



City of Richmond

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Legislation Text

File #: RES. 2021-R032, **Version:** 1

To express the City's support for achieving equity and justice in access to resources and opportunities through the implementation of the City of Richmond's Equity Agenda.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby expresses its support for achieving equity and justice in access to resources and opportunities through the implementation of an equity agenda as set forth in the document entitled "The City of Richmond's Equity Agenda," a copy of which is attached to this resolution, and legislative action consistent with and in vigorous support of such equity agenda, and hereby encourages other organizations and individuals to support these proposals.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND'S EQUITY AGENDA

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond (further referred to as "City") recognizes that 2020 was a year of reckoning for our communities, families, cities, and nation; and,

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated our local economy and families, highlighting decades of inequities in health care, housing, education, and access to other resources; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that even though much work has been done to make our city more equitable and inclusive, there is still much work to be accomplished; and,

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges and apologizes for harms it caused in years past, such as redlining, annexation, and erecting monuments to the Lost Cause, that divided our community and broke trust; and,

WHEREAS, the City wants to engage and join in dialogue with Richmond residents to begin the healing process to ensure a more united community; and,

WHEREAS, on May 7, 2020, the Mayor proclaimed that the city of Richmond is a "City of Compassion" in affirmation of the mission of the Charter for Compassion organization and, in accordance with this proclamation, the City will continue efforts to move the city of Richmond forward using innovation and a lens of compassion; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that racial inequity is the result of structural racism that is embedded in our

historical, political, cultural, social, and economic systems and institutions; and,

WHEREAS, City residents who live at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities in addition to race, such as gender identity, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, or age, face compounding barriers to their ability to thrive and be well; and,

WHEREAS, the City's definition of "equity" is to "empower people and communities that have experienced past injustices by removing barriers to access and opportunity;" and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes its duty is to remove barriers (including educational, economic, and physical barriers, such as roads and access to affordable housing) to ensure greater access to resources and opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, the City understands and appreciates that advancing racial equity not only improves the lives of those who have faced injustice, but also leads to a higher quality of life for people of all backgrounds; and,

WHEREAS, research shows that every region of the country would be financially stronger with racial inclusion. Specifically, the American economy would gain approximately \$2.3 trillion in gross domestic product every year by closing its racial equity gaps in income; and,

WHEREAS, the City recognizes that there is an economic and moral cost to racial inequities. Racial equity would have a positive effect in Richmond - for families who are struggling to make ends meet, for the businesses that depend on them as customers, and for places that rely on their well-being; and,

WHEREAS, the City has an opportunity to meet its moment by addressing historic injustices and inequities by working with community and trusted health experts to ensure access to the COVID-19 vaccine, which is one of the keys to economic recovery; and,

WHEREAS, the most recent budget forecast anticipates that the City will experience a deficit in Fiscal Year 2021 and in Fiscal Year 2022; and,

WHEREAS, to meet additional needs, the City strongly advocates for additional flexible direct aid from the federal and state government to assist with vaccine distribution and to support the needs of our community; and,

WHEREAS, despite budgetary constraints, the City will continue to promote its "Equity Agenda" and find innovative solutions to solve problems, listening to and working alongside Richmond residents.

EQUITY AGENDA

That the Council, in support of the Administration's priorities and objectives as set forth in this document, hereby identifies the urgent economic and moral duty to promote equity and justice and appreciates the collective input to establish a City Equity Agenda to realize the City's definition of equity. That the Council hereby joins the Mayor and his Administration in support of a City Equity Agenda and urges other sectors, such as culture, tourism and business, to also promote and support equity and justice initiatives in the City of Richmond.

That the Council recognizes that this foundational document is only a starting point and will be a living document to guide the City in its support of all neighborhoods and community members, regardless of race, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

That the Council supports the creation of an Office of Equity and Inclusion within the Office of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services to support and guide the implementation of the Equity Agenda.

That the Council supports the establishment of “equity assessment tools” to track progress on the City’s Equity Agenda.

That the Council supports the following City Equity Agenda priority areas and initiatives, a number of which are also included in the Richmond 300 Master Plan, recognizing that this is not an exhaustive list and that additions will be needed as the City moves forward:

1. Addressing and Preventing Health Disparities

- a. Continue to ensure access to Covid-19 testing, vaccine, and healthcare, especially in communities of color;
- b. Continue to ensure access to masks and sanitizer during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in communities of color;
- c. Continue to support the City’s contact tracing pilot program to provide integrated services to those who test positive for Covid-19;
- d. Support opportunities to expand access to healthcare, such as education campaigns, outreach in targeted communities, and mobile health events;
- e. Create a mental and behavioral health and substance use disorder pilot program utilizing Richmond City Health District health centers in Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority communities and continue to partner with both of these agencies and the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority to assist those experiencing substance use disorder;
- f. Ensure public safety officials have access to and are trained in the application of naloxone to help save lives;
- g. Support the "Doula Fund" to help close health disparities for Black and Brown pregnant women and their children;
- h. Increase access to healthy, affordable foods and food education for lower income families; and
- i. Establish an evidence-based model for gun violence prevention, approaching it as a public health issue and elevating community voices and experiences, with support from VCU, VCU Health, Richmond City Health District, and the Office of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services.

2. Housing as a Vaccine for Poverty

- a. Continue to provide and advocate for rent and mortgage relief for families during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- b. Implement the comprehensive zoning changes recommended in the Richmond 300 Master Plan to provide greater housing opportunities in all neighborhoods;

- c. Implement the proposed Equitable and Affordable Housing Plan, as set forth in the document entitled “One Richmond: An Equitable Affordable Housing Plan,” which, once approved by City Council, will provide clear pathways to support both renters and homeowners and combat gentrification;
- d. Utilize the funding stream for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to help meet a 10,000 unit need over 10 years - or 1,000 new units of affordable housing per year - partnering with the non-profit and private sectors;
- e. Collaborate with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to establish a memorandum of understanding with the City to provide greater oversight and a stronger working relationship;
- f. Work with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to advocate on the federal level for additional HUD dollars to support public housing redevelopment;
- g. Continue to fund Richmond’s Eviction Diversion Program and expand it to include eviction prevention and education funding;
- h. Implement the City of Richmond Strategic Plan to End Homelessness 2020-2030, adopted by Resolution No. 2020-R031, adopted May 11, 2020 and utilize the recommendations from the Homelessness Advisory Council to close gaps in our current system;
- i. Support proactive efforts to ensure that protections from discrimination in housing and public accommodations (such as shelter) under Chapter 1140 of the Acts of Assembly of 2020, also known as the Virginia Values Act, are implemented, working with the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- j. Transfer up to 100 City owned parcels to the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust over the next four years to help with homeownership opportunities; and
- k. Advocate at the state level for legislative changes, such as inclusionary zoning and stronger building codes, to support housing affordability.

3. *Ensuring Equitable Transit and Mobility for Residents*

- a. Advocate for the City as a member of the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA);
- b. Support the Office of Transit and Mobility and establish resources for office needs;
- c. Create a “Mobility Action Plan” that prioritizes pedestrians’ mobility choices and their safety using an equity lens;
- d. Invest in Complete Streets Projects;
- e. Continue to prioritize Vision Zero initiatives in high-need areas, based on data;
- f. Collaborate with federal lawmakers to provide infrastructure funding directly to localities to improve the City’s roads, bridges, and water systems;

- g. Advocate and work to secure funding for a North/South BRT;
- h. Collaborate with the Greater Richmond Transit Co. to maintain zero fare beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and expand route frequency; and
- i. Paint the Pulse “bus only” lanes red to ensure the safety and timeliness of the Pulse, partnering with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

4. *Building Community Wealth to Combat Economic Inequity*

- a. Work with the Virginia Governor and General Assembly to fully legalize cannabis and ensure future revenues are reinvested in Virginia’s children and advocate for additional criminal justice reforms on the state-level;
- b. Continue to invest in City workforce development programs for youth and adults, creating pathways to careers, and the Office of Community Wealth Building’s workforce programs, including the Community Ambassador program;
- c. Conduct targeted outreach to underserved communities to provide connections to jobs and resources;
- d. Continue to support the Richmond Resilience Initiative;
- e. Strengthen City policies and practices and partner with community organizations to create greater reentry support and outcomes; and
- f. Conduct a disparity study in order to identify with particularity the existence of any discrimination suffered by minorities for the purposes of meeting federal constitutional requirements for the City’s use of race-conscious measures to promote greater minority participation in public contracting.

5. *Supporting and Caring for our Children and Families*

- a. Continue to build out the Office of Children and Families, using a multigenerational lens;
- b. Construct two schools over the next four years: George Wythe and Tech High School;
- c. Continue to support and expand out of school opportunities for youth and community center improvements;
- d. Continue to support and enhance the “community connectors” program, which has helped to ensure students are successful in a virtual learning environment;
- e. Create a Youth Advisory Council to advise the Mayor and City Council;
- f. Advocate at the state and local level to increase LGBTQ+ affirming foster care placements that reduce the disproportionate impact of aging out of care on LGBTQ+ youth and LGBTQ+ youth of color on long-term housing instability;
- g. Establish an Educator Task Force to assist with recommendations on college and career

preparation for students in grades 6-12 and guidance for planning a year-round academic calendar;

- h. Continue to assist and collaborate with childcare providers to support families;
- i. Advocate for state support for preschool and create a local framework for universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in Richmond; and
- j. Ensure that all Richmonders benefit from robust preparation for careers and college by supporting youth apprenticeship, mentoring, and employment opportunities across the city.

6. *Creating Equitable Climate Action and Resilience*

- a. Continue the work and establish resources to implement RVAGreen 2050 equity-centered Net Zero and climate resilience goals;
- b. Continue to equitably expand access to green space under the leadership of the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, using the Climate Equity Index established by the Office of Sustainability;
- c. Invest more in green infrastructure and use the Envision framework for city infrastructure projects to help mitigate the effects of climate change within the community;
- d. Lead by example and implement a comprehensive plan to transition the passenger and light-duty municipal fleet to zero-emission vehicles and to improve the way the City designs, constructs, maintains and renovates its buildings for enhanced energy efficiency, resilience and renewable energy;
- e. Work with community leaders and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive high performance building policy for private development- creating spaces that are highly energy efficient, healthier, resilient, and powered by renewable energy; and
- f. Continue support of the Department of Public Utilities lead service line replacement program to help homeowners with the cost of replacing lead water service lines running from the water meter serving their property into their homes.

7. *Reimagining Public Safety*

- a. Establish a Marcus Alert System, working with community and state partners, to ensure a more appropriate response to those suffering from a mental health crisis;
- b. Create a Civilian Review Board;
- c. Evaluate and implement recommendations of the Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety (currently 27 out of 31 recommendations are either in progress or under evaluation) to create greater accountability, transparency, and community involvement; and
- d. Continue to advocate for necessary changes at the state level, such as a statewide law

enforcement officer misconduct database.

8. *Telling the Real History of Richmond*

- a. Invest in the Shockoe Historical Heritage Campus, to ensure appropriate preservation and memorialization;
- b. Work with the Richmond History and Culture Commission to ensure the complete history of Richmond is told and commemorated;
- c. Implement City art installations at City Hall and other City-owned spaces with community input; and
- d. Reimagine Monument Avenue working with the Richmond community and other partners, such as the Commonwealth of Virginia and the VMFA, to ensure that it is inclusive of all Richmonders.

9. *Strengthening Community Engagement and Trust*

- a. Create an Office of Public Information and Engagement to provide consistent and reliable engagement opportunities for residents and ensure clear and inclusive citywide communications and responsiveness;
- b. Utilize the new RVA.gov website to increase resident education and understanding of services and also ensure the availability of information in the many languages Richmonders use;
- c. Provide a reliable avenue for digital engagement to help residents provide active feedback on City projects;
- d. Ensure that RVA311 is an easy to access and well-utilized platform for residents.
- e. Double the number of Community Ambassadors in the Office of Community Wealth Building from 20 to 40 to ensure that the City is connecting with its residents and ensure that such expansion includes bilingual staff;
- f. Establish a Culture Advisory Council, within the Office of Multicultural Affairs, to advise on issues related to Richmond's growing diversity of cultures;
- g. Create a Community Events Calendar on RVA.gov to uplift community-driven events and resources;
- h. Continue to collaborate with LGBTQ+ leaders to empower and support the LGBTQ + community through policy change, events, and direct dialogue;
- i. Implement racial equity, diversity, and inclusion training for City staff, to include departmental racial equity action plans, and conduct a City equity study/analysis to ensure the City is removing barriers that create inequities; and
- j. Share resources, empowering the people in our community who are rich with lived experiences

and knowledge and low on resources to help lead solutions.

10. Utilizing Economic Development to Create Economic Justice

- a. Continue to support the Office of Equitable Development to facilitate the creation of the more sustainable, beautiful and equitable city envisioned by Richmonders in the Master Plan;
- b. Continue to work with and support small businesses through the Department of Economic Development and the Office of Minority Business Development;
- c. Establish a Downtown Task Force to assist with revitalizing the City's downtown core, working with business owners, Venture Richmond, and Richmond Region Tourism;
- d. Redevelop core areas of the City, prioritizing community benefits, such as green space, affordable housing, and job opportunities for Richmonders;
- e. Require community benefits agreements from all developers that purchase City-owned land for redevelopment, or that receive a financial benefit from the City for economic development to ensure greater equity in job education and training, contracting, business opportunities and investment;
- f. Establish an Equitable Economic Development Scorecard; and
- g. Provide the use of City-owned real estate through the surplus property process to encourage affordable housing, community building, and economic development projects.