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## **City of Gainesville Policy Program Preliminary Research & Analysis**

**TOPIC:** Race and Equity Task Force  
**PREPARED BY:** Morgan Spicer, Research and Prototyping Fellow  
**DATE:** January 21, 2020  
**REQUESTED BY:** Commissioner Johnson

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Many cities have established community-led race and equity task forces in order to gain insight from community members regarding their views of racial equity within the city. These task forces generally **involve city officials serving as liaisons and support staff to the task force, while the task force itself is comprised of 10-20 community leaders** from the education, healthcare, and nonprofit sectors.

These task forces **provide a space for community members to research and discuss racial inequity within their cities and communities**, and they provide policy or program recommendations to city staff regarding how city services can better serve residents. The task forces additionally frequently split into working groups or subcommittees to tackle specific issues such as healthcare, housing, law enforcement, and education. **Generally, these task forces conclude with either the creation of a strategic plan on race and equity initiatives, or cities direct their staff to create a strategic plan out of the task force's recommendations.**

The first step cities have generally taken in creating a task force has been to **determine the goals** the task force ought to set out to achieve, namely whether the task force should culminate in a final strategic plan or whether they should simply provide recommendations that city officials ultimately craft into a strategic plan. Cities then open applications for the task force, and either **the City Commission, the City Manager, or a combination thereof choose individuals** to take part in the task force, based on their experience serving as community leaders in various fields, and the task forces are generally made up of 10-20 individuals. Some cities have additionally implemented quotas to ensure diversity among their task force, however most simply make a concerted effort to select qualified individuals from a diverse

set of backgrounds. There are often no specific requirements or qualifications necessary to be part of the task force, apart from having leadership experience within the community. City officials oftentimes **appoint a chairperson** for the task force, **or members of the task force can elect a chairperson**. These task forces most commonly **meet once a month**, and they **generally divide tasks into several subcommittees** based on prominent issues in the community, as mentioned above. Many cities have additionally given their task forces **deadlines to compile their plan or recommendations** by, in order to ensure the group works in a timely fashion. Ultimately, these task forces are generally encouraged to **run as independently from the local government as possible**, with staff providing support when needed, in order to ensure the community's voice is the strongest when understanding racial equity.

## PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

Below are examples of several municipalities that have created community task forces in relation to race and equity.

### Durham, North Carolina

Durham's Racial Equity Task Force Board is made up of **17 members** and was announced by the Mayor and approved by the City Council in mid-2018. The goal of the task force was to **make the public aware of racial disparities within the community, and work to identify best practices for policy change and social interventions addressing racial inequality**. Members research initiatives that had success in other cities and look for ways for those changes to be implemented in Durham. The task force then makes funding and policy recommendations to the City Council.

In order to be appointed, individuals could apply either to be a general member or to apply for the chair position. Those who chose to apply for the chair position were also considered for regular membership if they were not selected as the chair. **The City Council selected and appointed the members**. The Mayor Pro Tempore is a liaison for the group, not the chairperson, in order to keep the group community-led. In order to become a member of the task force, individuals are required to have obtained racial equity training within the past five years, or to receive it within two months of appointment. Scholarships are offered by the City of Durham to pay for the training. **The council did not make specific requirements regarding the racial makeup of the group**, but said that the council would appoint a majority people of color.<sup>1</sup>

Originally, there were twelve members appointed to the task force, overseen by the chairperson. However, the City Council ended up voting to expand the group to 17 in order to add four African American men to the task force, after none were on the original list of members. The group's current makeup includes six African American women, four African American men, four white women, two white men, and two Latina women. Additionally, the group is equally represented by each of the City's three wards.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://indyweek.com/news/archives/durham-s-racial-equity-task-force-takes-shape/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.heraldsun.com/news/local/counties/durham-county/article218740540.html>

**The committee meets on a monthly basis**, and has **four subcommittees**, one focusing on education, one focusing on health and environment, one focusing on wealth and the economy, and one focusing on criminal justice, which additionally meet once a month. The Task Force is still in existence and has not produced any official reports yet.

### **Metro, Oregon**

**The Equity Strategy Advisory Committee** was created by the City of Metro in 2013 in order to **provide support in the development of Metro's Equity Program**. The Committee was made up of **15 members**, and brought leaders from the philanthropy, nonprofit, public and business sectors together to provide guidance, input and community perspective throughout the creation of the city's strategic plan. The ultimate goal of the committee was to provide a working definition of equity, which framed the development of a strategic plan. **Members of the committee were appointed by the City Council** and represented city and county government, community schools, and non-profits in the region.<sup>3</sup> The committee was ended after the production of the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity.

In 2017, the Equity Strategy Advisory Committee was replaced by the **Committee on Racial Equity**, which **was created by the City Council to aid them in the implementation of the strategic plan**. The goal of the committee is to provide input and advice for the successful implementation of the strategic plan, provide community oversight and opportunities for Metro to have greater accountability to the community on the implementation of the strategic plan, communicate Metro's progress in implementing the strategic plan, and assisting Metro staff in the creation and implementation of the strategic plan evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

This committee is made up of **15 members, including individuals from the county government, the education sector, race equity organizations, philanthropic organizations, and other non-profits**.<sup>5</sup> Members are appointed to serve **two year terms**, and are eligible to be reappointed for a second term. **Individuals on the committee receive a stipend** and free childcare and catering at committee meetings, which occur once a month.<sup>6</sup>

### **Fort Worth, Texas**

In 2017, the Fort Worth City Council appointed a **23-member Task Force on Race and Culture** to examine issues related to race and culture in Fort Worth. The task force asked for **community input through a series of meetings and online engagement tools**, and as a result thousands of residents participated in town hall-style meetings and smaller gatherings.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/strategic-plan-advance-racial-equity-diversity-and-inclusion>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/regional-leadership/metro-advisory-committees/committee-racial-equity>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/regional-leadership/metro-advisory-committees/committee-racial-equity/meet-members>

<sup>6</sup> <https://onacc.org/2019/09/12/metro-is-recruiting-for-our-committee-on-racial-equity/>

City of Gainesville Policy Program Preliminary Research & Analysis  
Race and Equity Task Force

The Task Force's creation was led by the former head of the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, a local rabbi, the president of Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital, and the communications director with the Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce.<sup>7</sup> The final group was made up of seven African Americans, seven Hispanics, and seven whites, and included 12 women and 11 men. These individuals included former city and county staff, business owners, and representatives of religious and nonprofit organizations, and **were appointed by the City Council.**<sup>8</sup>

The Task Force had **seven subcommittees** which studied racial equity and bias in several areas, including criminal justice, economic development, education, health, housing, municipal governance, and transportation. Each subcommittee included members of the larger Race and Culture Task Force, as well as subject matter experts and support staff from the City of Fort Worth.

The Task Force concluded **18 months of work** when it presented the City Council with **more than 20 recommendations.**<sup>9</sup>

### **Fairfax, Virginia**

Fairfax's One Fairfax policy stemmed from the work of **Fairfax County's Successful Children and Youth Policy Team**, a task force organized by the county comprised of government staff, school board members, and community representatives. The group was first convened in March of 2013 in response to concerns about racial and economic disparities in the public school system, and the main goal was to **set goals to reduce these disparities and recommend policy priorities to the Fairfax County government.**

The team was made up of **9 members from the public school system, 12 members from the county government, and 15 members from the community**, including representatives of non-profits, religious groups, early childhood centers, higher education, and equity advocacy. Individuals representing the public school system and county government were chosen by their respective institution, while community members were identified by existing members of the task force to provide the perspective of various sectors impacting youth well-being.<sup>10</sup> The executive committee met every other month, while the general membership met every three months.<sup>11</sup>

**The group divided into several prevention teams/coalitions**, including behavioral health, domestic and sexual violence and child abuse, physical health, place-based initiatives, school readiness, academic success and workforce readiness, and faith communities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/fort-worth/article158484194.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/fort-worth/article163638003.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://fortworthtexas.gov/news/2018/12/Task-Force-recommendations/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health-humanservices/scypt>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health-humanservices/scypt/meetings>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/prevention/teams-initiatives-coalitions>

## City of Gainesville Policy Program Preliminary Research & Analysis Race and Equity Task Force

The group additionally conducted an **Institutional Analysis**, where they reviewed juvenile cases and conducted in depth interviews with youth, their family, and those in their lives. In response to this research, **Fairfax County passed the One Fairfax resolution, which broadened the focus beyond children to all county residents** and to all government sectors, by directing the county to develop an intentional racial and social equity policy.<sup>13</sup>

While the original task force focused specifically on inequity among youth populations, it does reveal a potential structure for a community wide task force.

### Austin, Texas

The **Mayor's Taskforce on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities** was formed in November of 2016 in response to several instances of reported police violence and in an effort to provide community-based policy recommendations to reduce systemic racism. The task force was comprised of several **local representatives from business, education, and criminal justice sectors** to address institutional racism in Austin. The task force members formed **five working groups to focus in key areas** – education, real estate and housing, health, finance/banking and industry, and civil and criminal justice.

The creation of the task force was led by the Huston Tillotson University President and the Austin ISD Superintendent, who were chosen by the Mayor and who selected the additional members of the task force, and **involved collaboration with over 200 community members**.<sup>14</sup> The task force had a **six-month deadline** to submit a final report, which was completed in April of 2017. The task force ultimately developed more than 200 recommendations that would attempt to create transparency in law enforcement, provide funding for housing inequalities, and provide a path to review Austin's governmental policies that perpetuate systemic inequities.<sup>15</sup>

### Bainbridge Island, Washington

The City of Bainbridge Island created a **Race Equity Task Force** in March of 2019, whose goal is to develop a series of events through the year to promote awareness and raise the community's level of engagement around race and to encourage a dialogue between residents and city officials. The Task Force will additionally provide a series of recommendations to the City Council on ways in which the City can help the community become a more inclusive and responsive community when it comes to addressing racial inequities.<sup>16</sup>

The Task Force is made up of **seven members appointed by the City Council, in addition to 3 City Council members that serve as liaisons**. Prior to the first meeting, the group **received training from a member**

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.fairfaxtimes.com/articles/fairfax\\_county/fairfax-county-resolution-makes-racial-and-social-equity-a-priority/article\\_e94253b4-5507-11e6-8be2-67dcf2817b61.html](http://www.fairfaxtimes.com/articles/fairfax_county/fairfax-county-resolution-makes-racial-and-social-equity-a-priority/article_e94253b4-5507-11e6-8be2-67dcf2817b61.html)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.austintexas.gov/blog/mayors-task-force-institutional-racism-and-systemic-inequities>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.usmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AUSTIN-TX-1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bainbridgewa.gov/1124/Race-Equity-Task-Force>

of the city's **Ethics Board**.<sup>17</sup> The group additionally has **two subcommittees**: one made up of three members to look into the tools on the GARE website and make recommendations, and one made up of three members to do youth outreach and look into youth harassment.<sup>18</sup> The Task Force is still meeting once a month, and has not produced any final reports yet.<sup>19</sup>

### Edina, Minnesota

The **Race and Equity Task Force** was created by the Edina City Council in December of 2016 to eliminate disparate impacts of city policies and operations that are caused by race. The structure of this initiative is multi-tiered, consisting of 30 community members serving on the Task Force and Working Groups. The Task Force is the ultimate decision-making group of this initiative and is composed of nine members, all Edina residents, who are **appointed by the City Council** with member selection.

The **Task Force is additionally supported by three working groups** focused on facilities, services, and institutions. Each working group is composed of one or two members of the task force, five members appointed by the City Council, two members that work for the city government and a City Staff Support person, all of whom are appointed by the City Manager. All members, apart from the City Manager's appointments, are required to be Edina residents. These members additionally include community members, human rights city commissioners, and GARE team members.

The final report from the task force was created in 2018, and it included **21 recommendations** to address racial discrimination in all facets of the city. These recommendations were largely based on comments provided by community members who shared their experiences through an anonymous survey.<sup>20</sup>

### Asheville, North Carolina

Asheville, North Carolina, established the **Human Relations Commission** of Asheville in mid-2018, and it is comprised of fifteen members, **appointed by the City Council**. The City recommended that this number include 6 African Americans, 2 Latinx individuals, 2 members of the LGBTQ community, 2 youth members (18-25), 2-3 individuals who live in public housing, 2 individuals with a disability, and 3 individuals recognized as community leaders. These quotas have largely been met, however the pool of applicants for the first group of commissioners did not contain enough members to meet the Latinx and public housing minimums, although the numbers of black and LGBT individuals exceeded the recommendations.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bainbridgereview.com/news/bainbridge-island-race-equity-task-force-gathers-for-first-meeting/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bainbridgewa.gov/AgendaCenter>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bainbridgewa.gov/1124/Race-Equity-Task-Force>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.edinamn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5021/Race--Equity-Final-Report-and-Recommendations->

<sup>21</sup> <https://mountainx.com/news/human-relations-commission-takes-up-task-of-advancing-equity/>

The members may serve **two consecutive two-year terms** and their duties include making policy recommendations to the City Council which promote and improve equity in the City, supporting the City's Office of Equity and Inclusion, providing a forum where residents can raise issues and complaints relating to human relations in the City, engaging the community regarding the utilization of City-funded programs and policies for the promotion of human relations, and promoting and improving equity throughout the city.<sup>22</sup> The Human Relations Commission meets once a month.

Asheville's Human Relations Commission does not have the end goal of creating strategic plan, however its structure is similar to a race and equity task force as it has the goal of understanding equity concerns from the view of residents.

### PRELIMINARY AND ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- City of Gainesville – Office of Equal Opportunity
- Alachua County
- University of Florida
- Santa Fe
- UF Health
- Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Alachua County Public Schools
- United Church of Gainesville's Racial Justice Task Force
- Alachua County NAACP

### RECOMMENDED POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH/DISCUSSION

- Should the final goal of the task force be to *create* the strategic plan, or simply come up with the recommendations that City staff will create a strategic plan out of.
- Should there be a deadline for the task force?
  - Likely 6 months to a year and a half.
- Who should appoint the task force members and what are the guiding principles of appointments?
  - Determine the number of individuals (likely 10-20)
  - Quota requirements (like Asheville HRC)? Or conscious selection of members?
    - Race, gender, sexual orientation, income, location. Etc.
  - Equity training requirement?
- Should City Commissioner(s)/City/County staff serve as liaisons or group members?

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ashevilenc.gov/departments/city-clerk/boards-and-commissions/human-relations-commission/>

