



Edward M. Augustus, Jr.  
City Manager

CITY OF WORCESTER

cm2015apr23050008

Attachment for Item #

8.34 F

April 28, 2015

TO THE WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL

COUNCILORS:

The following informational report on the City of Worcester's plan to implement improved strategies and policies that better serve and represent our diverse community is presented to your Honorable Body for review and discussion.

Over the past few months, my Administration, communities of color throughout the city, the Mayor's Office, and representatives from city departments including the Worcester Police Department, Human Resources Department, Election Commission, Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, Division of Public Health and Office of Economic Development, have worked together to create a comprehensive proposal with specific strategies aimed at building a more diverse and inclusive approach to city government. This report incorporates best practices from communities comparable demographically to Worcester, information gathered during numerous meetings with the city's communities of color, and ideas from the Coming Together Collective, a community group invested in pursuing better outcomes for people of color in our city.

The report addresses five key areas: **Creating a more Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce; Improving Public Safety Relations with the Community; Providing Opportunities for Young People; Expanding Efforts to Educate and Engage the Public on the Electoral Process; and Enhancing Economic Development Opportunities.** In each area I am recommending concrete strategies the city can implement to achieve specific goals. Some of these are short term recommendations; others will take months or years of focused effort and attention.



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER, CITY HALL, WORCESTER, MA 01608  
TELEPHONE (508) 799-1175 | FAX (508) 799-1208  
EMAIL: [citymanager@worcestema.gov](mailto:citymanager@worcestema.gov)



## **CREATING A MORE DIVERSE AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT WORKFORCE**

While the City's minority workforce increased by 3 percent from 2006 to 2014, city government still does not adequately reflect the population it serves. According to the Worcester Research Bureau, in the first decade of the new millennium the number of Worcester residents who identify as White decreased by 5.57 percent, while the African American population increased by 77 percent, the Latino population increased by 45 percent and the Asian population increased by 31 percent. Creating a more diverse and culturally competent workforce is crucial as we work to encourage a more inclusive city.

### **- *Hire a Dedicated Chief Diversity Officer:***

Currently the Affirmative Action Officer in the Human Resources Office is combined with the Principle Staff Assistant position. The duties of the Principle Staff Assistant leave approximately 5 percent of the work week to focus on diversity and affirmative action-related activities, including crucial duties like recruiting a diverse candidate pool. This also leaves little time to devote to researching and developing inclusion policies or monitoring departments to make sure City diversity goals are being met. This does not allow time to effectively provide support and assistance to Department Heads and departmental Diversity Officers.

My recommendation is to create a Chief Diversity Officer position for FY16, effective July 1, 2015. The Chief Diversity Officer will oversee the development and implementation of the City's Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity and Inclusion Plan. He or she will ensure the City is in compliance with all federal, state, and local Equal Employment Opportunity laws and policies, and that the City's diversity and inclusion goals and commitments are met. This position will work with department heads and diversity officers to achieve their department-specific goals, while providing technical assistance, employee support, and training. This position will develop and monitor recruiting, hiring, training, promoting, and retaining strategies to increase the number of people from under-represented groups. The Chief Diversity officer will act as an active liaison to community meetings to further aid the relationship between the City administration and the community.

The Chief Diversity Officer will work to increase the number of women and minorities who work for the City so the workforce and volunteer positions truly represent the community they serve.

### ***Restructure and rename the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee***

The Chief Diversity Officer will also serve as the administration liaison to the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee. The committee will be renamed the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee. It will be re-structured to provide technical assistance in the areas of diversity and inclusion. It will set goals and closely monitor the City's progress towards those goals. The committee will directly advise the City Manager and Chief Diversity Officer on diversity and equal opportunity. It will advise the Chief Diversity Officer and the Director of Human Resources in the areas of recruitment, hiring, promoting, and retaining, and assist the Chief Diversity Officer with community outreach efforts and campaigns. The Committee will assist the Chief Diversity Officer to review and update the City's Affirmative Action Policy and Plan.

- ***Update the Affirmative Action Policy and Plan to reflect the current demographics of our community:***

The Affirmative Action Policy and Plan will be updated by the Chief Diversity Officer, with the assistance of the new Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee. Among the changes will be the inclusion of goals for new hires who speak languages other than English, and who better reflect the diversity of the community. In addition, annual trainings for hiring managers will be required for the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding of the growing diverse demographics in the City and the workforce.

- ***Develop training and development opportunities for City employees across each level of government:***

Currently, the Training Division provides cultural competency and diversity classes when requested and as part of Customer Service training. However, the scope is limited and the classes are sporadic and voluntary. Making the diversity and inclusion trainings and professional development mandatory would improve their effectiveness. Training programs will include regular ongoing training of board and commission members and city employees – from the City Manager on down – on cultural diversity and bias awareness.

The City is currently in the third year of the Division of Public Health's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), a key goal of which is to "improve population health by systematically eliminating institutional racism and the pathology of oppression and discrimination by promoting equitable access to, and use of, health promoting resources in the community, and significantly reducing the structural and environmental factors that contribute to health disparities." The City will continue to support community-wide efforts to further this goal, including the objectives of pursuing policies that create more equitable environments in which to live and grow, ensuring a lens of health equity across community health improvement, and building capacity through Undoing Racism workshops. Staff of various City departments, boards and commissions, and the City Manager's cabinet will attend an Undoing Racism training in the following year.

In addition, the City Manager's Community Coalition Against Bias & Hate will host a spring workshop for community leaders on "Building a More Inclusive Workplace: Understanding and Addressing Unconscious and Unintentional Bias." One of the learning objectives will be to develop awareness of micro-aggressions, a form of "unintended discrimination". These actions are demonstrated by the use of known social norms of behavior and/or expression that, while without conscious choice of the user, has the same effect as conscious, intended discrimination. The training will take place May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and city employees have been encouraged to attend. The City is also an active participant in the annual YWCA Stand Against Racism event on April 24, 2015.

- ***Improve Access to Services of Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP):***

The City has no comprehensive policy or process for providing services to persons with limited English proficiency. Historically, this has been handled differently by

each department. Most departments rely on staff who may speak another language to assist LEP customers; however the current practice has no default process for languages that are not spoken by staff members, creating language barriers for many residents trying to access vital City services and programs. Additionally, some departments rely on the assistance of community partners for voluntary interpretation and translation assistance.

The City will develop a formal plan and policy across departments to ensure effective access and services. Subject to available resources, the plan will strive to include language assistance and focus on:

- Oral interpretation
- Written language services
- Telephone interpreter lines

I recommend a pilot plan to be implemented first in City Hall offices and then reproduced in other City departments, including boards and commissions. The pilot plan will seek to use every resource already available to the City, including bilingual employees, and provide training to all city employees to ensure the policy is understood and fully functioning.

The plan will:

- Identify the most common non-English languages spoken by those doing business with City offices and boards/commissions
- Identify and use local resources, including bilingual employees and Worcester Public Schools language interpreters
- Identify vital documents in each department for translation into other languages
- Provide a plan for translating documents into less common languages
- Research best practices for helping residents easily communicate their language needs to employees
- Educate employees on the established process for servicing LEP persons and include training on cultural competency and sensitivity
- Create a marketing plan to inform residents that interpretation and translation services are available and how to access them for business in City Hall and boards and commissions.

## **IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY**

### ***- Reconstitute the Worcester Clergy and Police Alliance:***

At the urging of Mayor Petty, the Worcester Clergy and Police Community Partnership will be reinvigorated. The partnership is comprised of faith organizations and law enforcement agencies working together to build relationships for the good of the community by creating sensitivity, respect, and trust.

The Partnership has assumed the responsibility, where possible, to serve as a catalyst in healing within the community. The Partnership works to create and maintain open lines of communication between the Worcester Police Department

and clergy members, to exchange information about critical incidents occurring in our City.

This Partnership will serve to connect religious organizations to the department's administration for important matters of concern for the community.

- ***Reinstate the Clergy/Civilian Police Academy:***

The Worcester Police Department's Clergy/Civilian Police Academy will provide participants with an understanding of the operations and resources of the department. Participants will interact with police supervisors, veteran officers, and other subject matter experts. Held over eight weeks and meeting for three hours each session, the goal of the Academy is to provide a greater awareness and understanding of law enforcement's role in our community. Further objectives include:

- Educating citizens on the day to day operations of a law enforcement officer and various divisions within the police department.
- Giving participants a better understanding of the risks associated with police work.
- Enhancing the relationship between the police and the community; showcase the education, capabilities, and talents of the members of the Worcester Police Department; foster cooperation between police and Academy students.
- Dispelling misconceptions of how the police department operates by explaining the constitutional and tactical reasoning behind specific law enforcement actions.

These subjects will be reinforced with the opportunity for each participant to partake in a ride-along. The ride-along program is an effective community-relations strategy that provides a sense of realism for Clergy/Civilian Academy members.

- ***Install Cameras to Capture Police Encounters with the Public:***

The Worcester Police Department has been analyzing the use of audio and video technologies within three different environments: a cruiser camera capable of capturing police encounters with the public during traffic enforcement; the ability to video record activities on the patrol wagon used to transport those in police custody; and body cameras generally deployed to capture a variety of urgent and routine encounters between the police and the public.

So far, in the context of a 3-6 month pilot program:

- One cruiser camera has been operational since early February and capturing live data.
- Hardware and the associated software are being installed in the three patrol wagons as the department works to finalize policy and procedure for final implementation. Data will be stored according to State retention guidelines and accepted best practices.
- The department will continue to explore the legal issues associated with the use of body cameras in Massachusetts, including the two-party consent law,

and the new statute concerning videoing individuals in inherently private situations

- Existing camera surveillance and recording technologies within the Worcester police Department cell room and prisoner processing area will be upgraded and enhanced to include coverage of the pre-booking holding cell. Data will be stored according to State retention guidelines and accepted best practices.

Each of these platforms, when combined with appropriate policy, are useful in documenting evidence; training officers; preventing and resolving complaints brought by members of the public; and strengthening police transparency, performance, and accountability throughout the organization.

- ***Monitor and remove abusive, hateful, and insensitive comments on WPD Facebook page:***

The Worcester Police Department will be vigilant in continuing to monitor their social media platforms and removing offensive comments. They will continue to keep a hard copy of the comments while being consistent with the responsibility under the public record law.

## **PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

- ***Establish a Summer Youth Corp program to provide youth employment opportunities:***

The City Manager's Summer Youth Corps will use several City Departments as host locations for YouthWorks participants broken into nine industry sector tracks: Health, Environment, Arts & Culture, Literacy, Child Development, Facilities Maintenance/Construction, Engineering, Finance, and Info Technology. Department leaders would identify projects and work activities for youth participants. Supervision would be provided by Department staff, with assistance from YouthWorks program case-managers, who will also be conducting weekly career guidance and readiness learning sessions. YouthWorks (YW) summer participants will be placed in participating City departments aligning with appropriate industry tracks. YW members will work 20 hours for six weeks, beginning July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Work hours will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- ***Develop a Youth Violence Strategic Plan:***

This initiative focuses attention on the highest risk young people and families in our community. Informed by an in-depth needs assessment and an extensive community engagement process described briefly below, the plan focuses on systems changes required to achieve the following overarching goals: promote an ethic of trust & care in the community, ensure equitable access to resources for health, education, activities, and employment, increase collaboration and break down silos, break cycles of violence, and foster the emotional and physical safety of boys, men, girls, and women of color. A focus on policies rather than programs and elimination of systemic barriers is required to challenge the status quo so that youth and gang violence can be prevented.

## **Focus Areas and Strategic Goals:**

### Early childhood education and wellbeing

- Increase access to high quality, trauma-informed early education and health services for children of proven-risk/incarcerated parents.

### Youth participation and engagement

- Reduce barriers for high-risk and proven-risk youth and young adults to community resources and services

### Divert young people from juvenile and criminal justice system

- Reduce the number of youth being arrested and reduce the number of youth being charged and detained

### Suspension policy and school climate

- Reduce use of out-of-school suspensions in the schools

### Youth employment

- Reduce barriers to employment for high-risk and proven-risk youth and young adults

### Emotional and physical safety of boys and men of color

- Develop a model for city-wide, recurring, youth-centered, intentional healing conversations amongst boys and men of color

The report with specific recommendations and an action plan is scheduled to be presented later this year. It will provide a framework with specific strategies to address youth violence in the City of Worcester.

## **EXPANDING EFFORTS TO EDUCATE AND ENGAGE THE PUBLIC ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

### ***- Increase voter education efforts and involvement:***

The Worcester Rising Civics Camp was held again this year at Worcester State University and hosted by WSU's Urban Studies Department. With 50 public high school juniors recommended for participation, the three-day event during April school vacation exposed students to several presenters from a variety of disciplines. The students agreed to conduct voter registration sessions in their respective high schools in the fall of 2015 and work at the polls on Tuesday, November 3, 2015.

As in past years, staff will partner with local organizations such as colleges, universities, neighborhood centers, and special event organizers to register voters in the community in advance of the September Primary and November Municipal Election and to educate all voters about the dates and details for voting in the upcoming elections.

A newly-developed brief voter guide is being distributed to anyone inquiring about the process and timetable for running in this year's election.

For the first time, it is anticipated that an informational flyer will be developed and inserted into the Fall 2015 real estate tax bills, informing the public of the details of the November, 2015 election, including the hours that polls are open and promoting the "Where do I vote?" button located on the city's web site.

Previous efforts to install motivational signage at strategic locations throughout the city will be enhanced with the anticipated purchase and hanging of banners on the exterior of City Hall, Union Station, the Main Public Library, and neighborhood centers. The signs will reinforce the date and details of the November 2015 election.

A new, updated, and more detailed video will be created for the city's website and government TV channel, providing details of the registration and voting processes.

Local radio personalities from both English and Spanish language programs will be asked to promote participation in the registration and voting processes.

Beginning in August 2015, state law will allow for online voter registration. Once guidance is received from the Commonwealth, local efforts will be developed to inform the public of this new method for registering to vote.

To encourage participation in the November 2015 election, a reverse 911 public service announcement will be explored. This method has met with some success in past elections.

Planning for the roll-out of early voting in the November 2016 election, the Election Commission and the City Clerk's staff will host discussions in all five City Council Districts about local implementation. Strong consideration will be given to the convenience of the public at a locations and times that will encourage participation rates among all populations and areas of the community.

Efforts will continue to recruit poll workers who speak languages other than English.

Efforts will be made to collaborate with public and private entities to maximize exposure into communities whose participation needs the most improvement.

- ***Reestablish the Mayor's Civic Academy:***

The Mayor's Civic Academy is designed to provide participants with an understanding of City government and the Judicial System. All participants will have the opportunity to interact with the City administration, judges, and other government leaders. The academy will hold four town-meeting style programs to give to an audience of approximately 30 civic leaders from various institutions and the community. The goal of the academy is to provide a greater awareness and understanding of government's role in the community, and to encourage participants to pass that knowledge to their constituents and institutions. Community leaders are encouraged to nominate or recommend individuals who demonstrate enthusiasm to learn and engage with civic leaders, and who want to learn about city government and the court system. The application will be available online or in person at the Mayor's Office starting in the fall of 2015.

**ENHANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- ***Promote Business Ownership in Worcester:***

The city's Division of Business Assistance (DBA) offered its first "Starting a Business in Worcester" workshop at the Worcester Public Library, and will continue to offer the

workshop quarterly, or even more frequently. The DBA will continue to partner with other community-based organizations to host future workshops at a variety of locations within the city neighborhoods, including, but not limited to the Martin Luther King Jr. Opportunity Center, Centro Las Americas, Ascentria Care Alliance, and more. The DBA also intends to vary the workshop times and days of week to accommodate different scheduling needs.

- ***Continue to expand the Worcester Jobs Fund:***

The Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (CMWIB), in partnership with Workforce Central, the Worcester Public Schools, the Worcester Community Labor Coalition, and the Chamber of Commerce is overseeing the implementation of the Worcester Jobs Fund (WJF) to strengthen the connection of local residents, especially vulnerable populations, with local employment opportunities. The City of Worcester established funding in early 2014 to help better prepare and connect Worcester residents for placement into livable-wage employment.

A planning team met numerous times, discussed the project with area stakeholders, and developed a set of recommendations:

- Employers will be engaged to help determine what kinds of jobs are available, both in the short term and beyond, and the specific skills needed for successful employment in these positions.
- The WJF programming will include:
  - Recruitment of local residents for anticipated job opportunities
  - Assessment of candidates
  - Coordination of referrals to connect qualified candidates to available positions or suitable job training programs
  - Development and oversight of new job training programs for in-demand positions when training is not currently available to local residents
  - Outreach to local companies to recruit their support as project partners
- The project will be staffed by independent consultants hired through a competitive bid process, led on behalf of the City by the WJF Oversight Committee, which will also establish performance measures and an evaluation process.

- ***Continue to Fund Non-Profit Organizations Serving Racial, Cultural, or Ethnic Minorities:***

Over the years, as Worcester has become more diverse, many non-profit entities have formed around addressing the needs of low-income populations within particular cultural or demographic niches, such as the Asian or African immigrant or refugee populations. The federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has supported many of these organizations that have proven viable, met a community need, and been capable of complying with other CDBG requirements. In addition, our CDBG Down Payment Assistance program is currently working with NeighborWorks, MassHousing, and the NAACP for a home buying information event in mid-May. The outreach efforts will be specifically targeted for the Latino, African

immigrant, African-American, and Southeast Asian communities. We hope that this will be a quarterly event expanding to include faith communities as partners.

- ***Ensure all Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board and Workforce Central programs and services are conducted with cultural competence:***

The CMWIB has established a Cultural Competency Advisory Committee (CCAC), which includes staff and volunteers who represent the communities they serve, including traditionally underserved populations. The CCAC will develop and review performance data, operational plans, policies, programming, and other items as necessary. The CMWIB also reviews cultural competence when making funding decisions for contracted programming and service delivery to ensure the chosen provider will have the capacity to effectively recruit and serve the intended program participants. CMWIB and Workforce Central staff value strong customer service for people of all races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, and are working with the City's Human Resources Department on a staff cultural competence training plan.

- ***Ensure people of color and vulnerable populations are able to access the career services offered by Workforce Central and the CMWIB:***

Workforce Central has established "access points" at community partner locations. Access Point partnerships include training staff at each location to deliver basic workforce development information and services to their clients. This train-the-trainer approach allows Workforce Central to expand its reach and impact in the community in a cost effective manner. Access Point partner locations also have access to online services offered through the career center, including the MA Job Quest employment board and the ACT Work Keys assessment and learning system. Access Point sites include; Worcester Public Housing, Southeast Asian Coalition, Worcester Public Library, Centro Las Americas and Ascentria.

These services are advertised through targeted efforts to reach traditionally underserved populations, including people of color. Workforce Central staff members attend community festivals (Latino Festival, Peace Festival, Asian Festival, Juneteenth Festival), and market through local communities of faith, and mass media (radio/TV, social media). The CMWIB and Workforce Central are active partners on relevant committees, boards, and advisory groups. These include: Centro Las Americas, United Families for Change, Mayor's Youth Anti-Violence Task Force, Mayor's Forum on Immigrants, Worcester Initiative for Supportive Re-entry (WISeR), the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, MOSAIC, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), Affirmative Action Committee for Worcester Public Schools, etc.

- ***Continue to offer programs and services that help people of color and vulnerable populations achieve career success:***

Unemployment continues to be higher for people of color and vulnerable populations. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics March 2015 report, the unemployment rate for Latinos was more than 40 percent higher than that of the total population, and the unemployment rate for African Americans was more than double.

Workforce Central offers career development counseling services and workshops from multilingual staff in Spanish and other languages upon request, including Portuguese, Albanian, French, and Vietnamese. Workforce Central staff and clients also have access to the State's multilingual translation services telephone line and support website. Through this, information is available on Unemployment Insurance Services, Employment Services, Worker's Compensation, and Occupational Safety in 16 languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Khmer, Laotian, Italian, French, Korean, and Arabic. Veterans also receive priority service at Workforce Central for all programming/services. Furthermore, Workforce Central has received a federal grant to provide additional counseling and assistance to serve customers with disabilities.

Workforce Central has also established a special workshop called the New Leaf program to help ex-offenders navigate their job search. Additionally, Career Center staff will continue to work with the Sheriff's Office by facilitating "Behind the Walls" employment services workshops at the West Boylston facility. The CMWIB coordinates the YouthWorks summer and year-round jobs program, which provided 466 low-income youth (a majority youth of color) with subsidized work experience at local non-profit organizations and for-profit companies.

Worcester holds a well-earned reputation for being welcoming and accessible to people of all backgrounds. This report aims to build on that reputation, and to address inequalities that still linger, especially among people of color. It is my hope that this report, along with the recently-announced series of forums on race to be facilitated by the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey's office, will form a basis for a conversation about how we can collectively build a Worcester that is open to, and representative of, all people.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward M. Augustus, Jr." in a cursive script.

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.  
City Manager