2024 Workplan Discussion - John Connet, City Manager
5. **OTHER BUSINESS**
6. **ADJOURNMENT**

The City of Hendersonville is committed to providing accessible facilities, programs and services for all people in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Should you need assistance or an accommodation for this meeting please contact the City Clerk no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting at 697-3005.



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, March 14, 2023 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Jayne Jennings, Chair, Josh Williams-Vice Chair, Laura Bannister, Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash and Melinda Lowrance

Absent: Florence Allbaugh

Liaisons Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, and Mayor Pro Tem Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet, City Clerk Jill Murray, and Communications Manager Allison Justus

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jayne Jennings called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

Melinda Lowrance moved, seconded by Laura Bannister to add Public Comment to the agenda. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the agenda as presented. Laura Bannister seconded the motion. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of January 10, 2023 Minutes- *Jill Murray, City Clerk*

Committee Member Nancy Diaz moved to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2023 as presented. Melinda Lowrance seconded the motion. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

5. OLD BUSINESS

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Presentation by Ahkirah Legal & Diversity Consultants** – *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet introduced Bahiyyah Greer of Ahkirah Legal & Diversity Consultants. Bahiyyah presented her City of Hendersonville Midmost Update via Zoom.

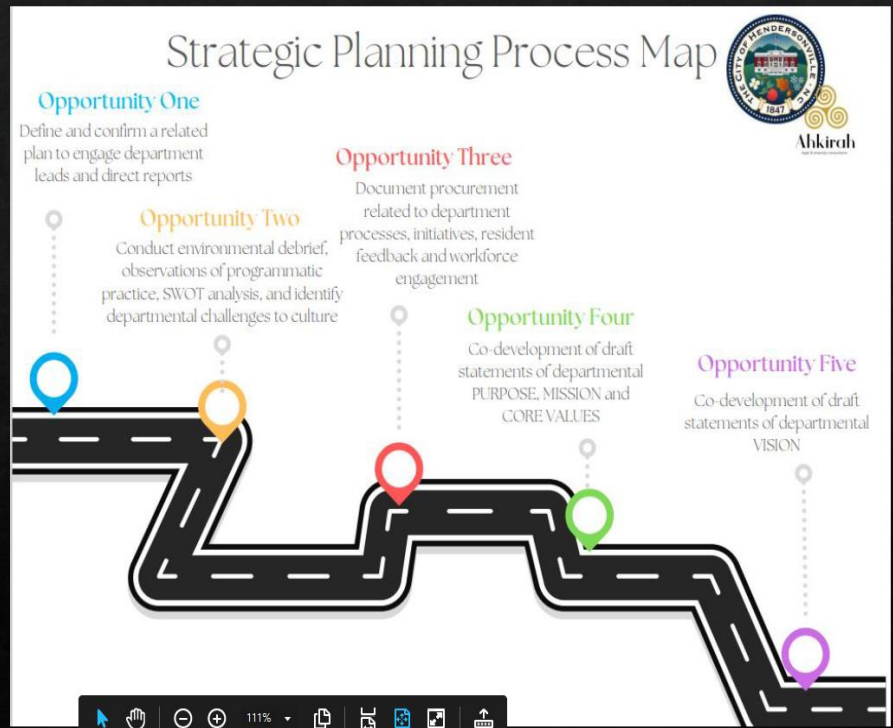
City of Hendersonville Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultancy Services

Midmost Timeline



City of Hendersonville Strategic Planning Process Map

Objective: to design a robust and inclusive engagement process that identifies and comprehensively addresses social inequalities, models of industry best practices, and strengths and challenges to fostering equitable local governance.



City of Hendersonville Strategic Planning Process Map

Objective: to design a robust and inclusive engagement process that identifies and comprehensively addresses social inequalities, models of industry best practices, and strengths and challenges to fostering equitable local governance.

Strategic Plan Ideation

September 2022

Strategic Planning Process Map

continued...

Opportunity Six
Define goals and objectives to sustain and achieve the departmental PURPOSE, MISSION, VISION and CORE VALUES

Opportunity Eight
Develop dashboard/scorecard to monitor progress, measure outcomes and systemize accountability

Opportunity Ten
Assemble and align departmental maps into City DEI MASTER MAP that is aligned with the City's strategic objectives and will ensure that barriers to inclusion continue to decrease, while internal awareness, knowledge and skills continue to increase

Opportunity Seven
Co-Develop key performance indicators, verifiable metrics, targets, standards and accountability framework

Opportunity Nine
Frame, recruit, engage and mobilize employee-led DEI committee. Committee co-designs Leadership Readiness Assessment

City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

Do you feel that employees can be themselves within the office setting? What do you attribute to this?

Administrative Stakeholder Responses

“I hope so. If not, there needs to be additional training”

“I feel employees should be able to be themselves in an office setting, but I don't feel they do because of fear of others. Polarization of the society. Making snap judgements.”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

Do you feel that employees can be themselves within the office setting? What do you attribute to this?

Community Stakeholder Responses

“No, as African Americans. It’s very difficult for African American leadership in Hendersonville. When I deal with the city and the majority population, I have to act like them. When you talk about equity, we have to look at each other as African Americans.”

“If your office has a code, they expect certain dress codes and when employees care about and want a job they should agree to the code. It depends on the department heads”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022



City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

What does your department do well when it comes to promoting equity?

Administrative Stakeholder Responses

“We extract all the wishes of the city council. We promote equity as much as the law will allow.”

“We have honest conversations about equity. We ask ourselves what kinds of roadblocks are in front of the minority population.”

“We talk with the hiring managers and try to give them advice on hiring the best candidates.”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022



City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

What does your agency do well when it comes to promoting equity?

Community Stakeholder Responses

“Our mission statement is to focus on the most vulnerable kids, not just race. We try to give them equal access.”

“Value representation”

“Pass.”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Objective: An environmental audit allows City of Hendersonville Administrative Departments to provide information and perspectives on each Department's programmatic practices, cultural perspectives, organizational support and other human considerations

Please take a moment and think back.....can you pick three words to describe the office/department culture you experienced when you FIRST started your role?

“supportive, eager, adaptive”

“Friendly”

“Dip Lazy Cold”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Objective: An environmental audit allows City of Hendersonville Administrative Departments to provide information and perspectives on each Department's programmatic practices, cultural perspectives, organizational support and other human considerations

Please take a moment and think about your present workplace. How would you describe your CURRENT office/department culture?

“very supportive, willing to teach and listen”

“becoming more welcoming and accepting”

“very supportive, willing to teach and listen”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Pick three words to describe the office/department culture NOW and when you FIRST started your role.

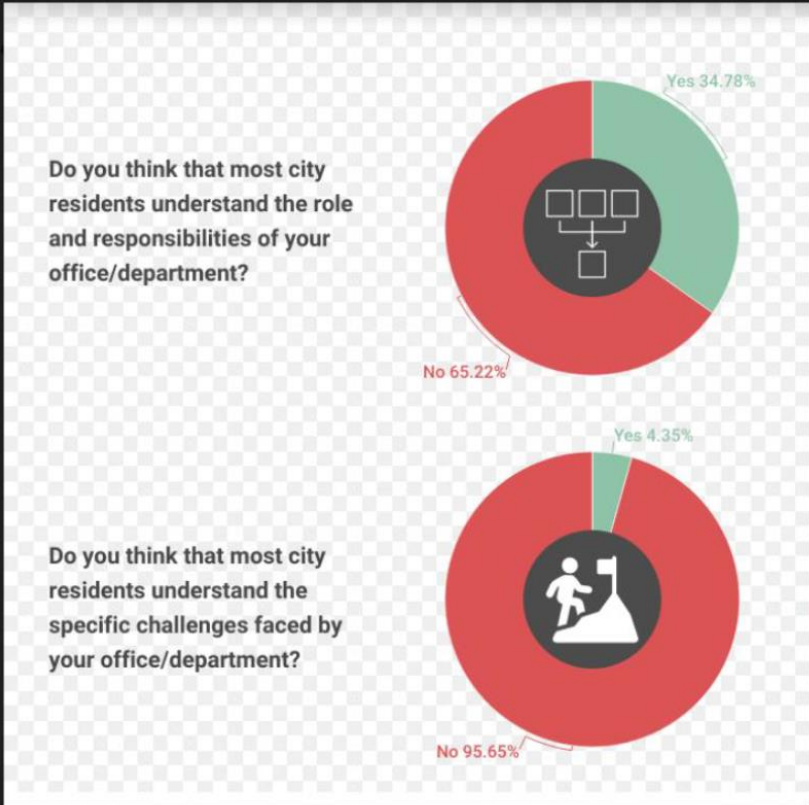
Respondents highlight positive work environment as a feature of office/department culture when they started, and that has grown over time. There are fewer mentions of apprehension/confusion and negative work environment now.



Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey



Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire

Objective: To assist The City of Hendersonville in identifying internal and external factors which influence and effect departmental performance. This questionnaire is used as an analysis tool to assist The City of Hendersonville with establishing DEI metrics and the Strategic Plan.

What do city residents say that your department does well?

“Compassion”

“Provide high-quality water”

“Respond to resident concerns”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire

Objective: To assist The City of Hendersonville in identifying internal and external factors which influence and effect departmental performance. This questionnaire is used as an analysis tool to assist The City of Hendersonville with establishing DEI metrics and the Strategic Plan.

What do city residents say that your department *does not* do well?

“Inspections of Businesses”

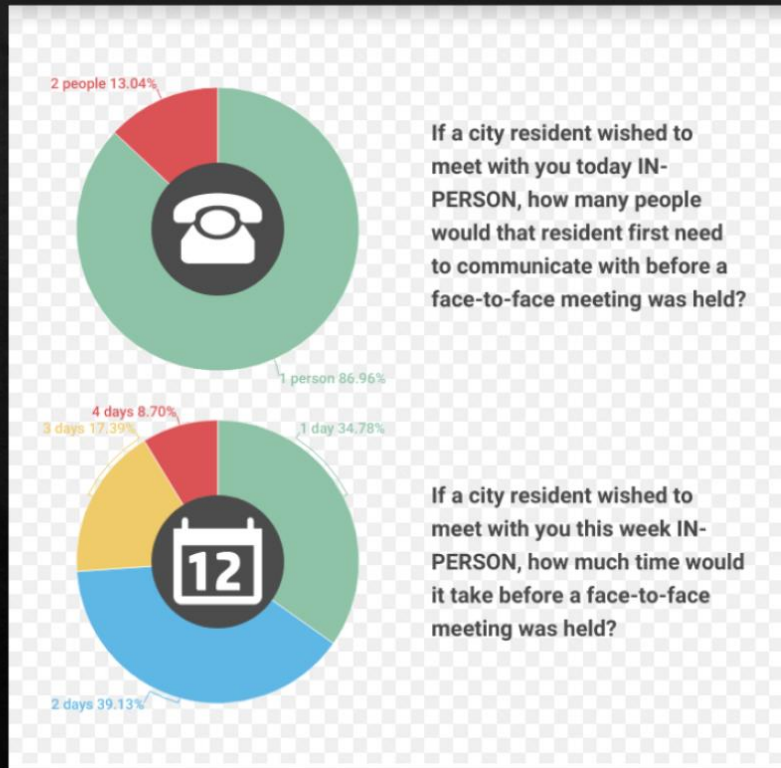
“slow, loud, too much disruption from construction”

“Get valuable public input on all projects”

Strategic Plan Information Gathering
and Synthesis

October 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire



Strategic Plan Information Gathering
and Synthesis

October 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the third step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, procure documentation related to department processes, initiatives, resident feedback and workforce engagement. To procure specific data to assist The City of Hendersonville in assessing how both codified and customary practices within all departments work harmoniously between departments.

The City of Hendersonville Engineering Department

Codified Practice

Who in your office does the hiring?

Human Resources advertises all Engineering Department vacancies, screens applications for minimal qualifications and schedules interviews. Qualified applicants' resumes are sent to a four-member department management team that conducts interviews and makes hiring decisions.

Who conducts the onboarding?

The Engineering Department onboards all new hires.

How do referrals originate within the office?

Referrals can originate by word of mouth or from other departments. All referrals must apply for vacancies through the City of Hendersonville job application process.

Customary Practice

Is it possible for a person to hear about a job opportunity with the City outside of the ways mentioned earlier?

The engineering Department posts job vacancies in trade magazines that have large circulation; therefore, it is possible for a person to hear about a job opportunity with the City outside of the ways mentioned earlier.

Is it possible for a person to receive an interview outside of the ways mentioned?

All applicants must be qualified to receive an interview and follow the City's application process.

Nepotism/Circles Of Familiarity

All inquiries pertaining to position vacancies are referred to either Human Resources or the Departmental website, www.hendersonvillenc.gov/engineering.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the third step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, procure documentation related to department processes, initiatives, resident feedback and workforce engagement. To procure specific data to assist The City of Hendersonville in assessing how both codified and customary practices within all departments work harmoniously between departments.

The City of Hendersonville Finance Department

Codified Practice

What process does your office follow to receive and respond to resident complaints? Can you walk through the process with me?

The Finance Department has no established process for handling resident complaints. Usually, if a complaint arises, the area supervisor will handle the complaint by responding directly to the complainant, in-kind. If the complaint is not resolved at this level, the complaint is sent to the City Manager. If no resolution is achieved at this level, the complaint is sent to the City Council for final resolution.

How do residents receive information regarding your departmental policies or departmental rules?

Residents receive information regarding Finance Department policies and or rules primarily from the City of Hendersonville website customer and billing page, www.hendersonville.gov/customer-service/view-or-pay-my-bill or www.hvlnc.authoritypay.com/site/login.

In what form (written, visual, auditory, online, in-person) can a resident receive information regarding your department policies or departmental rules?

Billing policies are on the billing services application that's available to all customers. Residents can receive information regarding the Finance Departmental policies in English and Spanish in any manner they choose such as walk-in, e-mail or via phone.

Customary Practice

What efforts are undertaken to ensure that residents understand who makes the day-to-day decisions that impact them most memorably?

Other than what City Council releases to the public or what is sent out through social media, The Department is not sure how residents understand who makes day-to-day decisions that impact them.

If a resident communicated to you an unpleasant experience, unfortunate issue, grievance, or general complaint, would they receive a response from you personally?

If the issue is related to Billing or Utility the Finance Director will respond personally. However, if the issue is related to another matter, the issue will be handled by the supervisor in the relevant department.

Would that response be communicated in-person, virtually, in-writing or through another departmental employee?

Responses to all issues from residents are communicated in-kind by the relevant department supervisor.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the fourth step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, to co-develop and/or reframe the organizational purpose, mission, core values and vision for each administrative department.

What aspirations keep your department going?

Engineering Department

Staff commitment to the job is the greatest aspiration that keeps the Engineering Department going. According to the City Engineer, many of their staff could make more money working in the private sector, however, they find great satisfaction providing good service to the community and choose to continue serving residents of the City of Hendersonville.

Water and Sewer

The Water and Sewer Department is 100% dependent on the quality of their people to perform their jobs. In some instances, to even rise above the call of duty during an emergency. This was demonstrated in December 2022 when their employees performed beyond the expectations of their jobs to help residents during an emergency. This overwhelming show of concern is what aspires Water and Sewer to keep going.

Human Resources

Within Human Resources, the delivery of efficient and effective customer service is central to their work. The staff aspires to continue providing high quality service as the demand increases in the future. The Department finds the many expressions of appreciation from the customers they serve to be inspiring and motivating, whether at the Annual Employee Appreciation dinner/lunch, or phone calls of thanks. These acts of kindness are very motivating and inspiring.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the fourth step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, to co-develop and/or reframe the organizational purpose, mission, core values and vision for each administrative department.

What would you want to change in your department pertaining to mission, goals, values and/or vision?

Engineering Department

The Engineering Department desires to have input from all their staff members as they update their mission statement. The Department believes that speaking as a collective, one voice, is more important for producing outcome and establishing more cohesion within the department. Whatever changes are made, if any, will represent the voice of the whole department.

Water and Sewer

The Department would not change a thing. The mission, goals, values and vision as stated on their website reflects their work. www.hendersonvillenc.gov/water-sewer/about-us/policy.

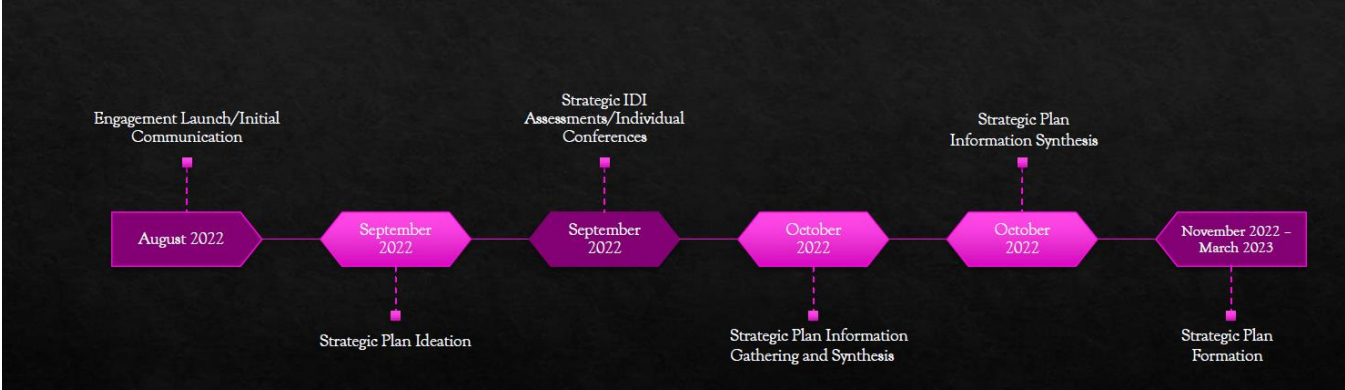
Human Resources

The Department feels the mission, goals, values and vision for the Dept. of Human Services are clearly expressed and implemented daily throughout their service delivery. The Department does not desire nor see a reason to change their stated internal beliefs.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

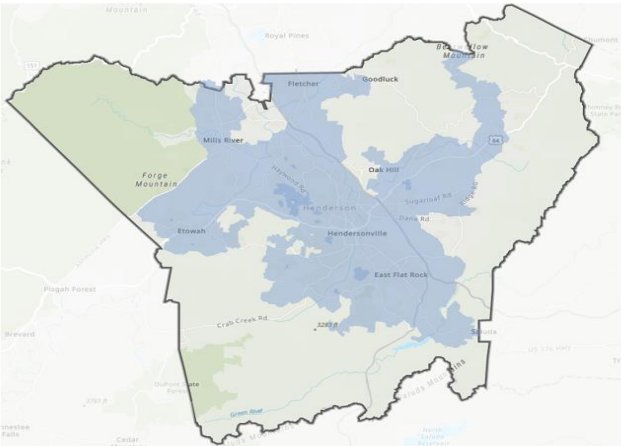
City of Hendersonville Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultancy Services Midmost Timeline



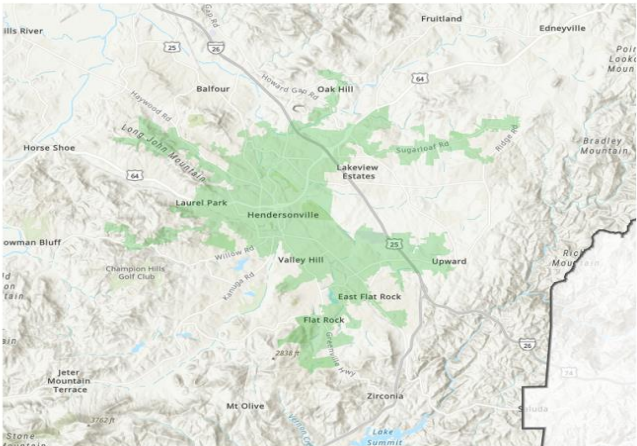
The plan is to present the final plan to everyone at the end of April.

B. Presentation of Utility System DEI Research – Adam Steurer, Utilities Engineer

Adam is participating in a America Water Works Association Leadership Program and as part of the program he has completed research on the importance of insuring that water and sewer policies are equitably applied across all areas of a community. He gave a PowerPoint presentation to present his findings.



Water Service Area



Sewer Service Area

Hendersonville Utility Overview



Transformational Water Leadership Academy

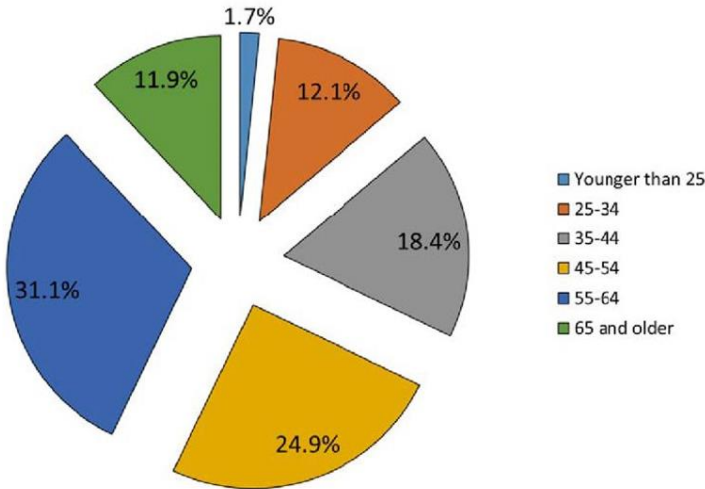
Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the utility. The most effective utilities reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and provide equitable access to water services.



Employment: Age Diversity in Water Sector

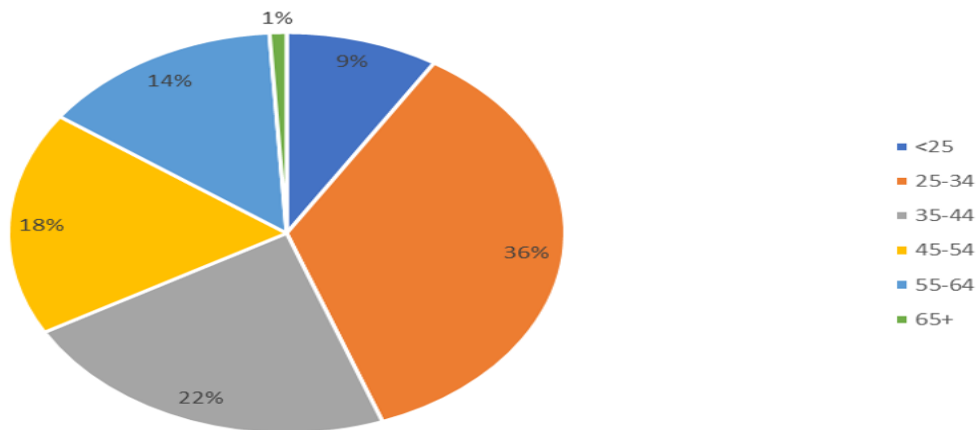
67.9%- over 45
2017 SOWI

41.7%
2020 Census



REF: The American Water Works Association's 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, "Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020

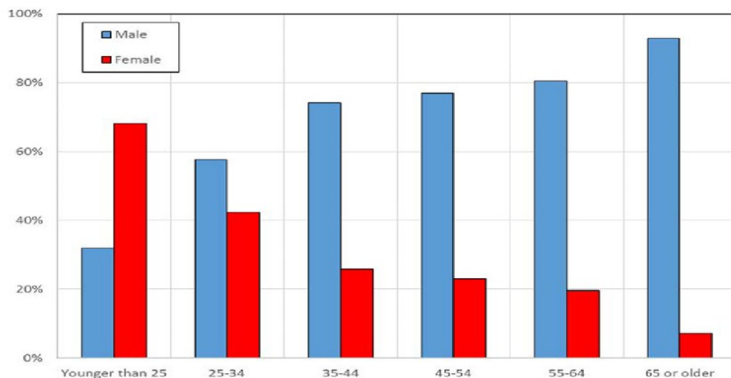
COH Employment - Age



Employment: Gender Diversity in Water Sector

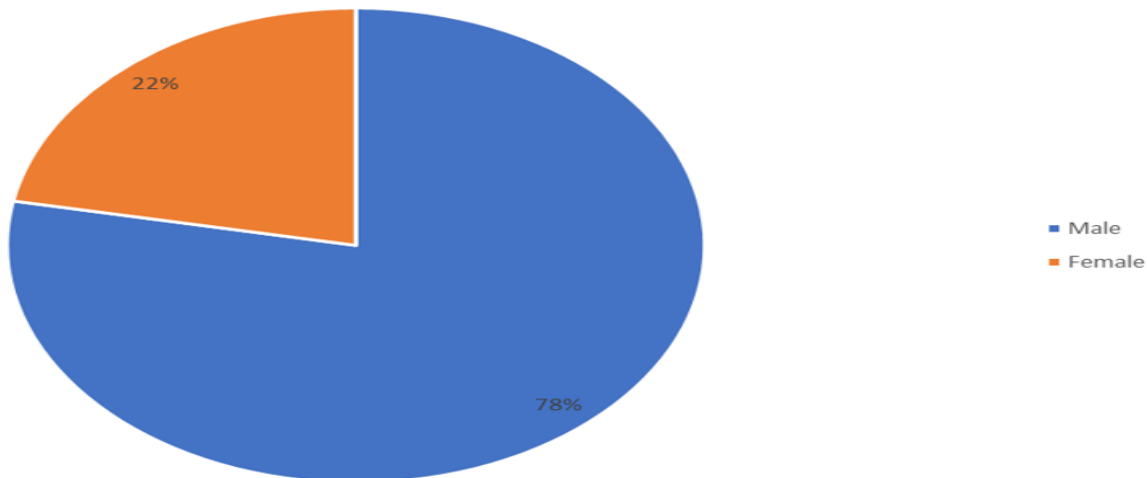
76% Male
2017 SOWI

51% female
2020 Census



EF: The American Water Works Association’s 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020

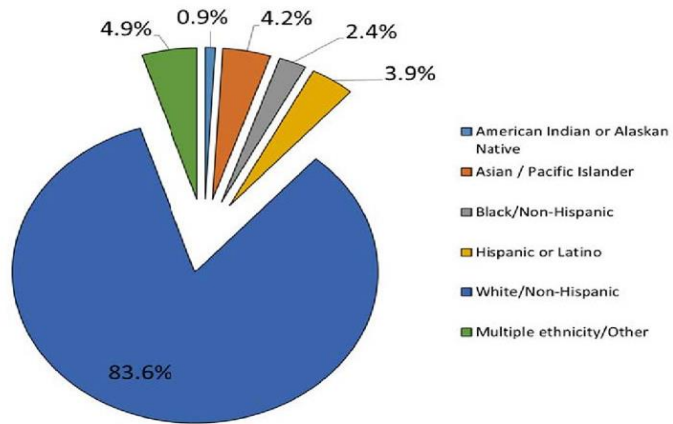
COH Employment - Gender



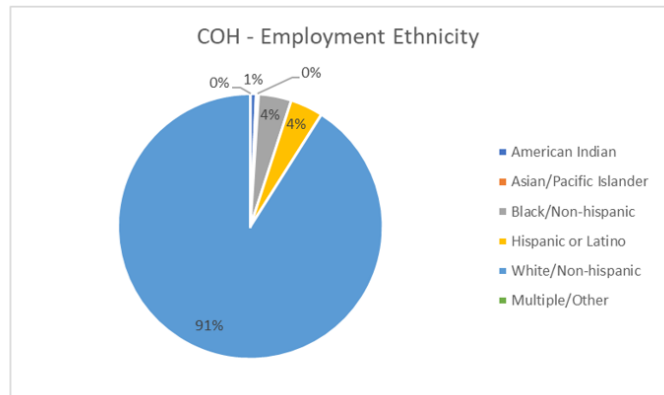
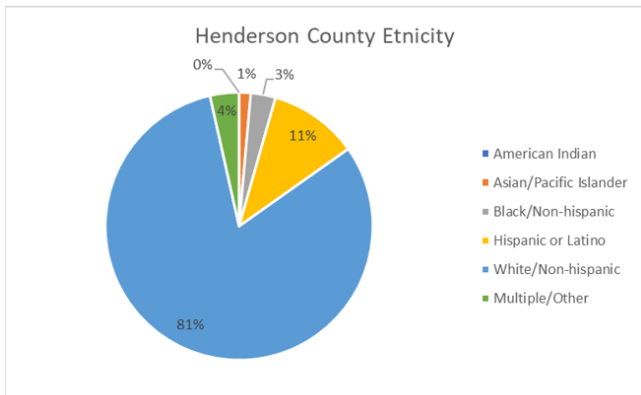
Employment: Ethnic Diversity in Water Sector

83.6%
White/Non-Hispanic or Latinx
(2017 SOWI)

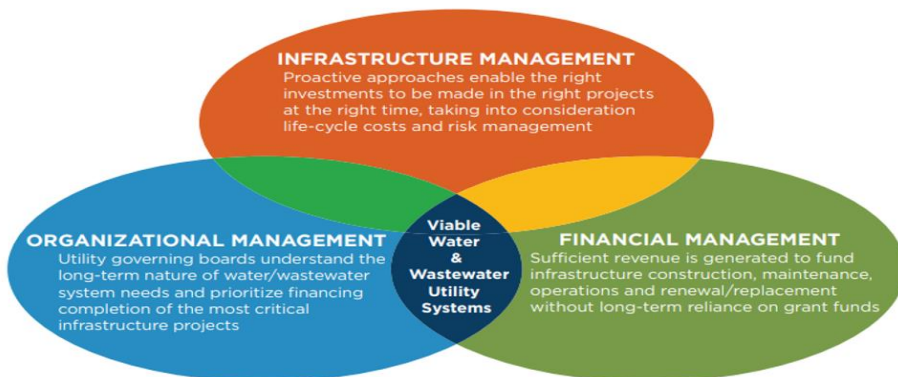
60.1% White/Non-Hispanic or Latinx (2020 Census)



REF: The American Water Works Association's 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, "Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020



Utility Systems Management



Vision for Viable Utilities

The state will best be able to meet its water infrastructure needs by ensuring individual utilities are, or are on a path to be, viable systems

A viable system is one that functions as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise, establishes organizational excellence, and provides appropriate levels of infrastructure maintenance, operation, and reinvestment that allow the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future

REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority



REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority

Utility Service Area - (Un)Viability Criteria

- Small Customer Base
- Customer Economic Indicators worse than benchmarks
 - Population change
 - Poverty rate
 - Median household income
 - Unemployment
 - Property valuation per capita
- High rates
- High debt service

REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority.

Trends in Safe Drinking Water Act Violations

FIGURE 1 Effect of percent Hispanic population and poverty on Safe Drinking Water Act violations

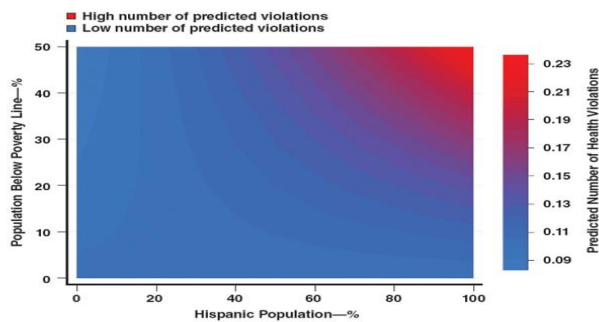
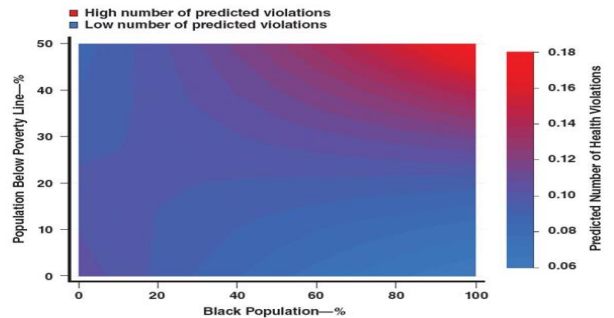


FIGURE 2 Effect of percent black population and poverty on Safe Drinking Water Act violations



Ref: Switzer and Teodoro, "The Color of Drinking Water: Class, Race, Ethnicity, and Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance"

Recent Water System Failures



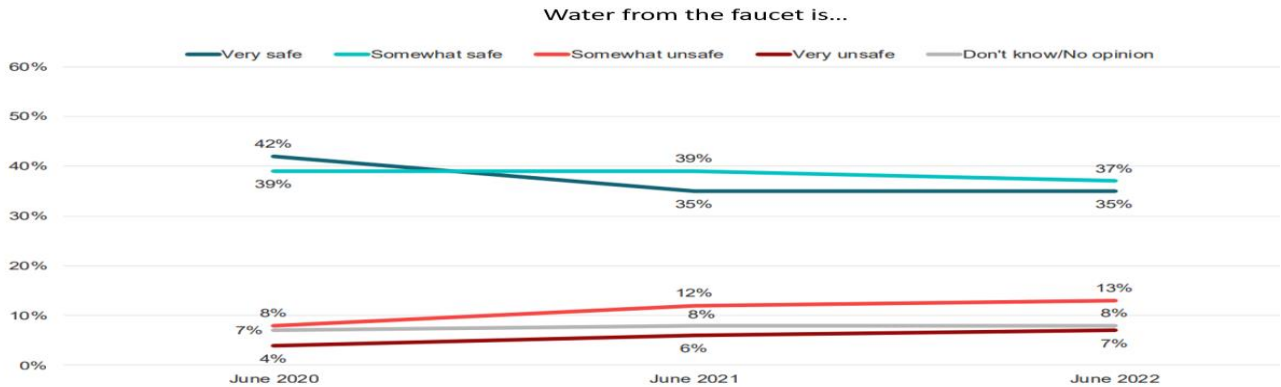
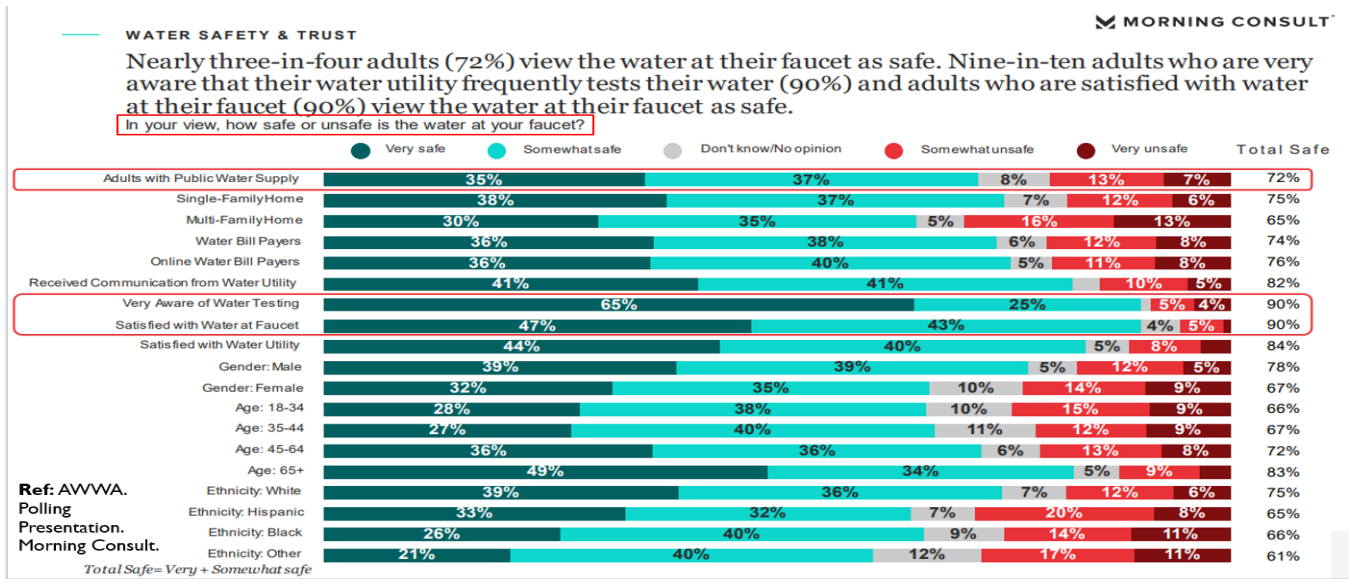
Flint, Michigan

- 55% Black
- 40% Poverty

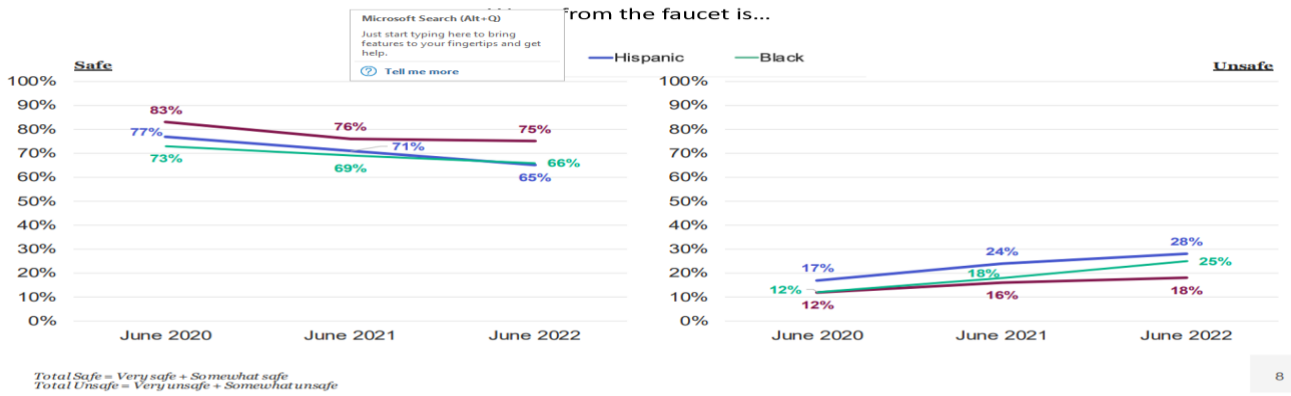
Jackson, Mississippi

- 80% Black
- 25% Poverty

“Water system failures anywhere affect trust in water systems everywhere.”



Ref: AWWWA. Polling Presentation. Morning Consult.

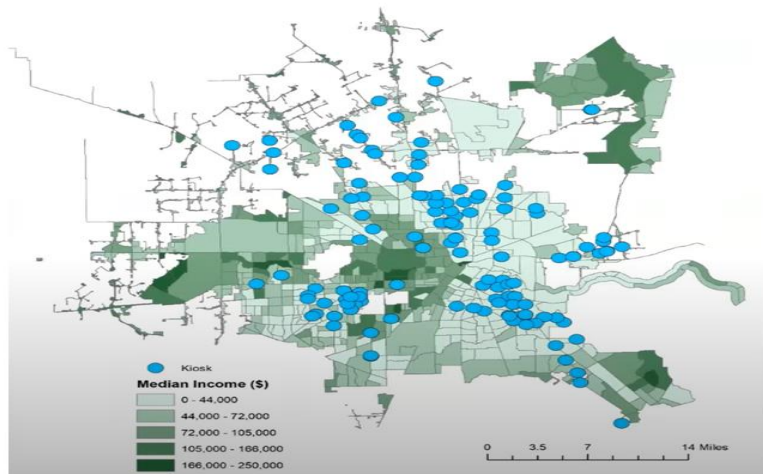


Ref: AWWA. Polling Presentation. Morning Consult

The Alternative..

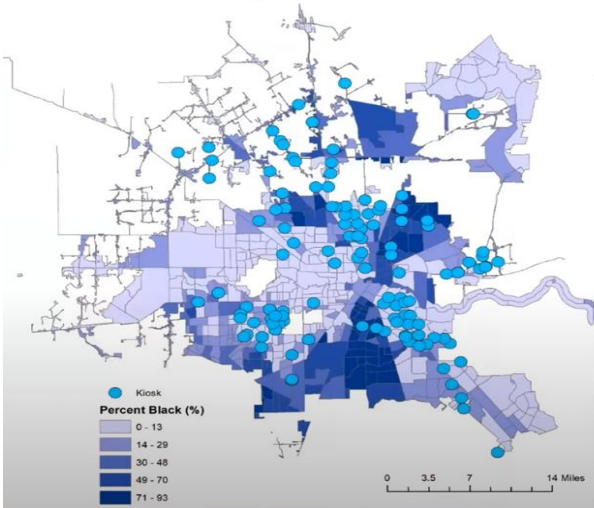


Drinking water kiosks in Houston by income, 2017

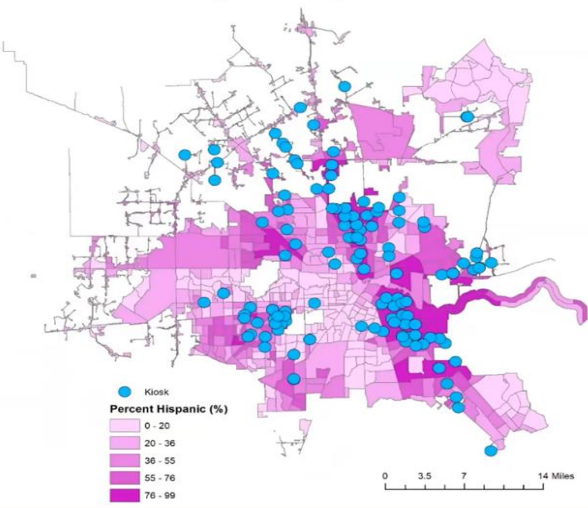


REF: The Profits of Distrust. Teodoro, Zuhlke, Switzer.

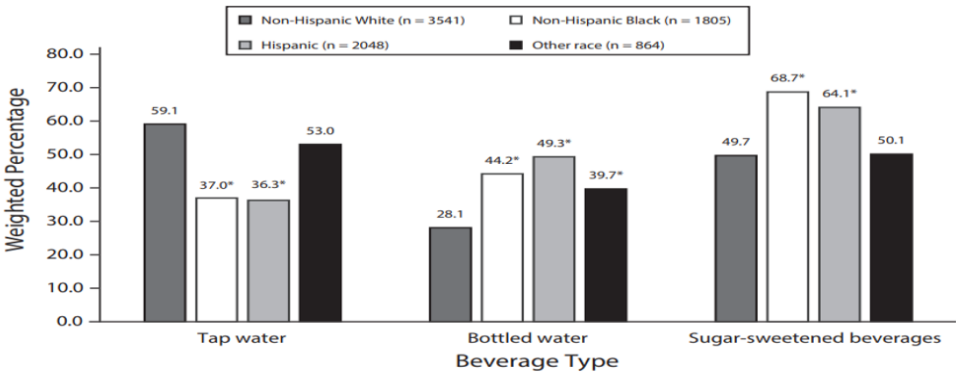
Drinking water kiosks in Houston by %Black, 2017



Drinking water kiosks in Houston by %Hispanic, 2017



REF: *The Profits of Distrust*. Teodoro, Zublke, Switzer.



REF: *Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Disparities in Hydration Status Among US Adults and the Role of Tap Water and Other Beverage Intake*. Brooks et al. American Journal of Public Health, September 2017.

- Primo: \$1.40/gallon (Filling station, Ingles)
- Aquafina: \$1.89/gallon (32-pack, Wal-Mart)
- FIJI: \$10.52/gallon (24-pack, Wal-Mart)

Hendersonville Tap Water: < \$0.01/gallon





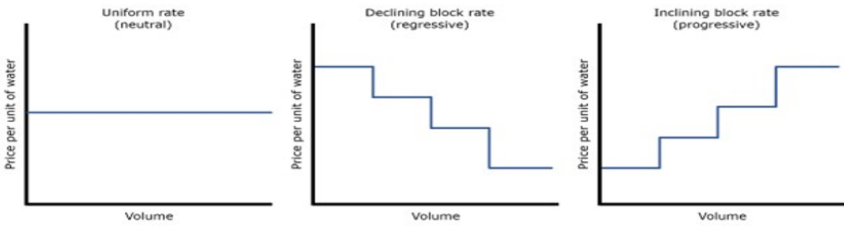
The importance of quality

Providing and maintaining high-quality tap water service is the most important thing any utility can do for affordability

Educating the public about the quality and value of tap water is part of an effective affordability strategy

Affordable Rate Design

- Monthly billing
- Smaller base charges
- Inclining block
- Low initial volume tiers







REF: *Of Bills and Balance Sheets*. Teodoro.

City's Current Water Rate Structure

Water Base Charges	Inside City	Outside City
3/4"	\$8.32	\$11.23
1"	\$9.71	\$13.11
1.5"	\$13.15	\$17.75
2"	\$17.55	\$23.69
3"	\$27.88	\$37.64
4"	\$42.60	\$57.51
6"	\$79.40	\$107.19
8"	\$123.56	\$166.81

Water Usage Rates (per 1,000 gallon)	Inside City	Outside City
Residential		
0 to 6,000 gal.	\$4.48	\$6.05
6,001 to 14,000 gal.	\$4.93	\$6.65
14,001 gal. and over	\$5.60	\$7.56
Commercial/Industrial		
0 to 40,000 gal.	\$4.48	\$6.05
40,001 to 200,000 gal.	\$4.28	\$5.78
200,001 gal. and over	\$3.80	\$5.13
Irrigation		
0 to 40,000 gal.	\$5.60	\$7.56
40,001 gal. and over	\$6.10	\$8.06
Municipal/Wholesale	\$4.48	
Bulk Water	\$7.56	

Average Monthly Household Spending

 <p>\$150 on electricity</p>	 <p>\$105 on cell phone service</p>	 <p>Water: \$22 Sewer: \$28 Total: \$50 Hendersonville</p>	 <p>Water: \$27 Sewer: \$33 Total: \$60 NC Average</p>
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- US Energy Information Administration, 2022 Electricity Reports
 - US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, August 2022
 - Current inside city residential rates for 3,000 gallons per month

Customer Assistance Program

Want to help some members of our community?

Donate to the H2O Program!

HELPING HAND OUTREACH

We invite you to help families in need through our automatic monthly or one-time annual donation program called "Helping Hand Outreach" or H2O. The Hendersonville Water and Sewer and the Interfaith Assistance Ministry started this program as a way for our customers to better meet the needs and moderate our customers' bills, especially when they are unable to pay for a water and/or sewer connection to City-owned utilities or may be unable to pay a City water and sewer bill. IAM only considers where requests to discontinue available assistance.

An easy way to help.

If you would like to become a donor, our bills will automatically include a donation chosen by you.

- You can select any dollar amount to add to your monthly bill as the donation.
- If you would prefer to be a one-time or annual donor, you may request a check to your water and sewer bill for any amount to the City of Hendersonville's H2O Assistance Program.

Hendersonville
Water Sewer

Need Help Paying Your Bill?

If you are having difficulty paying your Hendersonville Water and Sewer bill, the following options may help.

1 Payment Extensions:
In certain circumstances the City may allow an installment payment agreement to pay a balance over time.

2 Helping Hand Outreach (H2O):
This assistance program helps low to moderate income customers when they are temporarily unable to pay for water and/or sewer connection costs or a City water and/or sewer bill.

H2O donations are administered by the Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM), a non-profit agency which has helped local families in need since 1986. The IAM provides food, shelter, health, crisis intervention, utility bill assistance and other services to thousands of people each year. The IAM is a tax-exempt charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Follow IAM's contact information. If you are in need of this service, please contact IAM and mention the H2O program.

IAM P.O. Box 2562 • Hendersonville, NC 28793-2562
(828) 497-7020 • Email: interfaith@iam-hc.org

- Helping Hand Outreach (H2O)
- Donation Based
- Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM)
- ~\$4,000/year on average over past 10 years

Customer Assistance Program

- Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
- NC Department of Health and Human Services
- Temporary program

Do you need assistance paying your water bill?

Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) can help!

LIHWAP is a temporary emergency program that will help eligible households and families afford water and wastewater services, providing a one-time payment for eligible low-income households paid directly to the utility company. LIHWAP runs through September 2023 or until the funds are exhausted.



How Do I Know if I Qualify for LIHWAP?

If your water or wastewater services have been cut off or if you have received notice that your services are in danger of being cut off because your bill is past due, or you simply need help paying your water bill, you may be eligible!

Who is eligible to receive LIHWAP?

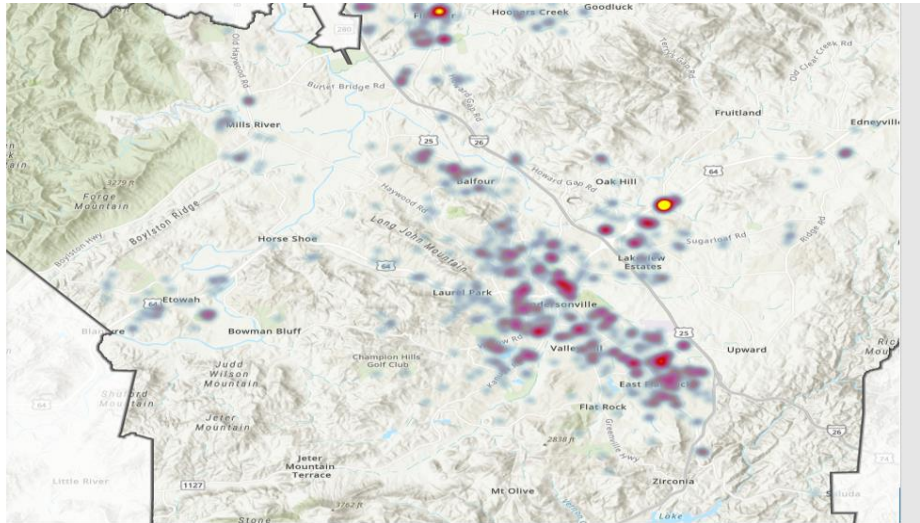
To be eligible for the LIHWAP program, a household must have at least one U.S. citizen or eligible legal permanent resident and:

- Have income equal to or less than 150% of the federal poverty level,
- Have water or wastewater services that are disconnected, in jeopardy of being disconnected or have a current outstanding bill, and
- Is responsible for paying the water bill.

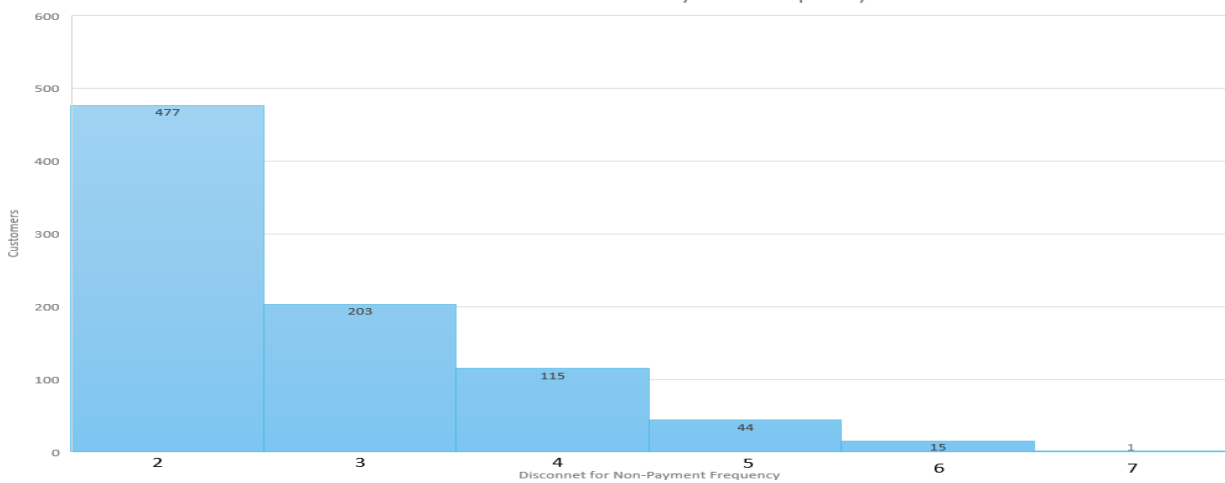



Disconnects for Non-Payment

- 2022
 - 855 accounts
 - 2 or more disconnects



2022 - Disconnect for Non-Payment Frequency



Utility Goals

- Improve Workforce Diversity
- Improve Public Trust through Education and Outreach Programs
- Affordable Service
 - Efficient Operations
 - Produce high-quality water
 - Rate and Fee Design
- Improve Customer Assistance Programs
- Policy and Procedures Improvements
- Opportunities for Historically Underutilized Businesses

C. Brooklyn Creek Streambank Restoration Project – Mike Huffman, *Stormwater Division Manager*

Stormwater Division Manager Mike Huffman provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Brooklyn Creek Streambank Restoration Project and sought input from the Diversity and Equity Committee.



Sullivan Park Stream Restoration

- Restore 800 LF of degraded urban stream channel
- Enhance natural ecosystem resiliency, improve water quality and aquatic habitats
- Provide nature-based community recreational and educational opportunities
- Received \$240,000 in grant funds to complete project

Name That Creek Program

Initiative in which communities submit name suggestions for unnamed creeks and vote for an official name.

The goal of the program is foster connection and a sense of shared stewardship of our local waterways

July 2022, RiverLink staff worked with residents in the Green Meadows community to select the name 'Brooklyn Creek' for the unnamed stream that flows through Sullivan Park and into Mud Creek



Formal approval of the naming was given at the September 2022 City of Hendersonville City Council meeting.

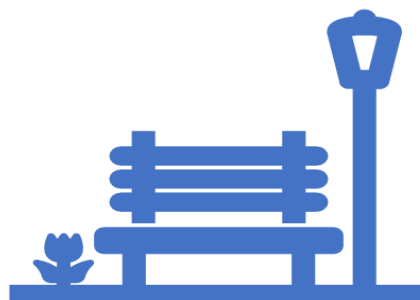
RiverLink then applied to the USGS Board of Geographical Names (USGS-BN).



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Next Steps

- Develop a sign to honor the history of the Brooklyn/Green Meadows community and its relationship with Brooklyn Creek
- Begin Stream Restoration Design
- Begin Stream Restoration Construction
- Organize community planting day



7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Jayne Jennings adjourned the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

Jayne Jennings, Chair

ATTEST:

Jill Murray, City Clerk



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, May 9, 2023 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Jayne Jennings, Chair, Josh Williams-Vice Chair, Laura Bannister, Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash and Melinda Lowrance

Absent: Florence Allbaugh & Jill Murray, City Clerk

Liaisons Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, and Mayor Pro Tem Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet and Communications Manager Allison Justus

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jayne Jennings called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

City Manager Connet asked that Public Comment be added to the agenda. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the agenda as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Melinda Lowrance said she would like to set the record straight about the DEI Board. The City was approached by the Henderson County NAACP about the possibility of hiring a DEI manager. Having someone from the outside looking at the whole picture, seemed to be a way of not being biased. This decision is working and I see a brighter future for my hometown. If you can't be a part of the solution, don't be a part of the problem.

Christy Ellenburg spoke in favor of the DEI Committee and making Hendersonville a more open and accepting community.

Jeff Groh spoke against DEI.

Kate Sevone spoke against DEI and said this is nothing new and learning how people are and how we live together. We need to understand each other and everyone needs a seat at the table. We all need equal rights and DEI is splitting us apart.

Lee Lockton spoke against DEI and said that she's not fond of equity but is fond of equality. Its not safe for my mom where she is.

Dave Bass said he supports quality treatment of other and sexual orientation etc. I don't think we need DEI to fix the problems of today and I am not happy about the cost of the program.

Jayne Jennings then read the terms of the charter aloud to explain why the committee was formed.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of March 14, 2023 Minutes- *Jill Murray, City Clerk*

Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2023 as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

5. OLD BUSINESS - None

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and Discussion Regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan – *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet gave a brief overview of the strategic plan and said I think it's important for you to know why we're doing this. I have previously submitted a copy of the strategic plan that was written by Akhirah, it's in your agenda packet. I thought I would take a different approach as we go over the plan itself. The plan originally came from a small group of community members, the Mayor, and a former Council member following the George Floyd murder. The conversation was about how can we bring the community together. This plan, while I feel it's gotten caught up in national rhetoric on both sides of the aisle, my plan tonight is to offend everybody in the room. I think it's important that I do that as the leader of this organization, its an opportunity to take this plan a little deeper and to show how we got here.

I think it's important for you to know my background. I am the son of two public servants. My mother taught in the community college system and focused on adult education. Her parents were middle class blue collar workers that grew up in Black Mountain North Carolina. My grandfather's ancestors are buried in this county. He was an alcoholic and was known from time to time to use a racial slur and my mother quickly told us that is not correct and took us out of that environment. My father was a city manager and began his career in urban renewal. His parents worked at Warren Wilson College. My grandfather was on the original fundraising committee to build Mission Hospital and served in the Red Cross during WWII and my grandmother was a Girl Scout leader. So I came from a diverse background and grew up in Eastern North Carolina in a very diverse community where we had a high minority population, not only of African American, but Latinos who were, as I was growing up, migrant workers who would come on buses in the summer and live in migrant camps and there was lots of racism in that community. My mother decided that at 13 we would move out of that community. So, that is my background and its important for you to know that as we're doing this, I think it's important for folks to know why I'm doing this. We work for everybody in our community. That is why we're here and that is why we began this process.

Let me tell you a couple of stories that I have learned during this process:

I attended several of the focus groups as we were putting this strategic plan together and I have been here ten years this month, and over the years, I've heard about communities such as Black Bottom,

Peacock Town, West End, Brooklyn and Green Meadows and as a 6'2" white guy, I didn't know what those meant and those were people I and my staff were trying to serve. As we went through this process, I heard stories.

The first story: I heard a story about Black Bottom, which was an African American neighborhood off of Kanuga Road, a community that I didn't know about when I got here. What's important about Black Bottom, is that folks that lived in that area, up until the 1960's, the main public sewer outfall of the entire City of Hendersonville, dumped into Mud Creek in Black Bottom. This was before there was a wastewater treatment plant. Folks in our community remember that and they remember that it was the city that was doing that.

The second story: My father believed in urban renewal and I believe to this day that my father was a good man. I know he was, but he was involved in urban renewal. Urban renewal came out of the great society. Urban renewal was well intended but what we found out, fast forward 50-60 years, is that it destroyed low income minority communities. In North Carolina, it was predominately African Americans. In other parts of our country, it may have been Latino. It was a well-intended program and the program was that we were going to take an area, the Government was coming into a community and we were going to make it better. We were going to take property through eminent domain, remove structures that the government thought were substandard, we were going to add water and sewer but then we were also going to displace people and we displaced people into public housing. We took property away from folks and moved them away from their community. Now growing up with my dad being city manager, I thought that was a great thing, that my dad was doing a great thing. There are people in this community that remember urban renewal.

The third story: Up until two or three years ago, we had a city attorney and she wouldn't mind me telling this story. When I came to Hendersonville, our city attorney's name was Sam and when Sam left the City of Hendersonville, he was Sophia. Sam had been struggling with his identity for most of his life. As a city manager, as a 6'2" white man, Christian, when that transition started to happen, I didn't know what to do. My staff didn't know what to do. They don't teach you that in graduate school or Human Resources class but as a city manager and head of the organization, Sam was doing a great job. Sophia was doing a great job. I had to lead our organization and make sure that our organization was respectful to Sophia. Sophia retired and moved out of the community.

The fourth story: Hiring of a police chief. Prior to my arrival, Hendersonville for almost 28-30 years, had an African American police chief and the community was proud of that. Both of them still live in the community, Donny Parks & Herbert Blake. When Herbert chose to move to another position in Buncombe County, we sat down and we looked at the standards for a police chief. We looked at who we wanted to hire and the skills and many folks in our community wanted us to make sure that we had a diverse group of candidates. Some members of this committee came to me and said we've had two African American police chiefs, but we want you to get the best candidate and we want to have a diverse pool. So we did that. We went out and recruited a diverse pool of applicants. Some African American, some Hispanic, some white. Members of this committee and members of this community sat down and we had a panel and we interviewed our candidates and because we had two African American chiefs, that did not set the standard. You all asked us to hire the best person and we hired a white male. His name is Blair Myhand and he's doing a great job in my opinion. He has created community groups but he also understands that we have to work for our community.

So I say all that to say, everything I've talked about is in this plan in one way or another. Stories are imbedded in this plan. This plan is about how our organization interacts with our community. This plan does not talk about lowering standards. This plan does not talk about reparations. This plan does not lay blame on anyone. This plan has not identified any significant issues in our community. What it has done is established a set of guidelines that our organization will follow and that we work for our community. We work for our citizens. We don't get to choose who our citizens are. We don't get to choose who our customers are. This plan will say "hey, our website needs some pictures or some things that will help people get the services they need." From an HR perspective we're recruiting from a diverse applicant pool for every position. It is going to provide guidelines of our HR department as it relates to folks that may be transforming/transgender so they get treated equally throughout our organization despite our different perspectives. It will provide guidance and teaching in our organization for folks that are devout Christians, can function and perform in our organization. We will respect it. We have to work together. If there's conflict, we will deal with it. That's what this plan is about. This plan is not about hate. It is not about national rhetoric. Its about what is best for our community. I could go on and on but I am here to answer any questions but I felt it was important to give you my opinion.

One more story. We have a piece of property in our community that is owned by an African American couple and the property sustained a pretty significant fire and the damage was pretty significant. Its not livable and unfortunately under our code enforcement, we sent letters to either remove the structure or repair it. That couple never responded after multiple approaches and we had to send one final letter saying that we were going to condemn the property. They hired a local attorney and that property is going to be sold now. We asked them why did you not contact us or come forward and talk to us and it was because they couldn't trust the government. So that puts a fine point on why this organization believes in this program. This is what this program is about. So, going forward, this is about having conversations and this is what is in this plan.

Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash and Jayne Jennings thanked Mr. Connet for his honesty and for being so forthcoming.

B. Community Focus Groups – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager Connet said that we are going to go out in the community into places of worship and we're still looking for other places and we just want the community to come out and to have a dialogue in June, July and August. For the record, for those of you who missed why we hired Akhirah, we chose them because they have a diverse group of staff members that work with us including a white southern Christian man. So, that's the next step.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Melinda Lowrance said on behalf of the DEI Board, we would like to thank Mrs. Jennings for her chairmanship. I remembered when we were organizing and I nominated you to be the chair. You were reluctant and said "I shouldn't be the chair because I'm a white woman". My reply was "the more reason you should be because you are a white woman and of the Jewish faith." It has been a pleasure working with you and getting to know you. We wish you all the best and pray that you and your family will find peace and happiness. Once again, thank you.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Jayne Jennings adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

Jayne Jennings, Chair

ATTEST:

Jill Murray, City Clerk



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, September 12, 2023 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Josh Williams-Vice Chair, Laura Bannister, Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash, Melinda Lowrance, Florence Allbaugh and Richard Reagan

Absent: Jill Murray, City Clerk

Liaisons: Mayor Barbara G. Volk and Mayor Pro Tem Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet and Communications Manager Allison Justus

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Josh Williams called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the agenda as presented. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Introduction of Richard Reagan- *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet introduced Mr. Reagen and suggested that everyone go around the room and introduce themselves.

B. Election of New Chairman – *John Connet, City Manager*

Laura Bannister nominated Josh Williams as Chair, seconded by Eric Gash. Motion carried unanimously.

Eric Gash nominated Nancy Diaz as Vice Chair, seconded by Laura Bannister. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Review of Community Conversations – *John Connet, City Manager*

City Manager Connet explained that they completed the contract with Akhirah. We had roughly 8-10 community conversations and we had an average of 20-30 people at each event, We thought they went well and had a diverse group at each meeting with diverse thoughts. We're expecting one final report from Akhirah that will include a synopsis of the conversations and I think it may lead to future conversations that we'll have ourselves.

The Committee gave some feedback of the community conversations. Everything was positive.

D. What’s Next? – John Connet, City Manager

John Connect said we’ve got foundation under us and I had no idea how to lead an effort like that but now our staff can lead some of the conversation and we can go from here and deal with some of the issues that arise in our community from time to time. So, what do we need to do now to keep the conversations going and keep the community engaged. What would you like to see us do? How can the committee help City Council?

Laura Bannister said there is a lot of distrust in the police, especially the transgender community. So I met with Chief Myhand. The police department here is more than willing to help the transgender community feel safe walking the streets. So that’s my goal to use this committee to bring information to my people and show them that the police is our friends.

Eric Gash said we need to be careful to not compare what goes on nationally to what’s going on here in Hendersonville because its not the same. Chief Myhand’s door is open to speak to him.

Florence Allbaugh said even having the SRO’s talk to the kids in the schools and communicate to the youth, that also goes back out to their parents.

John Connet asked how do we build the confidence in our community to speak with us, their local government about what’s going on around town. How do we educate folks in our community how to access their government and how to ask questions. How do we provide that access?

Florence Allbaugh suggested something like a “welcome wagon” like sending something to new homeowner’s in the area but doesn’t know how much that would cost. John said prior to Covid, that when we get new water accounts we could give out an information packet that gave all the info as to who they contact for certain services. Also, County Planning vs. City Planning etc. Melinda added that we need to be mindful of people who don’t use electronic communication.

Richard Reagen said WHKP Radio has a report every day before 7am that states the crimes in Hendersonville and Henderson County. We have to get to the kids, not to the parents. Do an outreach with the police.

Florence and Nancy suggested translation services available.

International festival in town

4. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan Update – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager Connet introduced Allison Justus to give an update on the comprehensive plan and said if you have not taken our survey, please do. Allison said that the survey launched on August 14th and that was the first day of our Community Advisory Committee meeting made up of stakeholders and they will meet four time throughout the process. The survey is the biggest public input portion and was have about 2100 people who have taken it so far, which is a strong start, but we’d like to hear from the people that we normally don’t hear from. We’ve done a variety of outreach so far with a pop-up at places like the Farmer’s Market, Rhythm & Brews, we have a resource table at the

workshops, we made a presentation at the Building Bridges workshop and we'll continue doing different events but the next four big input meetings are the Council Comp-versations. The council members do a series of meetings across the community every years but this year we're tying them in with the Comp Plan development. Debbie Roundtree held hers at Back-to-School Fest at Sullivan Park, our next one will be hosted by Lyndsey Simpson on Tuesday and hers is a little more focused on downtown and our remaining council members have meetings throughout the year. Mayor Volk will be hosting hers at IAN, Jerry Smith will be hosting his at the Earth Sciences Center and our final one will be hosted by Jennifer Hensley at Hendersonville High School.

The Committee thanked us for the appreciation dinner and said it was very good.

Jeff Groh asked for them to consider the City paying for classes regarding the U.S. Constitution.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Josh Williams adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Josh Williams, Chair

ATTEST:

Jill Murray, City Clerk