



PDIA in Action: Reparations in Asheville, NC

Day 1

- Asheville City Council unanimously passed a reparations resolution in July 2020
- Authorizer - Keith Young, former City Council member and author of the resolution
- **PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Is a blended component unit the best mechanism to use for a local government to fund reparations? Are there other options? If so, what?

SOCIAL CONTEXT

- Predominantly White
- Segregation of Black and White Communities
- Loss of Trust in Government
- Lack of unity/organization
- COVID Response
- Resolution Followed Unrest in City

LEGAL OBSTACLES

- No direct support of one race
- NC not a Home Rule State
- Limited funding and no deficit spending
- Legal and Financial Mechanism to satisfy these restrictions

LOGISTICS

- Disagreement on definitions/objectives
- Efficacy
- Program Term
- Funding Source and Mechanism
- Commission
- Responsibility to Act

THE PROBLEM

Competing Priorities

Setting a Precedent

COVID Response

Limited Resources for the whole city

Communication, Cohesion, and Trust Issues among Stakeholders

Lack of Broad Coalition and Stakeholder Engagement

Equity and Inclusion Dept understaffed/resourced

Shift in Council Makeup

No separate entity created to take responsibility for resolution

Disagreement re: gov relationship to fund/entity

Disagreement on communal v. individual use of funds

EXTERNAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

INTERNAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

Problem Deconstruction - Fishbone Diagram

By deconstructing, we were able to reconstruct our problem statement

There has been a lack of progress and consensus in designing and implementing reparations initiatives in Asheville since the passing of the reparations resolution in July of 2020.

The slow pace of government has led to small, mainly symbolic, steps have been taken to signal to the community that the process is underway, but meaningful advancement has been hindered by lack of capacity in key areas.

A concern is that justice delayed is often justice denied, as further delay of this initiative could widen divides in the community and reinforce the existing distrust that the local black community has in the government.

The Process

- Importance and Usefulness of Teaming
- Fluidity of Learning and Understanding
- Connecting thought leaders within the space

Key Lessons Learned

- Opposition is not the only explanation for lack of movement
- Working inside out rather than outside in
- Sequencing of action steps for success and momentum
- Takeaways from past and present reparations initiatives

Further Learning

- How to ensure the city government and its policies are not perpetuating harm while actively trying to repair the harm that has already been done? How to ensure the Equity and Inclusion Department is able to accomplish its goals?
- What is the role of the Black community in the city's process? How to foster healing and collaboration between the Black community and the city government?
- How to publicize and normalize the true historical narrative established and elucidated by the stories told during Truth Telling and Information Sharing? How to foster cohesion and unity within the whole Asheville community around this issue?
- Who has responsibility and authority to act on Commission recommendations? When is this meant to happen?
- Legal and funding mechanism for reparations policies?