Small Breakout Group Notes - Group #4

Group Members:

Monique, Zaki, Christian, Vallerie (with Kettering Foundation), and Janes

Monique agreed to report out - after no one volunteered

*Do you think a racial caste system exists in Brookhaven - why or why not?*

* Yes - given the presentation we just heard about Lynwood - segregated pockets and communities still exist;
* Certainly a large Latino community throughout many of our neighborhoods
* Drew Valley was named as a place where gentrification has happened and an older Black man who had a stroke - James - is often harassed by new neighbors who don’t know him; they see him walking the streets - minding his own business - but because he walks with a limp and looks different - they call the police to come get him.
* Lots of diversity within Brookhaven but siloed communities - so many faiths and places of worship, all within the city, but do they interact? What are the opportunities to understand and learn more about one another?
* Importance of inclusion and making people feel as if they belong
* Zaki spoke about Christians “insistance” that he participate on the commission - knowing the importance of bringing his/Islamic community voice into the conversation.
* 2017 Brookhaven tried to address the shortage of affordable housing - but it’s really not affordable to live along Buford Highway anymore (used to be but not now). City passed an inclusionary zoning policy which states that 10% of all new developments (apartments only) must be “affordable” - the problem IS there isn’t a market for new developments so there have been few opportunities to implement the 10% designation.

*How Can we ensure that SJREC’s recommendations acknowledge and address issues of race?*

* Education
* Better communication across the city - opportunities for people to be proximate
* Accountability - a lot of resources are being poured into this commission and work so we must hold the city accountable when it’s all said and done
* Inclusive of all (even those who are not currently at the table) - how do we message and include everyone’s voice in reimagining of Brookhaven?
* Give grace during this process; assume best intentions; find ways to invite all into these conversations

Large Group Report Out Notes - taken by Staci Lynch

Group 1- Karen: Yes Brookhaven has a racial caste system; wealth gap; Lynwood is a perfect example. Shows up in housing transportation schools voting experiences.

Need for awareness.

Goal of having the same quality of life for everyone.

Importance of reviewing documents used by the city’s planning agencies of the city - no implicit bias. Redefine economic development differently for our most vulnerable; special sensitivity for the vulnerable neighborhoods

Expectations to all citizens; get the message to our underserved communities (people in the community that are well known as respected as messengers)

Group 2 - Connie: Agreed a resounding yes that there is an incredible caste system across the world and Brookhaven. Housing and education in particular; south to north Brookhaven and the differences there; equality and lack there of and access. Policing and the court system - regardless of color - inequities there. Most violations dished out to Hispanics. Diversity is invited and inclusion is intended to be welcome but once you do that, there is an expectation of assimilation that defeats the purpose of diversity and belonging. If you’re an immigrant - you do want to assimilate to a certain degree to be an American - where to draw the line to bring your whole self with some assimilation. Dominant culture setting the norm - what’s right/wrong - it’s based on dominant culture - what makes that ok?

Ensure we acknowledge our work - Commission coming up with our own norms (not based on Dominant norms) - how we engage in conflict. Debate strong and heavily - so we don’t ensure a quiet voice never gets heard. Vetting recommendations with the broader community. We don’t want to operate in a vacuum. How to invite other voices in. Like Education - you can get involved - maybe some of our population will be impacted by our recommendations - how does the commission address inclusivity. Broadening our lens to be open to other voices and perspectives.

Group 3 - Kathy Wells: Unsure if we have a racial caste system. Most of us agreed the inequities are there. Peachtree Rd. and Buford Highway corridor. Those arrested are Hiapanic. Sustain housing. This commission to sustain businesses on Buford Highway. Cross sides to experience diversity. Great diversity - have to capture it. Is it fair - the school system. Population of the Mount Claire population - large Hispanic community; Ashford Park - gentrified - economically sound. Bicycle club. Taste of Brookhaven...taste wonderful diversity. See Lynwood Park and visit other neighborhoods. Public input - in order for us to experience change, we must be made to feel uncomfortable - bring ideas to the community. Activities to promote diversity. Lynwood Park Day festival - first Saturday to preserve our history. Knowledge is power. Scavenger Hunt.

Group 4 - Monique: Racial caste system in Brookhaven does exist; where different groups live in isolated areas throughout the city. Pockets of groups and communities and not cohesive. See it as it relates to economics - haves and have nots. Rents and costs is not really affordable; rent increased by 40% along that corridor over the last few years. Affordable housing - 10% - only applies to new developments of apartment complexes. But that churn of new developments aren’t happening. Economic side of it. Making ways to ensure this commission goes forward - accountability - the things suggested are implemented and follow through...committed as a city but being accountable to the suggestions we’re making. Create community - all this diversity in religion and religious groups (all siloed) - get to the various houses of worship...all that is here. Build community and enjoy each other. Systemic racism is addressed to proximity - comfortable being around people that don’t look like you. Commission learning what’s here. Who’s at the table and who needs to be at the table.

Group 5: Alexander: A lot of agreement that there is a racial caste system in Brookhaven. ARC data that was shown...based on race and age - different lived experiences. No middle school within Brookhaven - families have to make decisions what to do and where to go. Wealth and property taxes rising. Modest bungalow - mega mansion - right next door. Atlanta golf club and history...former plantation. Residents of Lynwood Park - often worked there and were part of the service community (it was a walkable job opportunity for Black folks). Education - continue to educate ourselves and others. Connect to the data. Improve quality of life to all - not just one group. Template for the city - social justice lens to use throughout all policies and hiring. Keep moving forward to have these challenging and tough conversations.

Danita Knight - opportunity for partnerships. Hold them - the restaurants and other business partners - to live up to the standards we are discussing tonight. Low tech communication for our community. AM/FM radio stations - use them to broadcast messages - alternative ways of reaching and communicating to folks to build community in Brookhaven. Commission to engage with those who need assistance as well - how to bring them alongside the conversation as well.

Speaker’s Bureua - to go and talk about the purpose of the commission - what we’re thinking about; an opportunity to get input.

Funny: Commission can create a newsletter - good old fashion mailer; translated into Spanish to be inclusive of everyone. Community dialogue sessions - invited in to have a dialogue on these discussions we’re having.

Oglethorpe University - VP of Diversity recently hired. Tape into that person. Utilize people who are in this DEI space - and a good way to reach the young populations. Dean at the University at Oglethorpe will replace Alvarez (who recently left). Institutional knowledge as partners - really key.

Amy Corn - Board of United Way and Mercy Care Foundation Board (as noted in the Chat).