

UP NEXT

Strategic Recommendations

The following section includes strategic recommendations that programmatic, financial, and policy leaders and decision-makers can employ to accelerate the growth of Black-owned businesses and to improve economic opportunity more broadly for the Black community in Birmingham.

Inspiring best practice examples from other communities have been incorporated to provide helpful roadmaps that can be followed by ecosystem members.

This is a blueprint for organizations to self-identify areas of interest, where and how to lean into leadership and owning aspects of these recommendations, and to organically form collaborative partnerships toward change.



PREVIEW OF STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

These Recommendations have been broken into three categories based on the timeliness of expected outcomes to begin reflecting results.

Immediate Actions (achievable within 1-2 year)

- Create a digital and physical hub
- Increase procurement to Black-owned businesses
- Create unified marketing efforts
- Expand capacity of CDFIs, MDIs, and support organizations

Next Steps (begin flourishing in 3-5 years)

- Cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship
- Invest in main streets and strategic corridors
- Seed wealth creation for Black businesses and the community at large

Generational Shifts

(may take 5 years or longer to begin coming to fruition)

- Aggregate Black wealth
- Directly address efforts towards racial reconciliation
- Be more intentional about talent development and retention
- Focus on wholesale community revitalization

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS: ACHIEVING TARGETED IMPACTS

GOAL

Invest in tangible concepts to enhance and improve the ecosystem supporting Black-owned businesses, resulting in a higher volume of strong, Black-owned businesses that create local jobs and contribute to overall economic vitality and community vibrancy in Birmingham.

Our immediate lens considers the state of the ecosystem as we review the current programs and resources offered across the ecosystem, review relevant economic data, and anchor ourselves in the feedback and lived experiences of the business owners who this ecosystem seeks to serve.

Understanding Birmingham's Black business ecosystem starts with an examination of history. Overt and systemic inequity based on race has existed in the city, dating back to its founding after the Civil War. Modern data and community feedback suggest inequities based on race remain widespread, from neighborhood assets to career pathways, to the rates of business ownership citywide, despite the history of Birmingham as a beacon of activism for civil rights in the 1960s. These inequities must be acknowledged and examined as the first step in creating a more united, capable Birmingham.

In the Birmingham MSA, there are 238 white-owned businesses per 10,000 white residents. That number diminishes to 21 Black-owned businesses per 10,000 Black residents. Birmingham has a far higher percentage of small businesses and sole proprietorships with 0-5 employees than the national average, the Black community owning 61% of these businesses. Black workers make roughly \$27,000 less than their white counterparts, on average.

From an ecosystem perspective, we see more organizations turning an intentional and strategic eye towards the disparities experienced by Black Birmingham business owners.

Now is the time to address these realities and build solutions for the future.

1

CREATE A DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL HUB/“FRONT DOOR” OF THE ECOSYSTEM

Taylor custom business supports and resources to the community.

Over the course of interviews with business owners and members of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, we continually heard interest in the development of a space or function that could serve as the “front door” of the ecosystem. From founders, we heard a sense of disconnection or disorientation surrounding the ecosystem, with many not knowing how to navigate the various program offerings or ascertain which organization might be the best fit for them. Additionally, frustration was expressed about the “trial and error” approach required to identify an appropriate contact or resource. On the ecosystem provider side, we heard about the challenge of turning entrepreneurs away who are not the right fit for offered programs, on occasion without a referral or potential solution.

Both parties expressed interest in increasing the ease of navigating the ecosystem, increasing connections between ecosystem entities and business owners, while also increasing awareness of the overall existence of the ecosystem itself. Many suggested this should take the form of a physical hub — a space where organizations can co-locate, where entrepreneurs can co-work, where community gatherings can occur, and where the public can engage. Elements of this vision exist already in organizations like [Innovation Depot](#) and [CREED 63](#). Yet additional steps can be taken to increase connective tissue across the ecosystem and, intentionally, with Black-owned businesses of all types.

Alternatively, this “front door” capacity could be intangible, such as a digital space. For instance, [myhuub.com](#) is a one-stop, central hub for cities that brings incubation, education and resources to small businesses. This and resources like it can provide everything from on-demand training and education to scheduling for professional services and access to funding opportunities. For a hybrid option, it can even be coupled with individuals monitoring the system and serving as ecosystem ambassadors within partnered organizations. These employees or volunteers would be responsible for having a keen awareness of the ecosystem’s provider landscape and offering guidance to identify and refer needed support.

Along with this, a more robust referral system and data sharing process would ensure greater collaboration and connectivity between the organizations themselves. While collaboration has increased in this regard in recent years, this level of coordination would mark a mindset shift for many organizations, requiring trust, vulnerability, and investment with the broader organizational peer group.

NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT



Bounce Innovation Hub in Akron, Ohio serves as the front door to the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northeast Ohio. Encompassing inclusive programming spanning a variety of industry focuses and business stages and 300,000 square feet of coworking, event, meeting, and professional office space, Bounce has amplified the impact and reach of their local ecosystem. Notably, their space also features Stray Dog Cafe, a coffee shop open to the broader public to serve as a gathering place and point of interaction with the entrepreneurial community.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

2

INCREASE PROCUREMENT AND ANNUAL SPENDING WITH LOCAL BLACK BUSINESSES

Promote public and private commitments that are tracked for accountability.

Intentional investment into local businesses is an objective that cannot solely rest with the ecosystem’s financial institutions, there is a broader role that the local government, corporate and business communities should play. While Birmingham’s banks, venture capitalists, and generous philanthropic leaders are engaged in the work of fiscal sponsorship and advocacy in support of the ecosystem, the business community and local government should play a more strategic role to create targeted impact.

Increasing annual spending with a specified target can be a powerful tool to swiftly bring about community change. Specific pledges by large members of the corporate or governmental community are the best options to play this role. Examples of this include [Target](#), which committed to spending \$2 billion with Black-owned businesses by 2025, and [P&G](#), who committed to increasing their spending with women- and diverse-owned businesses, with a goal of \$5 billion in annual spending by 2030.

Smaller scale examples include Dignity Health, a hospital system based in San Francisco, California, that is committed to supporting the local nonprofit community, providing low to no-interest loans to survive moments of economic downturn and diminished funding. Over the course of a 20-year time period, this commitment benefited 88 nonprofit organizations, which have collectively received \$45 million in funding from Dignity Health.

Network models, which coordinate the actions and economic power of a group of large institutions committed to track, share, and spend expand local impact and community benefit. Many of these networks prioritize the annual spend of anchor institutions, so-called “enduring organizations” that play a vital role with vested interest in their surrounding community. This would include institutions such as universities, healthcare systems, and local government.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

In Birmingham, a network model could be deployed to create new funding avenues for small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, to incentivize and support job creation or help to increase the capacity of capital-constrained nonprofits within the ecosystem. Locally, groups such as the Alabama Minority Business Development Agency and Economic Development Partnership of Alabama are already working to ensure greater equity in procurement and purchasing. With continued, intentional commitment to outcomes, government and private sector strategies and strong organizational partnerships have the potential to achieve transformational impact.



NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

With Target’s commitment to spend \$2 billion with Black-owned businesses by 2025, they committed to “create more equitable and welcoming experiences for Black guests,” striving to leverage “the full impact of our company’s size, scale and resources to create economic opportunity for Black-owned businesses here at Target and beyond.”

Based on recent impact data shared via their corporate blog, the company has increased the amount spent with Black-owned companies and suppliers by more than 50%, doubled the number of Black-owned brands sold, and launched Forward Founders, an accelerator program designed to “help early-stage Black-owned and diverse businesses increase their potential to be the next wave of wealth-building companies.”





3 CREATE UNIFIED MARKETING AND CITY-CENTRIC BRANDING ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM

Consolidate and promote Black businesses and their connection to space and place.

This recommendation serves a two-fold purpose. First, in speaking with business owners, would-be founders, and ecosystem members alike, all interviewees expressed the challenge of effective communication across the ecosystem. Many entrepreneurs shared frustration about the perceived lack of access or lack of awareness about resources that could benefit their business. Would-be founders described a reluctance to pursue their business ideas due to an additional perceived lack of support. From ecosystem members, we heard about lack of capacity, which could refer to a lack of staff or lack of resources to expand beyond the digital tools, such as newsletters and social media, that many organizations rely on to spread the word about their organization and its offerings.

These frustrations could be addressed through coordinated and shared marketing across the ecosystem, diminishing the need for business owners to be personally aware of or connected with an organization or targeted market, and diminishing the need for ecosystem organizations to be solely reliant on their own in-house capacity.

Second, by incorporating a location-based perspective, such an initiative would communicate a collective narrative of belonging and connection that goes beyond the individual, business, or even corporation. It codifies participants geographical link as a constant reminder that all are accountable for the growth or decline of the whole while also supporting the idea of expanded capacity.

This could take the form of a central location of information-sharing about the ecosystem, such as the front door, a website, shared calendar, media source, or social media page. Even simple tools such as a shared hashtag for and inclusive of everyone in the ecosystem to promote resources and opportunities available to Black business owners could be an effective solution.

There are assets that can be leveraged in this regard. The [Modern Green Book](#) is a prime example, serving as a directory of current Black-owned businesses in the city. Other groups, such as the Black Economic Alliance of Birmingham, Bronze Valley, Urban Impact, and IGNITE! Alabama also boast galleries of intriguing narratives and testimonials about the city's Black-owned businesses and the impact they create.

The recent Magic City Match program, for example, gathered basic data on over 800 Black-owned businesses and side hustles in the city. This information can be leveraged to drive a marketing campaign full of vibrancy, authenticity, and direct support for Black-owned businesses. Amplifying effective channels, streamlining, and support for efforts that foster coordination and create awareness will help solve the challenge of disconnected communication across the ecosystem. Additionally, steps should be taken to ensure that language and imagery used for the ecosystem are culturally competent and resonate with the intended audience.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

In New Orleans, Louisiana, a local entrepreneur recognized the need for a central source of information about the ecosystem's activity, including programs, events, and available resources, as well as stories of success and relevant events. Silicon Bayou News, founded in 2011, now serves as a one-stop source of information about entrepreneurial activity in New Orleans and Louisiana

more broadly, benefitting entrepreneurs, investors, and ecosystem members alike. The site annually receives over 3 million page views, with hundreds of thousands of site visitors per month from all 50 states and over 100 countries.

SILICON BAYOU NEWS 



4

EXPAND CAPACITY FOR CDFIs, MDIs, AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Scale access to capital and talent.

Access to capital and necessary talent are the lifeblood of a business venture. In Birmingham, we find a limited but growing financial landscape available to support businesses with critical operating capital. Similarly, we see many scaling businesses struggling to attract and retain necessary talent. These problems persist at all phases of growth and across all types of businesses. This challenge is exacerbated when we consider the dearth of dedicated resources designed to support the creation and growth of Black-owned businesses through the lens of talent access. While the research did find growing avenues for capital access in the forms of direct seed capital, lines of credit, and microgrants, **our ecosystem map lacked the presence of any organization focused on creating employment opportunities for Black individuals at Black-owned businesses.**

Workforce development and early education are the traditional paths to getting populations ready for employment. In Birmingham, there is very little evidence that Black residents are being connected to the opportunities that are present at Black-owned businesses, regardless of the industry these jobs fall in.

Organizations like Bronze Valley, The Penny Foundation, and Urban Impact, are working to meet this challenge head-on, with programs and efforts designed to scale capital access and financial education with dedicated intention surrounding Black entrepreneurship. Furthermore, CDFI's with a local presence are working daily to provide alternative forms of debt and equity financing to existing minority-owned businesses. And even major financial institutions such as Regions Bank and JPMorgan Chase have dedicated specific funds to not only organizations within the local community that support Black business ownership, but Black-owned businesses themselves.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Amplifying effective channels and streamlining support for efforts that foster coordination and create awareness will help solve the challenge of disconnected communication across the ecosystem. Additionally, steps should be taken to ensure that language and imagery used across the ecosystem are culturally competent and resonate with the intended audience.

In particular, we note trends relative to the Black business community that appear like bookends, affecting both the smallest and largest ventures in the community. Entrepreneurs and business owners seeking smaller levels of investment, frequently less than \$50,000 are often undercapitalized. This could be due to lack of access, lack of awareness, or lack of ability to meet the requirements of traditional financial institutions. For rapidly scaling ventures, particularly those that are technology-enabled or innovation-based, we find a scenario in which the types of capital they're seeking do not exist locally, particularly when their capital needs exceed \$3 million in funding. This can result in an exit from the market to pursue investment in other cities, such as Atlanta or Nashville, or larger markets along the East and West coasts. These trends, particularly for high-growth potential founders, persist nationally, with only 1% of venture-backed startups having a Black founder and fewer than 3% of venture capital investors being Black.

Talent follows a similar trend line, with the smallest ventures struggling to move beyond side hustle or sole proprietorship status. The larger or rapid-scaling ventures struggle to identify the types of expertise needed to maintain scale. Many expressed frustration at the lack of support in this area. One interviewee smartly noted that the ecosystem and specifically the talent needed for a high-growth startup is completely different than what a small storefront needs. Another pointed out that you simply can't use generic, cookie-cutter resources for problems that have been perpetuated for 150+ years and expect anything to change in this space. User-specific resources built for Black-owned businesses to attract talent are missing, only furthering the distrust many Black business owners feel towards the so-called 'establishment' of Birmingham.

There is an opportunity to scale both financial and human capital, increasing business owners' access to critical sources of funding and talent to fuel the growth of their business. This scale-up could include:

- The funding and expansion of existing financial institutions
- The creation of new sources of capital, such as angel investment groups dedicated to investing in Black-owned businesses
- Financial education for business owners to ensure awareness and preparedness
- Dedicated programs to market and promote Birmingham as a community of opportunity, as well as specific career opportunities at Black-owned firms
- Programs and resources designed to support talent retention at small businesses

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS



NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

With the understanding that a diverse workforce is essential to the ongoing economic vitality of its region, Vibrant Pittsburgh is building a thriving and inclusive region by attracting, welcoming, retaining, and elevating a diversity of talent in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This nonprofit organization accelerates the growth rate of diverse workers in its region by: (1) working with employers and community groups to organize, promote, and implement attraction and retention strategies, and (2) conducting targeted initiatives at national conventions, cultural festivals, and career fairs, and (3) serving as a central resource, spokesperson, and convener on inclusion issues.

IMPACT STORY



BBIF Florida is a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with a mission to help Black, minority, and underserved small businesses thrive by providing loan capital alongside business development training in the state of Florida. As of 2020, the organization has provided \$62.9 million in funding for small businesses, creating 14,717 jobs and retaining another 2,920. The organization prioritizes meeting local needs, including defining strategic areas of focus, offering technical assistance, and ensuring strong community outreach. As of 2022, the organization has hosted 477 community events and over 5,000 roundtable sessions.

INTERMEDIATE IDEAS: NEXT STEPS TOWARD COMMUNITY MINDSET

Birmingham still feels the generational trauma of legalized racism. Not only does inequality persist in the quality of neighborhoods, job opportunities, and rates of generational wealth, it is a part of the community mindset.

As one of our interviewees blatantly said: **“there is a perception that Black people in Birmingham can only go so far.”** This belief is supported by historic inequities that are maintained by modern-day realities, which have constrained economic opportunities for Birmingham’s Black residents. Resources for community and individual progress lag behind what is truly needed to generate social progress.

The goal of this project, to improve the economic and business support ecosystem for Birmingham’s Black businesses, would be for naught without a larger focus on how to break the barriers that uphold these generational inequalities. Improving the community mindset is improving the Black business ecosystem; improving the Black business ecosystem is shifting the community mindset. The two ideas are interconnected.

Birmingham’s mindset must first be examined as a whole. We hear consistently that the city should meet the standards of its Southern sisters, Atlanta, and Nashville. In data, the gaps between Birmingham and these models present themselves in low rates of business births, educational achievement, wage growth, and business size.

Specific to the Black community, these gaps loom even larger. The size of Black-owned businesses, the volume of existing businesses, wages, and education rates all lag behind the rest of the city. Pair this with increased levels of blight, vacancy, and disinvestment, one begins to see a bleak picture within Birmingham’s predominantly Black communities: quality of life and place are historically weakened, creating a perpetual feedback loop of negative outcomes.

“ GOAL

To identify key areas of investment that shift the mindset of the community, creating new opportunities and new narratives that catalyze economic prosperity in Birmingham.

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INTERMEDIATE IDEAS

How can this story of divestment and inequity be altered moving forward? Interviewees paint a clear picture of what has caused these issues: a lack of investment into placemaking, limited talent retention, dwindling cultures of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the limited creation of generational wealth through growth in jobs, businesses, and knowledge. Efforts have been made to create change in these areas, but as one of our interviewees said best: “you cannot use general solutions for specific racial issues in areas that have been discriminated against for 150 years.” It is clear that direct resources are needed to support community-changing initiatives in business creation, education, spaces, and social networks. These pillars can breed economic prosperity in the long term and are needed to shift longstanding disparities surrounding quality of life, place, and socioeconomic mobility based on race in the city.

A crucial part of this project is piecing together not only a stronger ecosystem but sustainable, change-making investments for the future. Birmingham’s inequities have long stood in the way of progress and prosperity for the Black community from the neighborhood to the city level. Though one project and plan will not uproot the realities of this situation, we hope to frame ideas that hold real weight and catalyze momentum to turn Birmingham into a place where all can succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1

CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Start with the youth and build clarity within career pathways, especially towards innovation and invention.

According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses create 62% of the nation's net new jobs. A strong ecosystem to support small business growth is key. Equally critical, however, is a culture of entrepreneurship, helping to ensure a viable pipeline of future founders and business owners who can contribute to the local economy. While an ecosystem and community culture are assets that can be held at the city level, additional diligence is needed when considering the Black community, which can be risk averse and wary of nontraditional pathways for career or financial investment.

This cultural shift is something that can begin at an early age, increasing exposure and awareness of K12 students to local entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship as a viable career path. Additionally, an intentional eye can be turned towards the communication and celebration of entrepreneurial activity, with emphasis on activity coming out of the Black community. This can take the form of an annual calendar of entrepreneurially-oriented events designed for participation from the broader community, shop local campaigns featuring local business owners, and dedicated features within local media.

The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham already does great work in driving investments that improve educational outcomes and communities in the city, creating thriving students and schools that breed better economic outcomes. Innovation Depot is working hard to ensure entrepreneurship in the city feels ‘cool,’ celebrating founders and the ideas they have, whether a formal business is born from them or not. Ideally, this sort of work would not only be expanded but refined to preach a unified mission and vision that all in Birmingham can participate in.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

In Louisiana, Junior Achievement of Greater New Orleans has developed the Trust Your Crazy Ideas Challenge, a statewide initiative that introduces high school students to the fundamentals of innovation and entrepreneurship, encouraging them to work in teams to develop a business plan that can be pitched to an audience of their peers and local business leaders. Student teams are partnered with local business owners who serve as mentors. Finalist teams compete for scholarship funding and funding for their respective high school. To date, \$250,000 has been provided in scholarships to students and schools across Louisiana.



INTERMEDIATE IDEAS

2

INVEST IN MAIN STREETS AND STRATEGIC BUSINESS CORRIDORS

Invest in storefronts, updates, and clean beautiful spaces that speak to culture and character.

Main streets and strategic corridors serve as the core of a community, bringing about business density, protecting neighborhood property values, and increasing the overall quality of life for neighborhood residents. In Birmingham, we see numerous strategic corridors, which have played critical roles in the economic, cultural, and civic history of the Black community, such as the Historic 4th Avenue Business District, the Civil Rights District, and corridors in Woodlawn, East Lake, and Ensley.

Many of the main streets and corridors historically thought of as critical to the Black community have experienced a decline from their historic heyday, either due to disinvestment, changes in residential patterns, or strategic policy and planning decisions that prioritized other areas. This stands in stark contrast to majority white communities that fall just outside of the city limits, such as Homewood, Vestavia, or Mountain Brook, where significant investments in commercial and residential development, neighborhood beautification, and amenities have increased the quality of place, quality of life, and overall sentiment surrounding the community.

As we heard in one interview, “what you see around you affects what you believe is possible for you and your community.” Investments in main streets and strategic corridors within majority Black communities will be critical to shifting the mindsets of residents, stakeholders, and potential investors.

Urban Impact and REV Birmingham, both local leaders in equitable community and economic development, have already laid the groundwork for practicing placemaking as a means of economic transition. Corridors, typically composed of small businesses, such as business service providers, restaurants, hair salons, and retail boutiques, have the potential to change the face of communities. As density is built, further investments can spill over from the main street core.

IMPACT STORY



Sweet Auburn is a historically Black neighborhood that lies just east of downtown Atlanta, Georgia, and features a critical corridor of businesses and historic buildings. Sweet Auburn Works is a nonprofit organization working to deploy Main Street America’s Main Street Approach within Sweet Auburn with goals to promote authentic community assets, organize pathways for local economic leadership, design and execute targeted infrastructure and building improvement, and provide economic guidance and restructuring that leads to community revitalization. As of 2017, Sweet Auburn has seen over \$155 million in investment, with another \$514 million in projects under construction or planned for completion, totaling \$689 million which includes 4,021 residential units, 4,300 square feet of retail and office space, and 532,500 square feet of institutional space.

3

SEED WEALTH CREATION FOR BLACK BUSINESSES AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Seeding Wealth Creation

Within the small business arena, we see Black small business owners struggling to meet similar levels of capital access as their white peers, even with equal qualifications. Data surrounding the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) affirmed this at a local and national level. Additional research has been executed, demonstrating the connectivity between low levels of Black business investment or capitalization and comparatively low levels of Black wealth and Black investor presence.

For example, at the national level, only 1% of venture-backed startups have a Black founder, and fewer than 3% of venture capital investors are Black, a set of statistics that many suggest indicates a direct correlation between numbers of investors and levels of investment. Similarly, Morgan Stanley executed research that found investors are more likely to focus on “fit” — a subjective term referring to an investor’s comfort or ability to relate to a founder — as a core requirement for investment. This subjectivity has created trends in the data that show a wide disparity in the investment community. This disparity spills over into the traditional lending community and holds grave implications for many Black business owners.

Effort must be placed into the work of Black wealth creation that can begin to turn the tide of experienced trends relative to small business capitalization and overall investment in Birmingham’s Black communities and businesses. Emphasis should be placed more immediately on increasing local wages and educating individuals who currently possess high net worth on the importance and tactics connected to local investing.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH



BLCK VC is a nonprofit organization designed to “connect, engage, empower, and advance Black venture investors.” They offer the Black Venture Institute, a curriculum-based model, designed in partnership with the Berkeley Haas School of Business and Berkeley Executive Education, dedicated to teaching Black potential investors the foundational elements to become angel and venture investors.

GENERATIONAL SHIFTS: QUALITY OF LIFE

The strategic recommendations reflected previously in this plan represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of the type of impact that can and must be achieved over time. Below are overarching outcomes to envision a future for Birmingham that is both equitable and inclusive.

1

AGGREGATE BLACK WEALTH

As strategies to seed Black wealth take hold, this movement towards accumulation can be aggregated to achieve greater impact within the city. Establishing investment funds, seeding new ventures, both for-profit and nonprofit, increasing homeownership, as well as helping to influence and shape local policy and planning can work to close the racial wealth gap and increase the overall quality of life for Black residents.

2

DIRECTLY ADDRESS EFFORTS FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Without addressing the legacy of the past, there is limited hope for a future that looks drastically different from today. Efforts to address the past and present realities of racism, both systemic and social, must be contended with and connected to real action to rectify and repair past ills. Work must be done to bridge the dissonance in lived experience between Black and white Birmingham. Program and resource providers must place radical intention and investment in programs that reconcile and repair past ills and that document and report out against the stories, strategies, and commitments resulting from this work.

3

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

For Birmingham's Black community to thrive it also must grow. This includes the cultivation of current talent — the community's Black youth and student population — as well as the attraction and retention of talent coming from outside of the city to pursue opportunities in Birmingham. This work includes the creation of good, well-paying jobs, as well as the intentional promotion of Birmingham where young, Black people can live, work, and thrive.

4

WHOLESCALE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Lastly, a clear commitment must be made surrounding community revitalization and reinvestment. Without even considering the data, the disparities between Birmingham neighborhoods are clear. Building up neighborhoods, supporting residents in pursuing home ownership and personal revitalization and beautification efforts, as well as larger scale investments in infrastructure, educational facilities, gathering spaces, and green space will honor the legacy of the past and honor the promise of tomorrow.



NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

In Long Beach, California, the Long Beach City Council adopted a four-part Framework for Racial Reconciliation that set-in place intentions to 1) acknowledge the existence and impact of systemic racism in Long Beach; 2) listen to the lived experience of residents impacted by racism; 3) convene stakeholders to consider programmatic, budgetary, and policy-oriented areas of investment; and 4) catalyze action to accelerate racial equity. Following a series of town halls, roundtables, listening sessions, and stakeholder convenings, an initial report was released in August 2020 that details specific actions the City is intending to take “to address anti-Black racism, advance racial equity, and create a vision for Long Beach’s future where race does not determine social and economic outcomes.” City staff and a broader stakeholder network are now working against the report’s action items.