



Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Equity & Empowerment Commission

Subject: Reparations Recommendations - Wealth and Opportunity Gaps

Date: September 9, 2019

Background

At its June 2019 meeting, Alderman Rue Simmons requested that the Equity and Empowerment Commission assist with identifying ways to address the historical wealth and opportunity gaps that African American residents of Evanston experience. Ald. Rue Simmons sought a "Solutions Only" process to identify actions that the City of Evanston could take to implement a meaningful repair and reparations policy.

The Commission created an *ad hoc* subcommittee and convened community meetings on July 11 and July 13 to include residents and gather public input on why Evanston should address repair and reparation, who should be involved, what actions could be taken, and what revenue sources should be considered. Both meetings were well-attended.

Attendees identified five **priority categories for action** (History/Culture, Finance, Education, Institutions/Systems, and Power Structure) and then broke into smaller groups to **prioritize actions** within each category. Notes of both meetings are attached; they also include public input for a related, but separate, community reconciliation initiative. City staff also provided attendees with a partial list of existing City programs and ordinances that already address specific priorities regarding policies and actions to begin to remedy the City's role in historical and institutional racism and discrimination.

Acknowledging that additional research and data collection that are beyond the scope of this commission are necessary to create a fair and equitable process that is sustainable, the Commission makes no specific recommendations as to how these policies would be implemented.

Livability Benefits:

Equity & Empowerment: Provide for meaningful community engagement; Ensure equitable access to community assets.

Recommended Action:

The Equity and Empowerment Commission recommends the City Council receive this report and directs the City Manager to do the additional research and data collection that would determine the feasibility of these recommendations.

Housing:

- Provide property tax relief to African-American, long-time owners of residential property in Evanston.
- Provide housing repair and rehabilitation assistance to African-American property owners in Evanston.
- Provide down payment assistance to income-qualified, African-American home purchasers in Evanston.
- Provide housing rental assistance to income-qualified, African-American residents in Evanston.

Economic Development:

- Re-purpose the Gibbs-Morrison Center to provide co-working or work cooperative space for African-American entrepreneurs.
- Invest in workforce training for African-American Evanston residents.
- Provide low-interest loans for African-American Evanston entrepreneurs.