

Information Item

Date: March 16, 2021

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Angela I. Carmon, City Attorney
Meridith J. Martin, Strategic Initiatives Administrator

Subject:
Information on Racial Equality

Strategic Focus Area: Livable Neighborhoods

Strategic Objective: Support Inclusion of Community Populations

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: Yes



At the request of Mayor Pro Tempore Adams, staff reviewed the processes taken by other jurisdictions within North Carolina related to social justice and reparations. After researching the request, actions were taken by the City of Asheville, the City of Durham, the Town of Carrboro, Buncombe County, and Orange County. The attached table shows the date an action was taken for each jurisdiction, as well as a summary of the actions that were authorized. Direct payments were not a part of any action for the jurisdictions included.

A draft resolution is also included with this item calling for Federal and State action to establish a commission to study the issue of reparations for Black/African American citizens. Black/African Americans continue to be denied equal access to education and skill development, access to healthcare, access to safe neighborhoods, access to affordable housing, access to mortgages and capital to purchase homes and invest in businesses necessary to generate wealth and create job opportunities with their communities, access to other meaningful opportunities to eliminate the racial wealth gap, and access to equal protection under the law. In Winston-Salem, slum clearance and urban renewal programs destroyed homes, businesses, churches, and cultural institutions within neighborhoods where Black/African American residents lived, worked, shopped and worshiped, thereby eliminating accrued wealth and destroying vehicles for generating future wealth and replaced them with infrastructure projects such as the Cherry/Marshall Expressway, US Highway 52, and what is now known as Salem Parkway.

The resolution includes the following actions by the City of Winston-Salem:

1. Apologizes for participation in slum clearance and urban renewal programs that while providing infrastructure that would allow the city to grow, did so at the expense of multiple successful black business and homes
2. Calls on the United States Congress to pass H.R. 40, which would establish a federal commission to study and develop a reparations proposals for Black/African-Americans, which would examine the legacy of slavery and discrimination in the United States and

make recommendations to Congress to regarding remedies to address their lingering impacts

3. Calls on the North Carolina General Assembly to pass similar legislation and complete a parallel process
4. Calls on the African American Heritage Initiative to develop for publishing, on the City's website, a narrative about the history of the Black/African American churches, businesses, neighborhoods, and cultural institutions that were lost to slum removal and urban renewal projects such as the Cherry/Marshall Expressway, US Highway 52, and what is now known as Salem Parkway
5. Direct the City Manager to give, at a minimum, a bi-annual update to the City Council on the progress of work performed pursuant to this resolution
6. Requests that the City Clerk forward copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of North Carolina, the City of Winston-Salem Delegation to the North Carolina General Assembly and United States House of Representatives, and the North Carolina Delegation to the United States Senate