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# COURAGEOUS COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Policy Opportunities To Improve Racial Equity In The City Of Raleigh

Prepared by The Raben Group

# SHAW

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## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY OPTION METHODOLOGY

The Courageous Community Conversations Campaign, co-created by Shaw University and the City of Raleigh and led by Shaw University's Center for Racial and Social Justice, was established to create community space for meaningful dialogue on issues regarding race and racism, social inequality, and other related topics deemed by community members to be important to inform equity-centered and action-based policy for the City of Raleigh, and institutions throughout the community. The Raben Group (Raben) was hired by Shaw University to provide relevant and actionable policy options for the City of Raleigh directly in response to the needs highlighted by community members. Raben was provided transcripts and videos from the Courageous Community Conversations, along with survey data, notes and direct advice from the Center for Racial and Social Justice.

The goal of this initiative was to continue to build upon conversations of the past and to generate new ideas to improve the quality of life for all people in Raleigh. We acknowledge what we now know as the City of Raleigh is the unceded land belonging to the Tuscarora, the Catawba, and the Siouan peoples. This acknowledgement and the policy options in this report demonstrates a continued commitment to dismantling the legacies of historical systems of oppression.

The policy options in this report take into account historical context and other interrelated elements that can replicate inequities in power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes regardless of policy. As the policy options in this report are considered, our recommendation is that the City of Raleigh continues to meaningfully and transparently engage the community, beginning by sharing this report with community members, in particular those members of the courageous Community Conversations Campaign. While Raleigh no longer has Citizens Advisory Councils,<sup>1</sup> a potential model for continued transparency and community engagement could be Durham's Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint.<sup>2</sup>

#### LIMITATIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

We want to also acknowledge some points of consideration and limitations within the report. While this report was informed by meaningful community engagement across multiple formats, engagement and outreach were limited due to convening restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes constraints with engaging an audience that fully represents the diversity of Raleigh, including achieving significant representation from Indigenous communities and those outside of the city center. This is a limitation in the identification of representative community needs.

Another point for consideration is that some policy solutions for community concerns identified by participants sit at a county, state or federal level. Large-scale systemic change for residents of Raleigh would ideally be addressed at all of these levels. However, the city does have a significant role to play in the well-being of its residents and the opportunities provided to them.

It is also worth noting that although this report focuses on six specific areas: affordable housing; transportation; employment opportunities and economic stability; policing; mental health; and education, we acknowledge that these areas are intrinsically interrelated, and that the policy options and outcomes are intersectional. Some examples can be seen in the ways in which a zoning code policy can reinforce car dependency;<sup>3</sup> how public safety is related in part to the built environment, including housing and opportunities provided to justice-involved individuals;<sup>4</sup> the ways transportation policy decisions can impact public health;<sup>5</sup> and how schooling and employment can decrease the likelihood of becoming justice-involved.<sup>6</sup> As the City of Raleigh considers these policy options, their interrelated nature should be considered.

Another significant consideration, as it impacts funding and implementation, are the massive federal investments coming to North Carolina and the City of Raleigh that will provide generational opportunities to make meaningful progress towards racial equity. President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act<sup>7</sup> on November 15 and the Build Back Better legislation is likely to be passed by Congress this year.<sup>8</sup> These bills have the opportunity to support the City of Raleigh in addressing equity gaps in housing, transportation, employment opportunities and community violence interventions. Our recommendation is that the City of Raleigh focus on ensuring this funding is used to address the community needs and implement the policy LIMITATIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS CONT.

options highlighted in this report.

## THE URGENT NEED FOR PROGRESS

What was evident in the feedback from the participants of the Courageous Community Conversations was that generations of systemic racism has led to a lack of opportunities and limiting oppression for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) residents of Raleigh. This context is crucial in both understanding the community needs and considering any policy options. Important well-being indicators show stark disparities across race in income, housing, education, employment, access to healthcare and involvement with the justice system.

In North Carolina, the unemployment rate for Black residents is 5.9 percent, while the unemployment rate for white North Carolinians is 3.8 percent. In Raleigh, household income for non-Hispanic white residents is \$73,100, while it is \$42,600 for Black and \$41,500 for Hispanic residents.<sup>9</sup> This is compounded by income gaps across gender. In North Carolina, Black households earn only \$0.63 for every \$1 earned by white families.<sup>10</sup> Employment outcomes are also affected by educational opportunities. In Wake County, Black students' high school graduation rate is 88.7 percent and 82.5 percent for Hispanic students, while it is over 95 percent for white students.<sup>11</sup> This data is sobering but not surprising given that schools serving BIPOC students have fewer resources than schools serving white students.<sup>12</sup>

While instances of mental health concerns are similar between ethnicities, BIPOC Americans are less likely to receive mental health care.13 Due to generations of discriminatory policies like redlining, BIPOC communities also have more housing instability and lower rates of homeownership.14 And finally, Black Raleighites are much more likely to have negative interactions with police and the justice system. Nationwide, Black adults are about five times more likely than white adults to be stopped unfairly by police,<sup>15</sup> and 1 in 1,000 young Black men can expect to be killed by police.<sup>16</sup> Largely due to residential segregation, bias in the justice system and over policing in communities of color, Black people are more likely to be arrested, convicted, and serve longer prison sentences than their white counterparts.<sup>17</sup> These are just a few of the indicators that illustrate the incredibly pressing need to enact meaningful change that will begin to break down the long-standing effects of racism in the Raleigh community.

#### HOUSING

Access to affordable housing was identified as a top priority by participants in the Courageous Community Conversations. Community members highlighted three priority areas to be addressed regarding housing in the City of Raleigh, the first of which was that the rent to income ratio was too high. In the Raleigh area, residents need to make around \$20 to \$25 an hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment, a stretch when the minimum wage is \$7.25.<sup>18</sup> Next, community members identified that Black communities in the region have been impacted through destabilization and gentrification. Lastly, community members indicated that they perceived there to be a lack of transparency with regards to the creation and implementation of housing policy by the City of Raleigh.

The voices from the community echo a study by the Urban Institute examining the housing landscape in North Carolina. It has been determined that by 2030, the population growth in the state will exceed the supply of housing, specifically for those of low- and middle-income. The study further points out that the state will not have enough housing to meet the demand of low and middle-income individuals and families within the decade.<sup>19</sup>

#### **ZONING REFORM**

As population growth continues in North Carolina and the City of Raleigh, a worrisome housing trend is the massive expansion of single-family zoning that has dominated housing development since World War II. A glaring statistic to consider: during the 1950s, 41 percent of tracts constructed by 1950 rose in density by at least 0.5 units per acre; from 2000 to 2010, the comparable share was only 11 percent.<sup>20</sup> In other words, even as the population is rising, housing density is being spread in an inefficient way that leaves many lower-income individuals and BIPOC families displaced, resulting in what housing experts called "the missing middle" in housing supply.

It's important to note that this option is not about dismantling existing single-family units or halting future production. It is about eliminating regulations that impose requirements on residential areas that only allow detached single-family homes to be constructed, and that they must be on large land parcels. "Upzoning," or allowing areas traditionally zoned for single-family homes to build multi-resident units, could have a significant impact on the region's housing supply and housing value. It is worth acknowledging that a potentially

#### HOUSING CONT.

negative consequence of increasing housing prices is the exacerbation of inequality for low-income earners (again, historically BIPOC community members) and their ability to obtain a home. Taking the upzoning approach needs to be executed in a manner that would center equity and ensure affordable housing units be available in the potential housing production.

Minneapolis provides a good example of zoning reform. In December of 2018, the Minneapolis City Council passed a new comprehensive plan that proposed removing singlefamily zoning limits across the city. This move stoked concerns from residents about the dilution of values for their properties. However, the years since have proven no adverse consequence for single-family unit owners. In fact, the new plan was associated with a 3 to 5 percent increase in the price of affected housing units. Furthermore, there is evidence that this price increase is linked to the new construction option that would be available to property owners.<sup>21</sup>

It should also be noted that the city of Raleigh has already taken steps to address the "missing middle,"<sup>22</sup> along with additional reform proposals that need to be finalized.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, reforming zoning laws without creating incentives for developers to build denser buildings and multi-dwelling units will do little to help address the problem of the "missing middle."

#### PROPERTY TAX GRANTS FOR LONG-TERM HOMEOWNERS

As Raleigh continues to grow and attract new employers, property taxes are increasing. In fact, home values increased 20 percent on average in a recent reassessment.<sup>24</sup> For some homeowners, this is a welcome increase that builds personal wealth. However, these increases put a squeeze on lower- or fixed-income, long-term homeowners. When property taxes become unaffordable, individuals are often forced to sell their homes at a time when rental rates continue to increase, contributing to gentrification and housing instability.

A number of North Carolina jurisdictions have put programs in place to support low-income, long-term homeowners. Charlotte's Aging in Place program supports seniors with grants to pay their rising property taxes.<sup>25</sup> Durham's Longtime Homeowner Grant Program "is designed to assist longtime homeowners that may have experienced an increase in their property taxes due to the City of Durham's revitalization efforts."<sup>26</sup> Low-income families are eligible for the program, which provides grants to reduce the cost of property taxes. Raleigh should consider following in the footsteps of our neighbors to help vulnerable families stay in their homes.

#### RIGHT TO COUNSEL FOR EVICTIONS

Due to rising rents and lack of employment opportunities that pay a living wage, many families in our community are at risk of eviction. As of summer 2021, about 50,000 North Carolinians were facing potential eviction.<sup>27</sup> Individuals experiencing housing insecurity are also the least likely to have legal representation in eviction proceedings. In fact, approximately 90 percent of landlords have legal representation in eviction 2011 of percent of tenants have representation.<sup>28</sup> Due to the lack of proper representation, the vast majority of tenants lose their claims and are evicted. Moreover, eviction disproportionately impacts people of color, particularly women of color<sup>29</sup> and children.<sup>30</sup> Evictions are traumatizing for children, disrupting their education and creating massive instability.<sup>31</sup>

Ensuring that tenants are on equal footing with landlords in the courtroom is essential to limiting housing displacement. Research shows that tenants with legal representation are far more likely than unrepresented tenants to avoid eviction and keep possession of their homes.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, providing tenants with legal support can save the city money by keeping families out of homeless shelters and other supportive housing. A cost-benefit analysis in New York City reveals that after accounting for the cost of providing counsel, right to counsel would save the city around \$320 million a year.<sup>33</sup>

Even before the pandemic imposed a huge eviction threat to tenants, many cities were already taking steps to protect their renters.<sup>34</sup> New York City established a right to counsel for low-income tenants in eviction cases in 2017.<sup>35</sup> San Francisco implemented a similar measure that provides counsel for tenants at all income levels. The city saw eviction filings fall by 10 percent between 2018 and 2019, while 67 percent of represented tenants won their cases.<sup>36</sup> Newark, New Jersey, Cleveland, Ohio, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Boulder, Colorado, and Baltimore, Maryland have all established a right to counsel for eviction trials.

#### **RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL**

Almost as crucial as investing in new affordable housing units for Raleigh is the need to preserve the current supply of affordable housing in the community. Because the majority of current low-cost rental housing stock is unsubsidized, meaning no public funding is keeping rent low, private owners will pivot away from affordable units as soon as they can. "Right of first refusal" policies can help keep affordable housing stock strong.

Policies granting the right of first refusal prioritizes missionoriented buyers dedicated to affordable housing. These buyers may be tenant associations, nonprofits, for-profit developers,

#### HOUSING CONT.

or government entities. Right of first refusal provides an exclusive period in which to make an offer on a property or the option to match any bids made by buyers not planning to keep the property as affordable housing. Right of first refusal policies, particularly in strong or growing housing markets, can help preserve rental housing and prevent the conversion of subsidized rental properties to another use by allowing their sale to stakeholders committed to long-term affordability. In addition, right of first refusal policies can help protect housing quality and slow the intrusion of predatory actors in a soft housing market.

There are many examples of effective right of first refusal policies being implemented. Portland, Oregon requires that property owners who intend to opt-out of a federal rental assistance contract must provide both the city and affected tenants with at least 150 days' notice. This ensures that the tenant has ample time to find new housing. Tenants in affordable units that are being sold or converted are afforded safeguards against evictions without cause and rent hikes, as well as relocation aid from the owner.<sup>37</sup> Prince George's County in Maryland passed a similar county code in 2015.<sup>38</sup> The provision remains "a very important tool" for the county to preserve its affordable housing supply.<sup>39</sup> Right of first refusal can also be provided to tenants, which can slow gentrification. Washington, DC provides tenants in multifamily buildings the right of first refusal should the owner decide to sell the property where they live.<sup>40</sup>

#### TRANSPORTATION

The survey from Shaw University shows that both the student body that lives, works, and studies in Raleigh and the population at large want more investment in the public transit system. This includes the current infrastructure and creating a robust system that has efficient routes in both urban and suburban areas with additional support to paratransit riders. The policy options below come with the recognition that there is an imminent flow of federal investment to support these options from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Economic opportunities, especially for low and middleincome earners both in Raleigh and for most North Carolinians at large, are intricately linked to access to good, safe, and reliable transportation. Conversely, rundown transportation infrastructure can significantly limit employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Simply put, investment in a sound transportation system improves the economic well-being of a community, as explained by Martin Wachs, a Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley: "High-productivity transportation investments increase connectivity and reduce congestion; by doing so they improve economic well-being."41

#### MICROTRANSIT AND DYNAMIC ROUTING

The city can improve access to public transportation by expanding access to its bus route, especially prioritizing increasing access for populations that cannot easily get to a bus stop or transit station, either because of lack of route access or personal accessibility and mobility issues. One excellent example of how to expand rider access is in Raleigh's backyard. Wilson, North Carolina started an ondemand ridesharing service that is operated by the city and replaces some of the fixed bus routes.<sup>42</sup> The service, which began in 2020, operates throughout most of Wilson's city limits, and riders can request a trip at any time via its web services or phone. The vehicle may stop along the way to pick up other passengers traveling in the same direction. A similar program is also in operation for the city of Birmingham, Alabama. Birmingham also imposes a flat-rate fee of \$1.50 to ensure that the services remain accessible to all Birmingham residents.<sup>43</sup>

This micro-transit system is an ideal supplement to the city's fixed transit infrastructure. It can fill in the gaps left by incomplete bus routes or holes of inaccessibility for paratransit riders while utilizing modern technology that most residents of the city are familiar with. It's worth noting that for some, access to technology and the internet may be limited, so analog options still need to be available.

The idea of dynamic scheduling can be utilized with or without microtransit options. Fixed bus routes are not always reflective of consumer needs, which change based on day and time. Dynamic scheduling means that transportation options, small or regular-sized buses, operate in correlation to the demand of consumers and traffic conditions. The City of Raleigh could consider further analyzing customer demands and implementing dynamic routing, which has been shown to reduce customer wait times and increase utilization of bus capacity,<sup>44</sup> both saving the city money and improving customer experience.

#### TRANSPORTATION CONT.

#### PLACE MORE BUS STOPS IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

In urban areas, people who are Black, Hispanic, or immigrants are more likely to use buses.<sup>45</sup> Further, evidence shows that transit systems treat "choice" riders, riders who have other transportation options such as a car, differently than "dependent" riders - those who have no other options.<sup>46</sup> One way this disparity makes itself known is in the frequency and safety of bus stops. According to participants in the Courageous Community Conversations, more bus stops should be placed in Raleigh's Black and Latinx communities they should also be at least as comfortable and well-maintained as bus stops in predominantly white neighborhoods. Additionally, bus stops in these neighborhoods should protect vulnerable users, including those who identify as older residents, residents with disabilities, transgender residents, and/or women, by including lighting for safety and shelters to protect riders from inclement weather. The city can consider utilizing bus stop advertising as necessary to make improvements to and maintain bus stops.47

As an example, Minneapolis and St. Paul established the Better Bus Program to "enhance access to opportunities by investing in bus stops." The program focuses on areas of concentrated poverty and adding transit shelters where people need them the most. This work was completed after significant community engagement and survey sessions to determine routes and locations. Local reports have shown promising results, including increasing the number of bus stops with shelters, benches, and heating.<sup>48</sup>

#### **FREE CITY BUSES**

A 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics study shows that average Americans are spending upward to 16 percent of their budget on transportation costs. That number rises to 17.1 percent for married couples with children.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, as the younger population gravitates toward larger cities, including in North Carolina, public transportation becomes an increasingly important way of commuting. Making public transportation free removes cost barriers, encourages greater ridership, eases traffic congestion, and can provide access to improved employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Fee elimination is possible as transportation operations do not come from fares alone but are comprised of other financing from federal, state, and local. Additionally, some cities have dedicated property tax to fund transportation projects, making it easier to eliminate transit fees.

In 2020, the city of Olympia, Washington entirely eliminated fees for bus riders, which led to a 20 percent increase in ridership.<sup>50</sup> Kansas City, Missouri has also adopted a universal, systemwide fare-free public transportation policy. Michelle Wu, the newly-elected mayor of Boston, has called for fare-free transit in the city, saying that "bus lines tend to serve communities that are least connected to transit and historically have been marginalized populations: communities of color and low-income residents. It actually costs more than most people think to collect the fare, and so you're saving much of the operational costs by moving towards a fare-free bus system. And you're also speeding up the boarding time in ways that lead to even more cost savings averaged across the system."

Laudably, Raleigh's buses have been operating at no cost to consumers since March 2020 due to the pandemic and will be free through at least June 2022.<sup>52</sup> Raleigh can build on this progress by implementing a permanently fare-free system. This change would ensure barrier-free public transportation and increase ridership for the system, while at the same time easing traffic congestion and providing genuine economic opportunities and health care access to those who need it the most.

#### EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

As the City of Raleigh continues to build back from the COVID-19 crisis, Raleighites have witnessed the disastrous toll the pandemic has caused to the local economy in over nearly two years. The Courageous Community Conversations clearly illustrated that the people of Raleigh need and expect concrete actions to drive economic recovery, and that recovery should be equitable for all communities in the city. Community feedback reflected a need to increase the standard of living for low-wage workers and expand access to opportunities for historically marginalized communities that have borne the brunt of the pandemic. Additionally, interventions to more broadly increase the economic stability of Raleigh residents would have follow-on impacts in all of the areas identified by the community as in need of improvement.

Currently, the minimum wage across North Carolina is \$7.25, which is the federal standard that was set into law 12 years ago. However, for an adult to meet a minimum standard of living in Wake County in 2021, the Massachusetts Institute of

## EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY CONT.

Technology estimates that the living wage should be \$16.32 - more than double the current minimum wage.<sup>53</sup> While it would be ideal for the city to raise the minimum wage on its own, legal experts in North Carolina are divided on whether municipalities can raise the minimum wage in their cities, and the state currently has no cities that have raised their minimum wage above the state and federal minimum.

There are clear benefits to an increased minimum wage, and many cities across the country have increased theirs over the state or federal levels. These cities include Denver, Seattle, Oakland, Flagstaff, Arizona, and Washington, DC. There are also private sector partners who understand that the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is far too low. Target, Bank of America, Amazon, Costco, Charter Communications, Cigna, and Aetna all have minimum pay of at least \$15 an hour. Studies have proven that the effects of increasing the minimum wage to \$15 are net positive for workers. A 2021 paper showed that: "for the average worker, a minimumwage increase does more good in raising pay than it hurts by prompting some employers to cut back on hiring or hours."54 If the nationwide minimum wage was increased to \$15 an hour, it would generate \$107 billion in new wages for workers,55 and much of that money would find its way back into communities. Crucially, studies show that "higher wages swamp disemployment effects [from raising the minimum wage]."56 It's worth stressing that even a \$15 minimum wage would not allow a family of four to afford basic expenses,<sup>57</sup> which underscores the difference between a minimum wage and a "living wage," which would allow families to afford basic necessities, even in higher-cost areas.

It appears based on the current economic conditions that workers are on the cusp of rejecting these low wages they have lived with for far too long. COVID-19 underscored the unsustainability of low-wage jobs for many of those participating in the labor market. An article in the New York Times concludes that: "The U.S. does not have a pure labor shortage so much as it has a shortage of workers willing to accept the working conditions that today's economy often demands."<sup>58 59</sup>

## INCREASING JOBS THAT PAY A LIVING WAGE

While considerations to raise the federal, state, and local minimum wage continue, Raleigh should consider creating incentives for businesses to pay workers a living wage immediately. One great example of this option is found in the North Carolina mountains.

A program originating in Buncombe and Transylvania

Counties certifies employers who provide a living wage. Organized by Just Economics of Western North Carolina, there have been over 800 employers certified since 2008. The program "aims to reward existing Living Wage Certified Employers in our community, to provide employers with tools and incentives to increase workers' wages up to a living wage, to connect consumers to employers that provide a living wage, and to promote a just and sustainable local economy."<sup>60</sup>

It should be noted that the City of Raleigh has already taken the initiative to pay its own 3,800 employees a living wage.<sup>61</sup> This is a beneficial move for all workers in the region, as it puts upward pressure on wages across the city and compels the private sector to compete for workers in the labor market. A living wage certification program could also add to this positive pressure and create a more competitive market where there are more well-paying jobs available to workers.

#### INCREASE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WHO ARE BANKED

Overall, 3.4 percent of individuals in North Carolina do not have bank accounts.<sup>62</sup> Low-income individuals are much more likely to be unbanked than their higher-income counterparts. Additionally, while an estimated 1.9 percent of white North Carolinians are unbanked, 13.3 percent of Black and 15.1 percent of Latinx North Carolinians are unbanked.<sup>63</sup> Being unbanked can have a range of negative impacts on an individual. Those without bank accounts are often subject to unnecessary fees for alternative financial services. Unbanked individuals spend 5 percent of their net income on these fees, which can amount to \$40,000 over a lifetime.<sup>64</sup> Unbanked families also struggle to build savings, may be robbed while carrying cash,<sup>65</sup> and may not be able to build credit.

Boston has a "Bank On Boston" initiative within the Mayor's Office of Financial Empowerment. The effort "connects Boston residents with affordable financial products and services that can help them save, grow, and access their money."<sup>66</sup> The program brings together a wide coalition of banks, community organizations, and government entities to grow banking opportunities for residents. Given North Carolina's status as a financial hub and a home to many nationally- and world-renowned banking institutions, this effort would be a good fit.

#### GUARANTEED INCOME PILOT PROGRAM

A guaranteed income provides regular cash payments with no strings attached to targeted individuals in need. A guaranteed income program could go a long way towards reducing Raleigh's racial wealth gap and giving families of color the

### EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY CONT.

opportunities that systemic racism has long denied them. Stockton, California's Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration was shown to increase economic stability and improve employment outcomes. Participants were also healthier and exhibited less depression and anxiety at the demonstration's conclusion.<sup>67</sup>

Cities across the country, including Columbia, South Carolina, Jackson, Mississippi, Gary, Indiana and Richmond, Virginia have proposed or implemented guaranteed income programs. Durham is currently designing a guaranteed income pilot program focused on citizens returning from incarceration.<sup>68</sup> Raleigh should strongly consider investing in this proven effort, particularly as federal funding continues to flow to the state to address the impacts of the pandemic.

#### IMPROVING ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

In a longer-term solution to the problem of skilled worker supply, the city can also examine the opportunity to reinforce its labor supply for high-demand jobs through vocational apprenticeship programs. While a two- or four-year diploma is one route to a well-paying job, there are also high-demand careers that require shorter-term specific training and certificates. Supporting these alternative career pathways can help reduce student loan debt for low-income households while boosting the local worker supply.

Apprenticeship offers myriad benefits to employers, including building a pipeline of skilled workers, gaining workers with customized skills, boosting retention, saving money on wages, and creating a positive return on investment.<sup>69</sup> More than 80 percent of U.S. companies that sponsor apprentices say that apprenticeship is an effective strategy for helping them meet their need for skilled labor.<sup>70</sup>

Many cities across the country have experimented with supporting apprenticeship programs. Williamsport, Pennsylvania partners with local technology centers to establish a program to train workers and help companies address hard-to-fill positions.<sup>71</sup> The program has become so successful that one of the participating company's human resources managers told local papers that the program is the main selling point for the company's recruitment strategy.

Similarly, EmployIndy proves that an apprenticeship model aimed at preparing Indianapolis high school students for careers in high-demand fields. Partner employers span multiple high-demand industries such as information technology, financial services, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. Students participate in the program for two to three years, and get paid, hands-on coursework that compliments regular academic offerings. The program is designed to support students to either go right into the workforce or on to college after high school.<sup>72</sup>

Boston's City Academy is a smaller-scale apprenticeship program which helps low-income residents train for two types of in-demand and well-paying city jobs: Commercial Driver's License/Hoisting or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). This model benefits the individual as well as helping the city fill much-needed roles.

#### SUPPORTING CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT

An equitable recovery would not be complete without an examination of opportunities, or lack thereof, for justiceinvolved individuals. Nationwide, over 70 million people are estimated to be living with a criminal record. Most of these individuals are no longer incarcerated or on parole or supervision.73 Additionally, almost half of all children have at least one parent with a conviction.<sup>74</sup> We know that individuals who have been incarcerated suffer disproportionately from mental and physical illness,75 and Black and brown Americans represent a disproportionate percentage of individuals living with convictions due to generations of systemic and institutionalized racism, over-policing, mass incarceration, and the War on Drugs.<sup>76</sup> The city needs to examine how it has disproportionately prosecuted people of color in the past, and the ways in which justice system-involvement has damaged generations of families and communities.

Individuals living with convictions suffer a myriad of "collateral consequences," which can include barriers to employment, housing, business and occupational licensing, voting, and education. Those with children may find it hard to access anti-hunger programs like food stamps and may not be able to volunteer at their children's school, even if their crimes were nonviolent. These collateral consequences make it even more difficult for those with convictions to stabilize their lives and support their families and communities.

Research clearly shows that people who get expungements enjoy a 23 percent gain in income after a year,<sup>77</sup> and record clearance helps with the rate of recidivism and increases economic success.<sup>78</sup> On a bipartisan basis, North Carolina has widened opportunities for expungement with the 2020 Second Chance Act.<sup>79</sup> However, the process of obtaining an expungement can be complicated. By enacting a program to support its residents with expungement, Raleigh can help close employment and opportunity gaps in the city. The City of Raleigh should use its resources to support criminal record expungement and sealing in order to improve economic outcomes for its residents. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY CONT.

Durham's Expunction and Restoration Program (DEAR) is a good example of this work. The program helps residents erase charges and convictions from criminal records by providing

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Several themes came across very clearly in the Courageous Community Conversations about policing. First, the community believes that it is important to reallocate resources away from the police department and increase investment in citizens and community organizations. Stakeholders also feel that overpolicing in both low-wealth communities and communities of color is a problem. And finally, community members expressed frustration at a lack of accountability for police officers who unjustly harm Raleigh residents. Meaningful efforts towards decarceration are multi-layered and require buy-in and action from all levels of government. Cities have an important role to play in this work since they have direct oversight over their police force.

#### **IMPROVE DIVERSION**

The concept of diversion refers to efforts to keep individuals out of the justice system when appropriate. Diversion programs can minimize the "collateral consequences" of arrest and incarceration, like limiting employment and housing opportunities. They can also be an effective way to limit criminal justice system costs.<sup>81</sup>

Many cities and counties in North Carolina provide outstanding examples of successful diversion programs. Durham's Post Arrest Diversion Program is a partnership between the Durham District Attorney's office and the Criminal Justice Resource Center. The program serves individuals with low-level felonies. Each individual receives a plan tailored to their needs that seeks to reduce future recidivism.<sup>82</sup> Durham also has a Misdemeanor Diversion Plan in place for first-time offenses. In lieu of arrest, police officers refer the individual to the program, which lasts for 90 days and includes wrap-around services such as mental health and substance misuse treatment, housing, education, and employment services.83 Charlotte's Youth Diversion Program serves children aged 6-17 and provides them with programmatic alternatives, including a life skills class, to criminal prosecution.<sup>84</sup> Finally, many North Carolina cities, including Waynesville, Wilmington, Statesville, and Fayetteville, all operate the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. LEAD addresses low-level drug offenses and crimes associated with sex work. Individuals in the program are diverted to community programs and

them with legal assistance.<sup>80</sup> Residents are also assisted in restoring their drivers' licenses, which can be a major barrier to employment and mobility for those with convictions.

services. The LEAD program has a strong research base that shows it reduced involvement in the justice system and is a cost saver for jurisdictions that implement it.<sup>85</sup>

#### SHIFTING RESOURCES TOWARD PREVENTION

There has been much attention on calls to "defund the police," and this phrase has become politically-charged. However, the idea at the core of this is one that is common sense: moving towards a front-end, or "upstream," model of crime prevention and public safety instead of an emphasis on back-end, or "downstream," policing. A great example of this resource shift is child welfare policy,<sup>86</sup> where bipartisan support for efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect has led to improved outcomes for children and their families. Another widely-understood example would be focusing on disease prevention to keep people healthier and reduce their risks of illness.

Long-term research shows that increased spending on policing doesn't necessarily reduce crime.<sup>87</sup> Research also shows that focusing on decarceration does not increase crime rates.<sup>88</sup> This means that the City of Raleigh can reallocate resources towards community services without fearing an increase in crime. Additionally, a national poll shows that the public supports community-based strategies to improve public safety.<sup>89</sup>

The Urban Institute proposes three options for shifting funding toward prevention and community services as a non-policing way to increase public safety: 1) reinvestment, which means generating savings through reform and farming that funding back into community supports; 2) up-front investments, or simply putting new resources into community supports; and 3) invest-divest, meaning reallocating funding away from policing towards community supports that would increase public safety. These are all options worthy of consideration by the City of Raleigh.

More than 20 major cities across the country have shifted funding away from policing towards prevention services.<sup>90</sup> Austin, Texas reallocated funding from its policing

#### CRIMINAL JUSTICE CONT.

budget to invest in housing.<sup>91</sup> The city should particularly keep this concept in mind as it makes decisions on how COVID-19 relief and other federal funding is used in the city. Minneapolis reallocated \$8 million from its policing budget towards mental health services and alternative police responses.<sup>92</sup> Other cities, such as Denver, have paired this resource shift with a desire to end the school-to-prison pipeline by ending school resource officer programs.<sup>93</sup>

#### BANNING SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES

The #8CantWait94 movement, a project of the non-profit Campaign Zero, encourages law enforcement agencies across the country to enact key changes that are shown to reduce police violence. Raleigh currently has 6 of the policies in place, including: banning chokeholds and strangleholds; requiring warning before shooting; requiring officers to exhaust all alternatives before shooting; a duty to intervene; implementing a use of force continuum; and requiring comprehensive reporting. The city is "currently reviewing our policies and procedures to align with #8CantWait."95 The city should immediately implement a remaining policy: banning shooting at moving vehicles. Generally, shooting at moving vehicles is seen as ineffective and poses a danger to bystanders nearby not involved in the incident. Banning shooting at moving vehicles has been shown to lower rates of killings by police.96

#### **REQUIRING DE-ESCALATION**

In addition to banning shooting at moving vehicles, the city should immediately implement the final #8CantWait recommendation: requiring de-escalation. De-escalation is the use of non-physical tactics in a policing situation. This includes increasing communication, ensuring interactions are based on respect, not making assumptions, and use of a critical decision-making model.<sup>97</sup> De-escalation reduces the need for physical force when police are interacting with citizens<sup>98</sup> and has been linked with improved public health outcomes.<sup>99</sup> The Raleigh Police Department recently announced that they would be developing a new deescalation policy as well as aligned training for its force, which is commendable.<sup>100</sup> Moving forward, accountability and culture change will be important to ensure that these policies and trainings result in meaningful change in how policing happens in the City of Raleigh.

#### CREATING AN EMPOWERED CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

Across the country, including in Raleigh, there have been calls to enact meaningful citizen review boards with police oversight power. In fact, over 160 cities and counties have citizen review boards in place, and another 130 are undertaking efforts to enact review boards.<sup>101</sup> Chicago and Washington, DC both provide examples of cities that have created more empowered citizen review boards. These efforts have resulted in enhanced accountability and greater trust between the police and community.<sup>102</sup>

Raleigh currently has a "police advisory board" without the power to conduct investigations, discipline officers, respond to citizen complaints, or collect data.<sup>103</sup> In North Carolina, state law makes it challenging to have meaningful citizen review boards.<sup>104</sup> Advocates are calling the City of Raleigh to lobby the North Carolina General Assembly to change this statute to make review boards more powerful and meaningful. The city should create an empowered citizen review board as soon as statutorily possible.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental wellness and health policy was another top priority identified by community members participating in the Courageous Community Conversations. While mental wellness and health impacts everyone throughout the community, for communities of color, racism is an added layer of trauma that can burden the community.<sup>105</sup> Community members identified the need to: 1) increase equitable access, including increased providers and facilities, to mental health support; and 2) create mental health resources that are racially and culturally relevant, with special consideration to the Black and Indigenous communities as top priorities.

#### EMBED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WITH FIRST RESPONDERS

Raleigh recently announced a new Addressing Crises Through Outreach, Referrals, Networking, and Service (ACORNS) program,<sup>106</sup> which is an "alternative emergency response" program. These programs pair law enforcement with a co-responder who is an expert in behavioral health, or the behavioral health expert may respond to the call without law enforcement present. These are promising models given that 22 percent of deaths due to lethal force by a police officer

#### MENTAL HEALTH CONT.

were "mental health related."<sup>107</sup> These types of programs relieve burden on first responders, as a quarter or more of emergency calls are related to nonviolent psychiatric or behavioral health needs.<sup>108</sup> Alternative emergency response diversion could also reduce incarceration costs, as national data shows that 64 percent of those in jail and 56 percent of those in state prisons have a mental health problem.<sup>109</sup> As Raleigh implements this program, it should be well-resourced and well-staffed in correlation with the mental health needs in the city. It is reasonable to imagine that as alternative emergency response teams are put in place, the need for armed officers will decrease in proportion.

A number of cities across the country have also taken this approach. Durham is working on an alternative response program, shifting resources from the Durham Police Department to create a Community Safety Department. This new department will use social workers and other non-lawenforcement individuals to respond to issues that do not need an armed officer present.<sup>110</sup> For over 3 decades, Eugene, Oregon has been implementing CAHOOTS, a non-lawenforcement approach to crises involving mental health, homelessness, and addiction. The city-funded model pairs a medic (such as a nurse, paramedic, or EMT) with a trained and experienced mental health crisis worker. 911 operators dispatch the teams, when appropriate, via police radios. On average 17 percent of the Eugene Police Department's overall calls were handled by CAHOOTs teams. Eugene has seen significant cost savings through the program - while it costs \$2.1 million annually to run the program, the city estimates that the program saves \$8.5 million annually.

#### EXPAND CRISIS INTERVENTION TRAINING

Crisis intervention training (CIT) is generally understood to be a high-quality, 40-hour training program that helps law enforcement officers de-escalate crises, assess the situation, and determine the path that would be most supportive for the individual. Research shows that officers who have undergone CIT report improved satisfaction and a reduction in the use of force.<sup>111</sup> The Raleigh Police Department already provides CIT to some of its officers. CIT should be available to as many of the city's law enforcement officers as possible, given the high frequency of calls that involve mental health crises.

Research shows that few 911 operators have CIT training, despite being the first point of contact for many in crisis.<sup>112</sup> Providing this training to operators would mean that more individuals are connected to the best resources available for their needs and police officers have a better and more informed experience engaging with community members.

#### CREATE A TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER

Untreated trauma can lead to "chronic emotional distress, relationship problems, and self-medicating through increased alcohol or drug use, all of which can lead to challenges with maintaining employment or housing."<sup>113</sup> One solution to reducing the cycles of trauma in our communities is the creation of trauma recovery centers (TRCs). TRCs are designed to help underserved crime survivors in recovering from crime and coordinate a crime victim's mental health, physical health, psychosocial, and legal services. TRCs may be housed at a hospital, university, or community-based organization. There are currently about 35 TRCs in six states across the country, but none in North Carolina. This is an opportunity for the city to lead the way and provide its citizens with a meaningful path to healing from trauma.<sup>114</sup>

#### EDUCATION

Responsibility for education lies at the state and county, and to a lesser extent the federal, levels. However, there are ways a city can intentionally work to support equitable education outcomes for its residents. Community members shared that the public school system is inequitable, with students of color experiencing discrimination in schools, curricula that does not affirm their identity, and having less funding. Educational opportunities have both individual positive benefits as well as community-wide impacts, such as improving public health.<sup>115</sup>

#### FREE OR LOW-COST POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

The City of Raleigh can examine opportunities to provide free or low-cost postsecondary opportunities to low-income residents. While inflation and other factors have contributed to the high rise in the cost of college, a postsecondary

#### **Courageous Community Conversations**

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degree remains a key to unlocking stable, well-paying jobs. Although two-thirds of jobs in North Carolina require a postsecondary credential or degree, but MyFutureNC reports that "fewer than half of North Carolinians ages 25-44 hold a postsecondary degree or high-quality credential."<sup>116</sup>

Raleigh can follow the example of a number of cities who have invested in postsecondary opportunities for their residents. North Carolina currently has a very limited lowcost college program, NC Promise. Under this program, tuition to Western Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, and the University of North Carolina-Pembroke is only \$500 per semester. However, all three of these universities are far from Raleigh and not a viable option for those geographically-bound to our area. More local opportunities are needed to rectify long-standing racial education gaps.

The Kalamazoo Promise program, a city-funded college promise program, provides up to 100 percent of community college, private, or public university costs for Kalamazoo high school graduates. The Kalamazoo Promise Program resulted in a 25 percent increase in a student's likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree,<sup>117</sup> and that every \$1 invested in the program led to \$4.60 in future earnings benefits for the students - a remarkable rate of return.<sup>118</sup> Through its Partners in Education Program, Chicago also provides public housing residents and voucher recipients free- or low-cost postsecondary opportunities.<sup>119</sup> The Dallas Rising Star program provides \$5,500 for tuition and books to Dallas County public school graduates attending Dallas College.<sup>120</sup> Peoria, Illinois, Wichita, Kansas, Detroit, Michigan, and Denver, Colorado are other cities with postsecondary promise programs for their students.

#### SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES VIA HOUSING

Research shows that stable, affordable housing may increase childrens' educational success.121 Families facing housing instability may move more frequently, creating educational instability that can lead to lower academic outcomes.<sup>122</sup> Cities can support education through their housing authorities. An outstanding example of this work is happening in Tacoma, Washington. The Tacoma Housing Authority's Education Project: 1) keeps children in their schools through parental rental assistance; 2) ensures that parents are signing up for available educational opportunities like financial aid along with their housing paperwork; 3) offers education savings accounts for families and matching their contributions; 4) pays for homeless or near-homeless students in the city to attend college, and offering them housing; and 5) offers educational supports like Head Start, literacy programs, mentoring and tutoring, and computer labs on-site at public housing. The City of Raleigh could replicate these types of programs and supports to leverage housing funding to improve a range of outcomes for the families they house.

#### CONCLUSION

Raleigh is a city with rich diversity, an engaged citizenry and much to offer its residents. However, as it continues to grow, it is crucial that the needs of communities of color are centered. Systemic racism and colonialism has created wide gaps in opportunity and success over generations, and it would be too easy to continue to leave BIPOC families behind. The City of Raleigh has made efforts to reduce the inequitable impacts of its growth. However, there is much more work to be done. We hope that this report offers concrete examples that the City could take immediately to meaningfully expand opportunities to all of its residents and level a playing field that has, for far too long, been uphill for communities of color.

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