Anibal:

That system, but it's definetly a tradition, where the major concentration of Latino immigrants are within the city of Brookhaven. So I don't know how that fits into that, but I don't want to use the word 'two tales', but there are two different Brookhavens in that sense, right?

John:

And to piggyback... Go ahead, Miss Kathy Wells.

Kathy Wells:

I agree. I grew up in the [Lenox Park 00:00:31] area, talking about the histories [inaudible 00:00:33], that's what I'm struggling with. There is definiteily a caste system in Brookhaven. I work with the Latino community.

Kathy Wells:

When you talk about the golf courses on one side of Brookhaven, and you look at the Highway area where there is a definite difference how people were treated in those areas. Now, our community has been gentrified. There are very few black people that continue to live there. My parents' house is still there, but there is definitely a difference. And I'm with you, Mr. Torres, I'm not sure if it's a caste system, but I definitely can tell you that there is a point of racism in those areas.

Kathy Wells:

I know how they treat the people Buford Highway. I taught the kids on Buford Highway, most wonderful people in the world. And I tuaght the kids at Montgomery Elementary, where they come from the foreign home. It's a very different way, how the DeKalb County treats those kids, and also how they're treated in Brookhaven.

Kathy Wells:

We do have a task before us that is huge. And I hope we can get it.

Speaker 4:

I'm not sure how we could live in America and not think that there's a caste system. And Brookhaven is an incredibly small plot of land in a very bigger cultural context. And that cultural context has to have washed over Brookhaven, both today, and then over many, many years.

Speaker 4:

So, the answer to the question of whether it exists, I think it's a 'yes'. I do think her definition of caste is different, it's unique. And I heard a little bit of it, but it would be interesting in hearing more, but that's just my two cents on whether it exists or not.

John:

And I would add that, from listening to her excerpt from caste, there's definitely a structural problem in Brookhaven. And the structure was in place, and nobody has attempted to fix the structure of the problem. So you have North Brookhaven, Central Brookhaven, that's not... I wouldn't say welcoming, but it doesn't make it a place where people from Buford Highway can move and live, because there's no affordable housing component in that area to receive any and everybody.

John:

So the structural problem that we have is there, and it has to be resolved, and we just can't keep overlooking it because it won't go away. We have to be a city that's inclusive for all, in all parts of the city, so that you don't have, like they mentioned, Buford Highway, with the highest population of Hispanics living there and nowhere else in Brookhaven. So we have to look at: how do we fix that structural problem?

Anibal:

And the other issue is that, okay, well the gentrification in the other part of Brookhaven, we're going to see that in the Buford Highway corridor for the next 10-15 years. And we already started seeing some of that in some areas. And in those... Those families where do they go? When they're so important to the essential economy and to everything that that we need, in terms of keeping the essential economy running, right?

Speaker 4:

I think another way that you can think about or see the caste in Brookhaven, is think about what would happen if people... What happens when people try and come into, or want to come into, Brookhaven. And the caste system, being something that keeps people out, or may push people out, like you were just saying, Anibal.

Speaker 4:

And so if you... I think that part of what we have in Brookhaven is a city that has intentionally, or unintentionally, homogenized itself; whether that's regionally, or socioeconomically or different things like that. And that the caste really shows itself by the way that the city, intentionally or not, prevents people from coming in, or prevents change from happening, or things like that.

John:

I think as the city changes... I'm sorry, were you about to say something, [inaudible 00:05:32]? I didn't want to...

John:

Oh. As the city changes, and receives, I'm going to call them outsiders, and I'm going to use Starbucks for example. I think the city has to have that dressing on them, so when someone comes to the city, they see that there's no caste, there's no special areas. If Starbucks can exist on Peachtree in front of Kroger, why can't they exist on Buford Highway near Brito? I mean, our Latinx friends drink coffee.

John:

So I think we have to be a city that not only look at the structure, and look at how we are receive internally, we have to be able to translate that to people that comes to us, like the external businesses and that sort. I think that's a piece where the City could assist with helping the structural problem that we have. Does that make sense? Does that...

Kathy Wells:

I really noticed in the last past week, from looking at Brookhaven in the media. One of the things we ought to look into, because I'm really concerned about, is brown and black communities being able to get the COVID vaccine. And when we watched our governor go to the Brookhaven Kroger, the Brookhaven Kroger. But then on the other side, on the Latino... On Buford Highway, we have grocery stores on that side of Brookhaven who have not received the vaccine.

Kathy Wells:

My biggest concern is the equity in that. We can look at how the governor, the mayor, the governor of DeKalb County. We have to look at what Brookhaven is representing for all of us. And when we talk about that Kroger, I'm not saying that... I know on Buford Highway there's another Kroger. There's a Kroger that has been there for years, that Hispanics, and brown and black people really frequent. All people really frequent. But there in Brookhaven, you know on that side of Peachtree, it's a different, just a different type of people.

Kathy Wells:

Those are the people who have memberships to the golf courses, okay? Would I be able to know what I'm doing on that golf course all day outside? Would a [inaudible 00:07:51] brother or my sister be able to? There is a huge difference in Brookhaven, it's been there for years, even before they changed the name of it. Those golf courses, I've been there. And the only black and brown people you see there, they're working there.

Kathy Wells:

So, there is a caste, it's economic caste system. It's the same thing in America. If you got money, I don't care if you black or brown, you accepted. But you don't have money? Insane.

Facilitator:

So, you know I have to do my facilitator thing, and just encourage and invite Lauren and William into the conversation. What's on your mind, guys? What's coming up for you as we have this conversation?

William:

I am concerned, obviously, about the disparity of different areas in the community. Part of the reason that I joined the group... I didn't jump in earlier, also, for some reason I bounced around the three groups before I landed in this one.

John:

Welcome, welcome.

William:

So I heard two other people start the conversation before this one. I was waiting for the right opportunity to join in.

William:

One thing I would say, too, that I've noticed... I've been here long enough in Brookhaven, I've seen the change. There's definitely embedded stuff that's already been brought up that were latent things, like in the example of the old house.

William:

We're also a very much a changing community, with more people coming in that are new to the community. And that will lead to new ideas, but oftentimes, lack of knowledge or ignorance of those issues that are already existing in the community.

Lauren:

And as for me, I was mostly just interested in listening. For this particular subject, I didn't really feel like I had much to offer as input. I guess, to hear discussion of golf courses... Those aren't the circles I run in and I see. I don't see an awful lot of, to be perfectly honest, disparity when I run into Lowe's and Zaxby's, and those are the kinds of circles I run in.

Lauren:

So... I will say, though, since I live right around the corner from the Starbucks, and the traffic here, I am 110% for Buford Highway getting another Starbucks, if it takes traffic away from this Starbucks. Yeah, let's see that happen.

Facilitator:

Yeah. You might rem... The initial article that we read before the last time about the curb cut, right? That equity has all kinds of benefits. For everyone. Traffic moving, access, and so forth. So that's a great example of that.

John:

No, that's a good point that you mentioned that. And this is one of the external realities that benefit others. You introduce a new Starbucks. It relieves the pressure off of Lauren's experience, because you're right, it gets very congested there. So that's a great way to look at why it's important to have diversity throughout the city, and location of businesses that can support all citizen in the city, not just in the main area on Peachtree.

Lauren:

But I think it's kind of strange to think about putting a Starbucks on Buford Highway, as opposed to putting the businesses from Buford Highway onto Peachtree. You know, it's like it's a one-way street that I don't know... That the corporate outsider is what needs to go on to Buford Highway for whatever reason, but that those businesses that are there: the restaurants, the grocery stores, things like that, wouldn't be acceptable to move into other parts of Brookhaven, which I think is what we're talking about if we're talking about equity.

Lauren:

Not bringing in more Starbucks, but really centering those communities, and expanding them to be more of a central part of Brookhaven, as opposed to what is just crammed into Buford Highway.

Anibal:

And also you have to... To that point is how do we get the other side of Brookhaven, the golf course side of Brookhaven, to better understand and listen. If you go to Buford Highway, you're going to get such an experience on different... Go to a grocery store or whatever, go to Brito, or whatever.

Anibal:

And I'm sure some of them do, but the more that people go and experience that: that diversity, or food, or whatever it is. Or maybe you said different type of coffee, right? Maybe it's a coffee from... That starts bringing the community more together. And then when the time comes, to realize, "Hey, we don't want to lose that, I love going to Brito to get my plantains or my, whatever it is that I want", right? Or my tortillas, or we're talking real, real tacos. I love Taqueria Del Sol, but if I go to the [Pas Porsita 00:13:44] or whatever there, I might get the real deal as well.

Anibal:

So, how do we bring those two worlds together? So that... Because I mean, the beauty of Brookhaven is that we have those two worlds. You don't have to go very far. And not only Latino, you can get all types of diversity, in terms of your culinary things, in Buford Highway, not just Latino. You can get Asian, Indian, there's a great Bangladeshi restaurant there in Southeast Plaza.

Anibal:

So, how do we bring those two together, so that everybody can rise equally well? Hey, if that golf course crowd started going to those places, we raise the standard of living, and maybe they can afford to stay there. Because my concern is that they will lose the affordability. And in Brookhaven, you want to move to Brookhaven now, you want to move to the golf course side? You going to be paying a lot of money for that townhouse or that house.

Facilitator:

I hear you, Anibal. It's like, you can make changes because something is wrong, or because something, right, right? You... I can't remember that little song from one of the cartoons about: accentuate the positive. So, lean into what's so wonderful around 'the other', the spaces where people aren't. Yeah. Yeah.

Anibal:

Let me tell you, one of the great things about those big farmer's market, that you go in there. The diversity of food that you see there is amazing. I'm just Latino. You see Russian, you see Czechoslovakia, you see India, you see China, Chinese. I mean, it's amazing. It's like... they're destinations, actually.

John:

I don't even go to the DeKalb County farmer's market anymore. I just go. Fresh vegetables, everything is there. You right. And you right, there's this: how do you package that and market it to the whole city, so that they can benefit off of it, also?

John:

I used to buy the Publix rotisserie chicken. I don't do that anymore, I go to the Buford Highway at the corner of Bryant... Davis... Curtis Drive, and Buford Highway. They make the best chicken in the world.

Kathy Wells:

Sweetheart. You sweetheart.

Facilitator:

Yeah, I definitely want to go.

Kathy Wells:

Sweetheart, if you've never been to the [crosstalk 00:16:16]. It's a bakery, it's fantastic. They have one on Buford Highway, but they also have one on [inaudible 00:16:23] Square.

Kathy Wells:

So, to Chris's point. Those businesses, we should not be looking to put out. I agree with him fully. We should use some of those businesses that are on Buford Highway, which are so rich and so fantastic. And put them on the West side. And I think people would be open to it, because the world is getting smaller. We are learning to appreciate different cultures. And that's the beauty of diversity.

Facilitator:

And this is perfect to where we actually should be. We didn't pick a reporter, so you guys be thinking about, who's going to volunteer to report out. Did you nominate someone?

Kathy Wells:

John?

John:

I was thinking Kathy, or?

Kathy Wells:

No, not me! I [inaudible 00:17:13], you do it.

John:

No, I talk all the time. I want to... I want one of you guys to do it. [inaudible 00:17:18]

Facilitator:

So our second question, though, is, and I think you've begun on it when you talk about promoting business, how do we make sure that what we come out of this process with, really addresses some of these divisions that we see?

Facilitator:

When you were talking about the farmer's market, I was sitting here thinking, wouldn't that really be a great socially distant outing for the Commission, or some portion of, get you get your delicious food on, experience one another, get folks over there, on the Commission, or may not ever be there. I mean, how do we make sure that what we're doing and what we come up with really tries to get at some of the issues that we're talking about?

Kathy Wells:

I think you're right. I think that this Commission, and all the [inaudible 00:18:12], really grasp the births of the years. And I've been fortunate because I have got to really find out Buford Highway, and experience the diversity, so it is a bit overwhelming to do, but I embrace it. Many people have not had that opportunity. Probably a lot of people in this Commission, who probably have travelled the world, but let's figure out what you got in your own home city, it's fantastic.

Kathy Wells:

We need to know what's there. There's so many, one of the places on Buford Highway. Buford Highway, also on Peachtree, there's a lot of good things there. But really to learn to do that. And then I think a field trip will be great. If we get a list of really great places that if you haven't visit, visit this and see that people are [inaudible 00:19:04], because it is great. So, that's the part of the principle. And that's my contribution. I still think John should report out.

John:

I want to hear from... I want one you all to report out. I think this will be great. People are tired of hearing from me.

Facilitator:

Otherwise, one of the... One critical body of work or responsibility for the sub committees will be public input. So, think about that related to the recommendations that the committees will be developing.

Facilitator:

How might we do that in a way that, again, addresses some of these divisions, or caste, or all the different ways that you term them? Does anything come to mind around that?

Facilitator:

And let me flip it, too. I'm not scared of silence, but let me flip it, too. We can think about, how do we address caste? Or we can think about, how do we make Brookhaven and places more welcoming, right? What does it mean to be welcoming? What does that look like?

Lauren:

So one of the questions early on in this whole process was asking us what we thought would... How would we know that the Commission had been successful, or something of that sort. And one of the things that I said is that we'll know that we're successful if it makes people upset and uncomfortable. And so, the idea that if we acknowledge that there's a caste system, and that there's inequalities here in Brookhaven, that in order to change it, you have to push up against it. And that is likely to be met with resistance, discomfort, things like that. And so for me, I hope that work that we do if we want to push back against these caste structures, these ideas, is that it is really like making the people on the golf course upset or whatnot. I think that that would be good for our city, to be challenged in that way to really commit to the work that we're doing here.

Lauren:

So it's just been something that's on my mind, in terms of how I think about what we're trying to do.

Kathy Wells:

That's a good point. Another point is, it's not necessarily so accepting that the people on the Buford Highway part would say, "Hey, welcome, come in". No. The golf course people like their own way, it's the same thing on the Buford Highway thing. We love we are, we like what we're doing, we don't need you in here. Plus a whole thing comes into, do we trust you? What do you want? What do you want when you're coming to this community? What you want?

Kathy Wells:

No, we are happy where we are because there are some teams of people in the Brookhaven corridor, that have every difficulty to keep those apartments where they can stay in their populations, really. There are teams of people who will work to keep that corridor open, and to keep them away if possible. If you come in, well we'd invite you in. There's also problems. It's just like the part that's like, "they're not welcome" [inaudible 00:22:34] these are on the other side of Brookhaven. So it's an interesting dichotomy.

Anibal:

You know, I sit on the board of the Visitors' Bureau of Brookhaven. And I'm thinking that once we get over this pandemic, and we're able to get back to normal lives, if we can really put together... We've got sometimes you have restaurant week, and we've got all those types of different weeks. We can have something around the Buford Highway, we can just get restaurants to open up, and the grocery stores could open up and just have like a big celebration. And not only for Brookhaven residents, but just the community at large, it would be great just to have the Brookhaven community know about it. So whenever they want to pick something to eat or dining, it's the city, it's really my own city. I can have all these type of...

Anibal:

And then we have, again, I go back, that's what will help grow the community, will help create wealth, equity, all those restaurants begin to have, start start making more money, and then can afford eventually to stay there, because otherwise we're going to buy them out.

Kathy Wells:

A taste of Brookhaven.

Anibal:

Yeah, taste of Brookhaven, a real taste of Brookhaven, because usually most of the events that we do, obviously we do it on the other side. Because we got the parks and everything, which is fine. There's nothing wrong with that.

Kathy Wells:

Keep in mind though, we do it on the other side, but the other side does not have as many restaurants as the Buford Highway side. They don't have a lot of restaurants on the golf course. It's not a whole lot of restaurants on that side. [crosstalk 00:24:23]

Anibal:

And I know that we've tried to bring the Buford Highway folks into the events that we do on the other side, but sometimes it's hard. Maybe they don't feel like they're part of the community. They don't feel like they're part... So maybe the first step to do that is to bring the golf course crowd over here, which might be easier. So we had the Cherry Blossom Festival, we have something at Blackburn Park, which is right down the hill from me. We can get those folks to come over as well.

Anibal:

I know that we've tried. I know that we've tried, and we've done it when I was at the LAA, we did that. But sometimes they don't... Maybe they don't feel it's their city. Maybe they don't feel that... That if I cross over, it's not my city.

Lauren:

Yeah. I was actually thinking something along the ideas of, similar to a taste of Brookhaven, but maybe like a scavenger hunt, particularly something that you could do for young families, and something that you could do for new people moving into the city. Where you set up some kind of 'let's go explore Brookhaven', not just the obvious streets and locations that you might see, but some of the history.

Lauren:

It'd be interesting to, if my kids learned about Lynwood. If there was a half-day bicycle tour. We did a bicycle tour of Atlanta, this goes back maybe 10 years, and we had such an amazing time. We learned so much about the city, all the way from the civil war through the present day. And it just, it stuck with us as a place, like, "Yeah, I want to be a part of this place. This place has an incredible history".

Lauren:

Maybe Brookhaven needs to do something similar, where we can tell the history of this place. Because when, in the meeting we had the other day, when they were talking about the Native Americans and the land they owned, that was very interesting to me because I... It's not something I ever thought about. But once again, if you did a tour of the town, not with a particular point of interest, you could do a full tour from Native Americans, to African-Americans, to the folks that are centered in the business community, to the Hispanics. I think you could tell a very good story there and get people really feeling a kinship for the town. And the diversity that exists in it.

Anibal:

Why don't we somehow try to see if we can get Plaza Fiesta to be part of Brookhaven, take it away from Chamblee? [Crosstalk 00:27:12]

Facilitator:

So, I think somebody's got to win the fight about who's going to report out, but in the report out, just somewhat... One way to think about it is just, what was the conversation? But any big ideas, we call them the ABCs, a-ha's, big ideas, or just what was the central question, crucial question that came up. So that's just one way, in these report outs, to think about them. I don't know who's up, I saw the battle going on, I don't know who won that one.

John:

It was between Anibal and Kathy. Who won the fight?

Kathy Wells:

I'm going for Anibal. I'm not really good with to a whole crowd of people.

Speaker 4:

[crosstalk 00:28:00] All right, 30 minutes.

Facilitator:

Time goes so fast.

Lauren:

We need 10 more minutes.

Facilitator:

No, I know.

John:

What she said.

John:

Where did Kathy go? Kathy, where'd you go?

Kathy Wells:

Here I am. Here.

John:

Oh we vote when you go away.

Facilitator:

Doing that quick beam me up, right? That's when you missed the vote.

John:

All right, Commissioner Wells.

Facilitator:

So I don't know, it looks like we're waiting for a few more folks to come back in. And we will, after we do our report outs, we have some time in to just open it up to the full Commission, around just insight and feedback.

Speaker 8:

Everybody's back?

Speaker 9:

Yes.

Speaker 8:

Okay. Well, as Leslie indicated, as we discussed it at the top, we're going to ask each recorder to share the highlights of the discussion for two minutes. Then, fortunately, we should have some time to hear any other points that are good for the whole tonight. So I was in group one, so I at least know who the recorder was there. And so we'll start with group one and that was Karen, can she...

Karen:

Okay. So, if you all bear with me, everybody. So the first question, do we think Brookhaven has a racial caste system? I think we were all in unanimous agreement. It exists everywhere. Lynwood Park was a great example of that, about that.