

Falcon Heights Community Conversation 2: March 2, 2017

PRELIMINARY Analysis of Key Themes

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Background

Nearly 100 people attended the second in a series of five community conversations on inclusion and policing. The theme of this conversation was developing options for how the city can live out the community's values in its activities, policies, policing, and other practices. Information gathered at the community conversations will inform recommendations that the Falcon Heights Task Force on Inclusion and Policing will make to the Falcon Heights City Council in the spring of this year.

Values identified at first community conversation (February 16, 2017)

These are frequently expressed statements, grouped by theme. They are not consensus statements.

- **Educate Selves and Seek Diverse Perspectives:** Seeking out others perspectives and being genuinely open-minded. Listening to others, especially those we might not want to listen to. Recognizing our own individual implicit biases.
- **Embrace the Greater Good:** Creating a community beyond oneself and thinking beyond individual values. Working to harmonize the needs of all while understanding different individuals need different things.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Upholding that we all want the same things as human beings. Insisting that officers need to engage and care.
- **Equity and Equality:** Fairness, inclusivity and equal justice.
- **Forge Strong Relationships and Have Meaningful Communication:** Creating a community by welcoming more diversity and welcoming new people into neighborhoods. Making all feel welcome and important regardless of race or age. Having honesty, creativity, and transparency in communication.
- **Honesty and Accountability:** Expecting honesty from elected officials. Holding everyone accountable for actions. Upholding honesty and transparent communication in all directions.
- **Honor Shared Humanity:** Having mutual respect. Recognizing the value of everyone and treating everyone as human beings. Finding a shared dignity and positive regard for neighbors and officials.
- **Take Courageous Actions:** Speaking up when we see something happening. Challenging others when we see or hear hurtful actions and comments. Being engaged and take action. Sensing that it is our responsibility to fix this.

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Circle: Participants shared barriers to honoring the values (above) in city and community activities and polices, and policing policies and practices.

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- **Challenge of Sustained Change and Action:** New solutions and actions are needed to create change.
- **City Government Structures:** Policies within the city and a lack of mechanisms understand and monitor what is taking place within the community creates a barrier.
- **Complacency and Apathy and Inertia:** It can be easy to become tired, feel a lack of control, and not expend the energy to be involved. Change needs sustained energy and momentum and can be lost when people become consumed with daily lives. There is a long history of no change and status quo.
- **Fear and Discomfort:** Change can be scary and uncomfortable which can create resistance to moving forward.
- **Need for Accountability:** More accountability is needed for policy and city to realize values. There is blame being pointed at multiple people and groups.
- **Personal Responsibility to Get Out of Circles:** There is a need for personal action and desire to get to know other people when living out community values. Individuals need to interact and get to know others perspectives. Making the time and commitment to get out of personal circles often does not happen.
- **Policing Structures:** Current structure and values of policing stand in the way of living out the community values.
- **Privilege, Bias, and Racism:** Oppression, racism, white privilege, and biases must be recognized and addressed in order for the community values to be honored.

Circle: Participants shared ideas on what it would look like for the City of Falcon Heights to live out these values in city and community activities and polices, and policing policies and practices.

Strongest Themes

- **Community Based Policing:** Policies put in place to end stops for minor traffic offenses such as speeding and equipment malfunctioning and remove the monetary incentives for this type of enforcement. Move to a model of community policing where officers are out of their cars and engaging with community members. Police officers lead and organize neighborhood events where they can interact with community members and have a commitment to community involvement. Increase the communication between police officers and community members including ongoing listening session between the community and police.
- **Community Events and Activities that Foster Broadening Perspectives:** Numerous ideas shared for events to build community and foster learning about each other. Ideas included: community reading groups, workshops to explore cultural similarities and differences, inter-active culture sharing events that celebrate diversity, programs and

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opportunities for mutually beneficial exchanges between community members of different ethnicities and on-going community conversations.

- **Training for Police, City Staff, and Community Members:** Increase the amount and types of training offered to police. Training topics included implicit bias, diversity, de-escalation skills, healing and restorative justice, trauma-informed services, and individual coaching. Comments also reflected the need to offer training to city staff and community members.

Very Strong Themes

- **City Accountability:** Accountability and honesty by decision makers. Encourage the City Council to clarify their expectations of police officers and resource allocation. Action encouraged by the City Council to establish a community board or task force that has ability review and monitor police and the power to affect change and create accountability for law enforcement officials. Create continued space for citizen voice and participation.
- **Collect, Share, and Utilize Data on Policing Practices:** Report on policing to community members to ensure the values are being met and action is being taken when necessary. The city should monitor police data and increase the timeliness and visibility of data on the city website.
- **Neighborhood Level Community Building:** Encourage community members to get know your neighbors' stories, say hello to one another, and care about the welfare of fellow neighbors. Ideas to create a neighborhood engagement toolkit to encourage citizen participation and a neighborhood welcome letter to new community members inviting them to be involved.
- **Policing Policies and Practices that Align with Falcon Heights Values:** Use of de-escalation tactics. Increased level of transparency. Recognize difficulties and dangers police face. Create a culture of reflection and compassion.

Strong Themes

- **Consider Alternatives to Contracting with St. Anthony Police Department:** End the contract with St. Anthony Police and consider contracting with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office or creating a small Falcon Heights only police force.
- **Forums for Truth and Reconciliation:** Council should publicly apologize and take responsibility for death of Philando Castile. A specific idea is to have the city council commission a writer to create a case study, story, or play about the killing of Philando Castile that becomes a part of school curriculum, and could be part of wider community events. Forums for police to hear about the experiences of people of color.
- **Hire Diverse and Reflective Police Officers**
- **Housing:** Create more affordable housing in the community and create opportunities for disparate groups to purchase homes in Falcon Heights.
- **Personal and Collective Commitment to Education, Reflection, Reflection and Dialogue:** Create opportunities for youth to learn about diversity and inclusiveness at a

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young age. Individual and collective commitment to learn about each other and explore our own assumptions.

- **Utilize Terms of the Contract to Ensure that the City's Contracted Police Force Demonstrates the City's Values:** When considering future contracts, incorporate community values and create policies for steps to be taken when policing practices fail to meet these values.