Kim:

With that in mind, perhaps even thinking about all the areas. You all started thinking about all the areas of structural racism show up, we've talked about a little bit about wealth, a little bit about education. I didn't hear any much about housing, access to jobs, access to transportation, immigration, some of these other core pillars of what makes life, makes Brookhaven. How does, where do we see structural racism in those tenants?

Karen:

Healthy living environment, especially as it relates to housing. So I'm working with the Brookhaven Conservancy and as we take a look at the impact of climate change coming on the city of Brookhaven, originally, we were [inaudible 00:02:55] dealing with increased shade and there are more trees in wealthier communities and a fewer trees in more impoverished communities. And so what that means is that the air quality tends to be worse, which Atlanta already suffers from really bad air quality. And then storm water tends to be valid. And so you end up with really dated environments that are really harmful to people's health. And tonight on the news hour, you probably saw the headline about in the first half of last year, that in America, we lost an average of one year off of a person's lifespan. Well, when you dig into the numbers, white people lost 0.8 years and black people lost 2.7 years. The impact when we talk about climate change in Atlanta, any first community without tree s[inaudible 00:03:54], and it'd be severe.

Danita:

And you know, Karen, as I was listening to you, I was also thinking about just vulnerability and what that's looking like in parts of the country. We'll talk about Eastern, but that couldn't be [crosstalk 00:04:09] just easily. And how we think ahead to try to prepare ourselves to mitigate some of that, because, you know, lines of people in poverty, trying to figure out what they're going to do based on a national disaster is something that cities and States and Brookhaven needs to be thinking about.

Karen:

Yeah

Amy:

I think a good example. I was thinking about that as well, because we think about this as a lot of people do right, as history, right? That happened [inaudible 00:04:47] And we see this playing out in Houston again, right? After a natural disaster, after natural disaster, after natural disaster. So it continues to repeat itself because we don't make those changes as systemic changes. [inaudible 00:05:03]

James:

I got another question though. When we're having discussions about the discrepancies in the areas and the quality of life in those areas, because of such things as green spaces and things like that, we have to understand that the decisions to develop these areas and that form fall within the boundaries of the city charter. So, if we allow that discrepancy to take place it is because the city has allowed and turned the blind eye to these conditions. Now, considering that Brookhaven is not that old as a city, it has been in existence for a long, long time, but as a city, those decisions to not allow those discrepancies to be maintained, needed to be made up front and enforced. But as we've seen throughout the past year or two, not only in Brookhaven, but surrounding communities, they have allowed clear cutting to be taking place, they allow low cost housing to be put in there, and they don't understand that [inaudible 00:06:28] important to me as it is to someone else with children to be a safe, comfortable place for their children to get out and play and know that it's a healthy environment for them. So we have to acknowledge the fact that the decisions that have been made were conscious decisions, but we have to tell ourselves from this point forward that it's not an acceptable decision and we have to take a stand against things like that.

Kim:

So, I think I just want to raise James's comment, quote and sound like a lawyer, but that makes the case for equity, right? So is that, you know, when you think about your charge in terms of going through the various aspects of the city structure and addressing what we know is inequities, what would we do to make it equitable? And I think Danita's comment perhaps, and again, I'm just prompting you all a bit, raises a question if what happened in Houston and Plano and all these other cities in Texas happened tomorrow in Brookhaven, what would have to be in place in order for everyone in Brookhaven to have an equitable experience in addressing that kind of tragedy?

James:

That goes back to the fact that Brookhaven is so dependent on the state for all of its resources, that the state of Georgia is lacking in those resources and those abilities to respond to that. It doesn't really matter what I's and T's that Brookhaven bothered to dot and cross. We are still just a speck on the map for Georgia and we have to look at the bigger picture, what does Georgia have in place to protect the citizens of Brookhaven in case something like that happens? Because that was a complete systemic failure across all infrastructure within the state of Texas. Now, I don't believe any one person was responsible for [inaudible 00:08:52] utilities control most of what goes on within that state. They should've been aware that there was a possibility that this would happen considering that they have tornadoes and hurricanes in Texas, that a weather event like this would affect their entire state like it's done in Atlanta before.

Alex:

James, I'll kind of throw this out here. [inaudible 00:09:21] I think one of the things we have to keep in mind is a lot of these issues are [inaudible 00:09:29] would be your classified working class. If you're a working class system in a city that's I guess generally considered affluent, like Brookhaven, you aren't aware of issues like environmental concerns. You're just trying to get by. If we don't have a community [inaudible 00:09:52] to get jobs, we don't have a community that gives these people access to healthcare. Then they're just not going to be aware of these issues. So I think a lot of that just comes down to awareness because I can tell you, oftentimes I don't think someone in that position would typically be thinking about environmental concerns. [crosstalk 00:10:17]

James:

I do not disagree with you. As a matter of fact, I echo your thoughts because it is important to have awareness within the community of the issues that affect your community. And many times we don't find out until it becomes a major issue, then there is an issue. If we were able to find out better from a [inaudible 00:10:44] means of communication that there are problems on the horizon that we need to address, but we don't address them until they become a major issue and everybody is panicking on how to address them. We've defeated ourselves that way too. So I agree with you, you know, we got to start from the bottom up to raise awareness of what's going on around us, whether it's environmental, whether it has to do with social economic factors within the city or whatever, you know, we need to have a open dialogue about these things.

Danita:

And James and Alex, I agree, absolutely agree with both of you. And, you know, I think it comes back to, you know, how each of us as individuals, how we define quality of life as individuals. And why wouldn't we want that for everybody who is a part of our community?

James:

Exactly.

Danita:

Living beyond the caste system, where different people have different quality of life.

James:

Yes. There's no place for that.

Danita:

Right.

Kim:

And acknowledging that there's a great deal of the tenants of systemic racism that are impacting parts of our society that we will not be able to touch on in our role as members of this commission, but given what we are charged with, and even thinking about your vision and mission, right? How valuable that is? Even though the city of Brookhaven doesn't control all aspects of municipal life in Brookhaven, you can make a statement and your vision and mission about what you want that to be like, and, back to James's comment, elevate and broadcast to others what you want and what you stand for. So which, as you think about the second question, and in terms of your recommendations, you know, what do you want to speak to in terms of the issues of race and caste? Again, acknowledging so much of what happens in our lives are outside of our control but it doesn't prevent us from elevating our vision and mission and then fighting within the structures to make that reality. So just want to make sure we address the second question in building upon James's comments.

Karen:

I think going back to, maybe it was either James or Alex, I think talking about documents, I think it would be good for us to make a recommendation that for all these documents that various commissions at Brookhaven use to make decisions about neighborhoods in the city, that there's a review conducted so that we make sure, to Danita's point, that we are setting each neighborhood up to have the same quality of life. I know that there's something called the character area study, where they break down different neighborhoods in the city and then they describe the vision for each neighborhood and they have a lot of attributes. And I kind of stumbled upon that by accident. But that would be a document we would probably want to suggest that they review and see if there's just any implicit biases in there that maybe, you know, to Alex's point, that we can help a community think beyond just basic needs to help them have the same quality of life.

Danita:

I really liked that. Yeah.

Amy:

I do too. I think the other, maybe just tagging on to that as just looking at what's defining economic development differently because in many cities, or in our state, right, we celebrate, maybe, and this isn't just in Brookhaven, but we celebrate like a Amazon or a Google or somebody announcing they're coming to Georgia or coming to our state or our city. But in some cases that economic development, again, because all the systemic racism is present and we live in a caste system that actually harms those that are underserved in many ways. And so within Brookhaven, how do we define economic development? And do we define that with a lens of, again, racial equity for all?

Danita:

I really liked that Amy and Karen, you know, in our notes, just really linking what Amy just said to just this concept of vulnerability. And, you know, that means different things to different people but it's very much a part of this caste, this whole caste system.

Kim:

Which then, perhaps, raises the question that you'll, of course, delve into over the months to come, what do you put in place to create the equity so that that vulnerability begins to dissipate? Right? What do we do so that, you know, our neighbors who are perhaps renters on Buford highway, what do we have to do to make sure their voices are heard? And their experience is equal to people on the other side of Peach Tree? Like, what do we have to do so that their experiences and ability to access and enjoy Brookhaven are equal?

Jose:

But I also think it's important to, we have to know what's being done. What are those practices [inaudible 00:16:46] now in order to kind of deep dive into these issues and see what we can do, because we can't really change anything if we don't even know what's going on or who's being affected and how they're being affected. [crosstalk 00:17:01].

Danita:

Agree. Yeah. Completely agree.

Karen:

And that goes back to Alex's point, I think. When you have a more impoverished neighborhood that they're just working to get a job amd food on the table, they're probably not paying attention to what the city is doing. And so that's a problem.

James:

Well, one thing I think that we really need to look at when we look at different groups in different levels within Brookhaven, is what are the expectations? Because there, a lot of times people have wants and needs that they don't voice because they're afraid if they voice it they're going to cut themselves off from the resources they need to get by.

James:

We need to really dive into what are the expectations of the citizens of Brookhaven, all of the citizens of Brookhaven and as a group, and not just a select few, because it would be a crime to exclude anybody, but it would also be a shame to over correct in any area. We have to make sure that any corrections that we recommend are beneficial corrections for everybody across the board, not just one particular group. And I'm not saying that to be snotty about anything, I'm saying it from a background of seeing what happens when you have somebody within your group who is misbehaving, instead of doing on the spot correction, with the one person, you punished the whole group and that never is effective. So, you know, let's find out what the expectations are because most of life is just managing expectations anyway. So if we find out what the true expectations are, what the people are seeking from their government, and then make recommendations that take care of those expectations, it should help. It won't always solve the problem, but it should help.

Jose:

And so, yeah, that's good to James and Karen's point, I think [crosstalk 00:19:13] spot on, because a lot of these individuals who are lacking resources, some of these people may not even have high speed internet and can't even, you know, view these meetings, town hall meetings that we have on Facebook live. They don't have Facebook, they don't have a computer to even access this type of information. They don't know what is going on in the community. So I think it's important we try to figure out a way, how do we reach these people? And obviously it's going to be even more tasking and difficult being in a pandemic, right?

Jose:

You know, two years ago we could go into these neighborhoods and just knock on someone's door. Now it's, you know, it's a little different, right. So how does that look? It's kind of what I think it's something we should look at.

Danita:

Well, and Jose, to that good point, you know, who is the most ideal messenger? Because messengers are only as good as the individual, you know, sharing the information and the person willing to receive it. You know? So we may not be the ideal messengers but maybe part of our task is determining who those individuals are so that, as you just said, the message can be received period, which is our goal, to get the message.

Jose:

Yeah. So a lot of that I think comes down to identifying people within that community that would represent them. So I know in the past, you know, I've worked with organizations that have been involved with community organizing, and recruitment was a part of it. So recognizing people in that community, whether it's business leaders, whether it is clergy, whoever it might be in that community that is well-known, respected, and kind of can serve as a voice, I think that's really important. So just being able to branch out and reach out and partner with these different organizations and people in the community is important. So definitely identifying people that can represent them is important.

Kim:

We've gotten our real warning so we have about three minutes and I saw Melissa come off of mute

James:

Well, I was, go ahead, Melissa.

Melissa:

I was going to bring up a lot of the points that had already been mentioned about getting into the community, hearing the voices and those [inaudible 00:21:36] I loved your point about access and not having internet and not having the computer to view the meetings, or even be part of missions from these lack of resources. And then, Alex, your point about identifying the community leaders to go in and then acknowledging that in Brookhaven language is going to be maybe a barrier [inaudible 00:21:57] and acknowledging that, you know, in the first meeting we had asked for comments in Spanish as well as English and being inclusive in those ways to make sure that all of our materials address the majority, as much of the population of Brookhaven as it possibly can.

James:

Yeah. [inaudible 00:22:16]

Kim:

James, you wanted to say something. James, you wanted to say something.

James:

Yes. I just wanted to say, though, whoever, once we identify who should be the messenger, we should also identify the fact whether or not that person is empowered to help convey the message back to the main body and impact change because it does no good to tell me what's going on in Brookhaven, because I have no authority to speak for the city. I have no authority to do anything, but listen to you, tell me what you think is wrong. So.

Jose:

I don't think there's one messenger, alright, there's than one [inaudible 00:23:09] , there's, you know, different community leaders. [crosstalk 00:23:11] Yeah, correct. Yeah. We need those leaders to be involved and convey that back to us, absolutely.

Danita:

And it will empower them to do that, you know, equip and empower them to meet that.

Jose:

Right.

Kim:

Which I guess gets to the definition. What do we, how do we define leaders? How do we find leaders and how do we make sure their voices are heard?

Jose:

Well, I think Alex, I know we're short on time, Alex made a great point, you know, within the community, especially, you know, Hispanic and the African-American community. Church, religion is so vital and important to them. The core of not only those individuals, also the individual, but the community themselves. So usually they have great ties and great insights into what the needs and wants are of the community.

Karen:

So I'm putting in the chat box the video I watched today from the resources page on our website about shapes and blocks, squares, blocks and squares. If you haven't seen it, you really should. It's very cute, but it talks about the importance of getting representation and not just the city making its own decision in the back. It's really good.

Kim:

Thank you. And I'll make sure that gets in the bigger notes. Anything else that we want to make sure Karen raises up when she reports out for group one? Because she only has two minutes. So she's going to have to talk real fast. Plus, there'll also be some open mic time, so you all can chime in after if we miss any points. Well you all have been a fabulous group and I really appreciated the depth of the conversation and shaping. So you have 56 seconds.

Karen:

Good to get to know you all.

Danita:

You as well. And thank you, Kim, too. Thanks so much.

Karen:

Yeah, absolutely.

Kim:

My pleasure.

Amy:

Thank you Kim and Karen. Karen [inaudible 00:00:25:14]

Karen:

Well wish me luck. We covered a lot of grounds.

Kim:

Very good. Very good. Well, we'll get it all. We'll get it all. Thank you. All right. See you in the big room.

Danita:

Okay. Thanks everybody.