

Statement on Advancing Racial Equity within Lancaster City Planning

In light of the recent death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and other tragic injustices, the Planning Commission of the City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania acknowledges with a sense of profound sadness the immense pain inflicted upon the Black American community. Lancaster is no exception among American cities in having perpetuated both blatant and insidious structural racism through its history of urban planning.

The Planning Commission recognizes that the history of housing in the city has long involved a racialized social geography. Our city's neighborhoods have been redlined, restrictive racial covenants entrenched segregation, and development of public housing frequently involved insensitivity and disregard for resident's concerns. Redevelopments in the city in the early 1970s meant devastation for most of the close-knit African American communities in the city, which were deemed blighted without being offered affordable replacement housing. Poverty has been hyper-concentrated in the southeast of the city for decades, and today, communities where blacks and Latinos live continue to experience a disproportionate level of poverty relative to the rest of the city. Urban planning decisions have underpinned many of these realities. The results all too frequently yielded disadvantages in housing, transportation, education, and employment for our city's racial and ethnic minorities.

Moving forward, the Planning Commission aims to put equity considerations front and center in its work. We are committed to public engagement and participation processes that ensure that the plans we make help guarantee the safety, health, and prosperity of all inhabitants in all neighborhoods of the city. Our upcoming Comprehensive Planning process offers a ripe opportunity to prioritize racial equity considerations through zoning ordinance changes and as new planning objectives are established. The Commission encourages developers and the city's planners alike to initiate concrete assessments, public participation, policy measures, and future development projects that foster corrections to the historical injustices that have marked our city.

We hope that using the tools available to us that we may move Lancaster toward a future in which housing affordability and racial equity are realized, to the benefit of all.

Drafted for discussion and comment by Eve Bratman, Chair, Lancaster City Planning Commission, 6/30/2020