

Human Rights Commission

Strategic Planning Workshop Results

July 2016



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Participants and Process

Human Rights Commission Members:

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Community Member:

Jason Larsen

Facilitated by:

Jason Gilman, City of La Crosse Director of Planning and Development

Process:

At the July 27th special meeting of the Human Rights Commission (HRC), Jason Gilman held a planning workshop for those in attendance. The workshop was held in effort to assist the commission in determining goals and the direction of the group's future actions. In order to do this, the participants were asked to write down their top suggestions for the vision and mission of the commission as well as goals and concerns for each of the following categories: overarching policy, community building and social capital, housing and economic development, public health, safety, and welfare. The participants then voted on the top priorities from each of the categories. The top goals and concerns as voted on by participants are included in this report.

The commission will meet again to brainstorm action items as well as plan for implementation. Staff suggestions for possible goals and action items are included in italics in each section.

Vision

Listed are the vision suggestions verbatim as received on the index cards:

- “Stronger community through a celebration of our various cultures, ethnicities, racial make up, etc. in order to meaningfully reduce discrimination based on race, gender, etc.”
- “A community that is inclusive + just with employment reflecting the population. Welcoming + treating justly all members + citizens of the community with a metropolitan collaborative approach to education, housing, employment + public safety”
- “Equal access to all resources, proportionate police contact, equal representation and a better balance in our communities and schools”
- “Long Term: An open + welcoming community for minorities, people of color, those w/diverse backgrounds + experiences. People will want to come here. Short Term: Ensuring practices are in place to promote diverse workforces + public organizations. Hiring practices should promote diversity.”
- “A city where people of all races, groups feel welcomed and want to live. Based on both equal access to jobs and housing and a feeling that city/county government is committed to promoting social and economic diversity: meaning for policing and specific economic outreach.”
- “Women and non-white males broadly represented in Professional fields, positions of leadership and influence, a cultural presence. An absence of the overall negativity that has characterized La Crosse for decades (WIZM, nasty bloggers, etc.) In a word, civility! A more educated, enlightened, economically comfortable populace.”
- “In a place where we truly embrace & appreciate the differences of all people. So much so that we help place different people in high positions, the work force is as equally representative of the community. Everything we offer in this community will be presentative & show appreciation for all- utopia of acceptance.”
- “A place where housing (safe/kept up/affordable) was available for everyone. Many diverse programs to help people with addiction, depression, homelessness, mental or physical disabilities, etc.... These programs would all be connected hospitals/clinics/city/county providing the best care. Diversity would be integrated in all neighborhoods. We would invest in our youth, making our city sustainable and welcoming. Our festivals would be focused on our diversity & to celebrate one another. We would listen to one another.”

Overarching – General Public Relations/Policy Influence

Voted as top priorities:

- Disproportionate minority contact with police – adults and youth
- Lack of mobility for people of color
- Adequate Housing – landlords often do not keep up their properties so people live in unsafe/bad homes or no middle cost housing (either student (slum) or high end)
- Employment - impartial (not preferential) application of affirmative efforts to match hiring and employment in City/County to existing demographics percentages of available and qualified candidates (race/sex/ability/orientation)

Possible Goal: Statistics will show police contact is proportionate to demographics

Possible Action Item: Diversify police force

Possible Action Item: Increase diversity training

Possible Goal:

Possible Goal: Work to ensure housing quality is better in La Crosse with affordable and adequate options

Possible Action Item: Encourage those to report housing breaking code to the Inspections Department

Possible Action Item: Talk with landlords and builders about building quality affordable housing

Possible Action Item: Encourage programs that provide affordable housing to low and moderate income residents

Possible Goal: Employee demographics of City/County will match those of the residents

Possible Action Item: Encourage employers to use practices such as removing all information that may give insight into people's race/sex/ability/orientation, etc. while doing initial reviews of applications to avoid explicit or implicit biases

Possible Action Item: Ensure recruitment efforts are being made to diverse populations

Community Building and Social Capital

Voted as top priorities:

- Need for more youth programming that provides leadership
- Treatment of Homeless – need for permanent housing and to be seen as human beings
- Stratification of social groups
- Failure to promote current diversity of the city as a plus

Possible Goal: There are multiple meaningful after school, weekend, and summer programming for youth

Possible Action: Encourage and support organizations in creating these programs

Possible Goal: Homeless individuals and families are treated with dignity and respect and efforts are made to make sure they are put into permanent housing quickly

Possible Action: Support groups working to fight homelessness

Possible Action: Provide trainings on compassion towards those that are homeless

Possible Action: Support projects and programs creating transitional and supportive housing for those that are homeless

Possible Goal:

Possible Goal: Diversity is celebrated in La Crosse

Possible Action: Hold free community events celebrating diversity

Possible Action: Release editorials or letters to the editor highlighting diversity?

Housing and Economic Development

Voted as top priorities

- Low income housing is often in certain neighborhoods, so people avoid those. Those neighborhoods are where many people of color live (segregated)
- Lack of affordable housing for all – not many options. Can be difficult to gain if they had been evicted.
- Hard to make ends meet when working minimum wage jobs. Higher min. wage needed in City of La Crosse
- Employment est. and matching employment in city and county to population demographics in city and county for fair representation of all citizens (qualified and available people)
- Homelessness – insufficient subsidized housing

Possible Goal: Neighborhoods are vibrant and diverse

Possible Action: Support efforts to diversify neighborhoods without displacing residents

Possible Goal: There is quality, affordable housing available to residents

Possible Action: Encourage developers and landlords to offer quality, affordable units

Possible Goal: Residents are able to earn a living wage

Possible Action: Encourage legislation to increase minimum wage

Possible Goal: Employee demographics will match those of residents

Possible Action: Encourage more efforts with hiring diverse candidates in city and county positions

Possible Goal: Subsidized housing is available for those that are homeless and transitioning

Possible Action: Encourage programs to expand subsidized housing

Public Health and Safety

Voted as top priorities:

- Mental health – most therapists/counselors have waiting lists and can't be seen for 2-3 months. We need access to more options – more therapists/psychiatrists/ what to do if beds are full – more short term care
- Integrating systems – healthcare – county – city – nonprofit so that people don't fall through the cracks
- Drug and alcohol addiction treatment
- Dark streets, unsafe for those that must walk and use public transportation

Possible Goal: Increase the mental health services in La Crosse so people can get help quickly

Possible Action: Encourage hospitals and clinics to expand their mental health services, hire more therapists/counselors, find ways to make it easily accessible

Possible Goal: All providers in La Crosse County use same intake system to enter information on client

Possible Action: Encourage all providers to use Service Point (??) so all providers can access list of those needing help

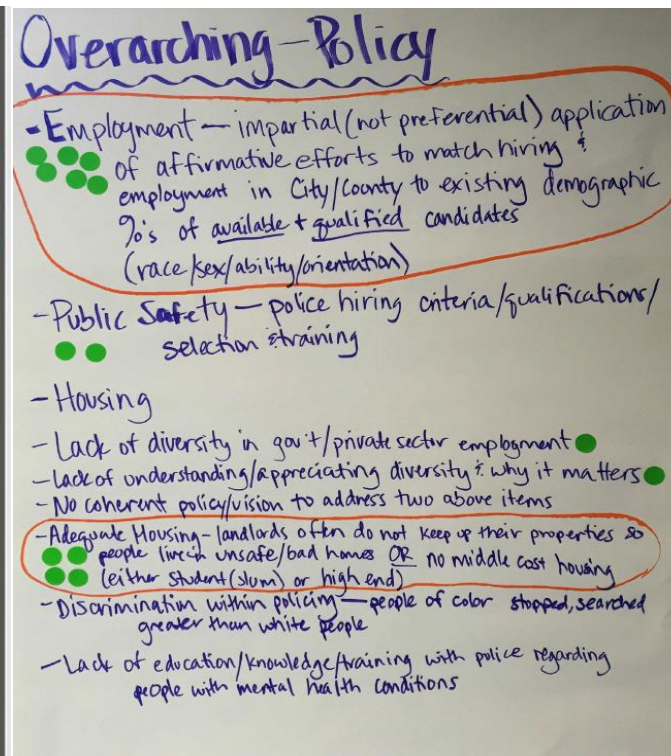
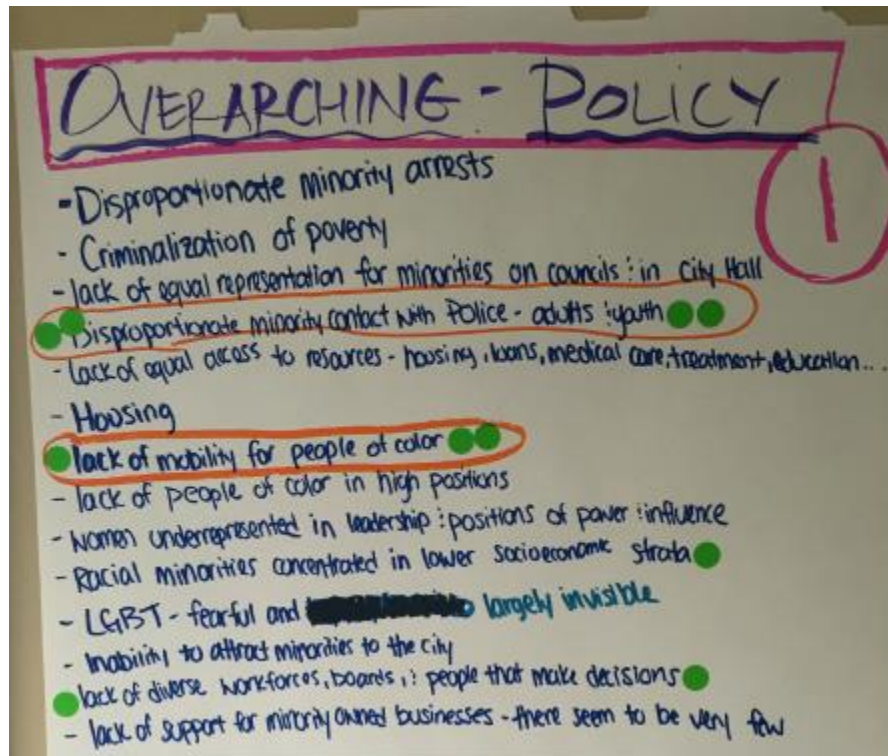
Possible Goal: Increase options for drug and alcohol addiction treatment

Possible Action: Work with groups such as Coulee Council on Addiction to determine what the needs and possible solutions are

Possible Goal: Increase walkability of streets and safety

Possible Action: Encourage City to fund lighting projects, including streets and bus stops

Appendix A – Images



COMMUNITY BUILDING - SOCIAL CAPITAL

- events that are representative of others / non whites
- gentrification / segregation within housing
- need for more youth programming that provides leadership
- Racism - you see it with the comments (Tribune/Wikileaks) or online (Facebook)
People know not to say it publicly but it is right under the surface
- fear violence
- Our festivals are based on white/male chosen leaders, fest master / commander
How is that inclusive of a diverse community?
- We are not welcoming of new diverse people. Based on color of skin, lack of wealth, who they love etc.. parking / affordable housing, places to shop, etc.

Homeless - could enable high density...

Social

(2)

- Treatment of Homeless - need for permanent housing : to be seen as human beings
- Celebrating the diversity of the community
- More resources for those in poverty reducing the stigma of poverty.
- Lack of resources for poorer neighborhoods
- Stratification of social groups - lack of contact between groups
- Failure to promote current diversity of the city as a plus.
- Creating social capital through meaningful community-neighborhood-based events.

COMMUNITY BUILDING -

- Discrimination of offenses that could be categorized as civil rather than criminal
- The events/festivals in the city cost money and are geared towards the majority - Oktoberfest, Puerfest, Irishfest etc - Need more free events that are inviting to all.
- Divide between North side & South side
- High crime in some neighborhoods stifles revitalization
- Drug manufacture-distribution and abuse
- Contributes to flight and discourages reinvestment & socio-economic mix

HOUSING & ECONOMICS

- Landlords are not all held accountable for the upkeep of property— including safety issues
- We have student housing (slums) or high end housing but nothing in between
- Low income housing is often in certain neighborhoods, so people avoid those. Those neighborhoods are where many people of color live (segregated)
- Lack of affordable housing for all — not many options. Can be difficult to gain if they had been evicted.
- Hard to make ends meet when working minimum wage jobs. Higher min. wage needed in City of La Crosse
- Need more resources for people if they need help paying rent or if anything else comes up unexpected — medical bills, car repairs.
- Housing discrimination — race/sexual orientation — needing to hold landlords accountable
- Need a center of some sort for Black/AA people
- Creation of employment/businesses that help create economic mobility
- Better paying jobs
- Better quality affordable housing
- Enforcing City codes (Housing)

Housing: each day

- Quality affordable rental units
- Treatment of poor or minority tenants — inability to see units / different rent/ lease terms
- more opportunities to increase wages which will be enough to support the family once assistance is decreased
- We need a more diverse workforce
- Transportation systems for the working poor
- Affordable scattered site housing
- Employment est.: matching employment in city: county to population demographics in city: county for fair representation of all citizens (Qualified: available people)
- Housing: city active role in providing safe shelter for homeless citizens
- proactive of health: safety of vets
- lack of affordable housing
- Homelessness — insufficient subsidized housing
- Economic development concentrated downtown

PUBLIC HEALTH - SAFETY - WELFARE (4)

- Mental health - most therapists/counselors have waiting lists? can't be seen for 2-3 months. We need access to more options - more therapists/psychiatrists/what to do if beds are full - more short term care
- Lack of hospital staff familiar with transgender issues - lack of staff who can or have training to serve transgender patients
- Criminalizing those who report sexual assaults - very few who are accused are convicted - instead those assaulted are re-traumatized and abused and we wonder why few report.
- Integrating systems - healthcare - county city - non profit so that people don't fall through the cracks
- Increasing collaboration between minority residents and police - NRO's

- Affordable healthcare for all
- Drug/Alcohol addiction treatment
- More Neighborhood watch groups in highest risk areas
- Dark streets, unsafe for those that must ~~be~~ walk: use public transportation
- Inability to get appropriate mental health services for those w/ limited ability to pay
- More diverse police force to help w/ disproportionate minority arrest rates
- Tent city by Riverside needs bathrooms: dumpsters - will help w/ basic needs
- Places in parks to leave used needles so police/fire dept.: public don't have to pick up
- Another free clinic: more translators to help.
- More diversity training for our police / fire dept: hospitals/clinics
- Poor maintenance of roads - mainly affects poorer neighborhoods
- Lack of access to medical care for poor
- Access to transportation

- Prioritizing outdoor recreation in our high-need neighborhoods parks - trails and activities
- Parenting and budgeting consultants provided in various neighborhoods
- Wellness classes that ~~are~~ are affordable / free and family oriented.

Appendix B- Implementation Worksheet

Goal:

Recommendation	Partner(s)	Range	Priority

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