

Lift Lakeland Overview



CITY COMMISSION PROPOSAL

September 19, 2020

Introduction:

The City Commission has focused on two critical needs during the first half of 2020. The first was to provide health safety as we learned how to battle the COVID virus. The second is to embrace the pivotal need to enhance inclusion by giving equal opportunities for all citizens more intentionally. This challenging moment in history is a period we must not squander. Winston Churchill summarized a similar time when during WWII he said:

“It would be foolish to disguise the gravity of the hour; it would be still more foolish to lose heart.”

As a Commission, we agree this is NOT a time to lose heart! Frankly, our nation’s protests opened opportunities to re-engage conversation, for which most citizens are grateful. The Commission has listened carefully to multiple to many community forums and is proposing several levels of specific solutions designed to bridge our most significant, immediate gaps. We are calling this initial plan: **Lift Lakeland**.

Although society first tends to look to the government to solve community problems, it is **people willing to do the heavy lifting while investing in others’ lives** that ultimately have the most profound impact. **Lift Lakeland** is a plan requiring substantial cooperation, ready availability, and initiative. The ultimate success is fueled by working together to level life’s playing fields during moments where we also want to foster a healthy economic recovery.

This initiative comes at a time when we must suppress defensive reactions and embrace transformational responses. This outline summarizes the broad scope of these potential opportunities. We are Lakeland. We care deeply about people. We can do this. Our goal is to **Lift Lakeland** together!

Humans can hurt one another. We all have had unkind things said to us. And, we have likely said cruel things about others. This behavior typically happens when we are hurt, mean-spirited, or jealous. A great gift we can provide and accept is a Fresh Start. It requires hitting the “clear” button on expectations while meeting the needs of others as we better understand their perceptions. A community effort desire to **Lift Lakeland** can help to provide a New Beginning. We can intentionally address many fronts simultaneously. This plan can become a catalyst and provide the synergy through

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concurrent efforts providing rewarding outcomes. These outcomes must build upon the foundations of ***increased trust*** and ***genuine heart-to-heart compassion***.

Despite our historical past, the ***Lift Lakeland*** plan focuses on how to motivate, inspire, and encourage every desiring participant. We are propelled by the desire to establish Equal Justice and Equal Opportunities for All! As we celebrate this 100th Year of Women's Suffrage, we can also provide greater equality as we ***Lift Lakeland*** together.

Lakeland's unique difference as a City is its Heart for People. It is ingrained in our history, philanthropy, and can be enhanced even more purposefully in the future! We win during ***Lift Lakeland*** by first seeking to Honor Everyone. This inclination is a genuine acknowledgment that no life is more valuable than another. It increases compassion and consideration, which generously compounds over time.

The Commission is recommending specific elements within this plan. Before addressing those, however, this is a starting framework. Its success requires short-term, mid-term, and long-range initiatives to be sustained. ***Lift Lakeland*** is not a government function, but rather, a community-wide effort that utilizes many different partnerships and a wide variety of connected expertise. It focuses on people, business, education, training, opportunity, and works towards a level playing field for justice. The result is a bond of community safety because of the confidence we increasingly have each others' backs.

We are not identifying, assigning, or highlighting specific partnerships (with a few defining exceptions.) We are confident organizations will "raise their hand" at portions of the plan they can best help absorb. Hence, if you are one of them, please take no offense and resist the tendency to think, "No one talked to us about this." This plan IS that conversation, and we want to be aware that being easily offended is another way to get sidetracked before we ever start. Furthermore, please recognize this is a start. It is our catalyst provision. It is the beginning and is built from the voices we've heard. There will be much more to add as we work together onto a more unified future.

Finally, we recognize these efforts will require oversight. A small committee or board might form to include those who have a passion for making it fruitful.

Economic & Educational Opportunities:

Academy & Career Exposure:

- 1) The overall academy goal is to increase a broader exposure provide in-depth early training for future career opportunities
- 2) Increase exposure of students to career fairs
- 3) Provide young adults (no longer in school) with similar career exposure opportunities in a sometimes different forum
- 4) Provide Polk County School Career Fair flyers broadly to any potential participants

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After School Program Enhancements:

- 1) Provide Civics Lessons Training and how laws work
- 2) Increase understanding of proper stop and arrest techniques to reduce feeling threatened when stopped by LPD; Citizens need to know their rights
- 3) Provide Personal Management Classes
- 4) Encourage Responsible Use of Social Media

Funding:

- 1) Seek local angel sources for crucial funding opportunities to help existing businesses or start-ups subject to corresponding training prerequisites
- 2) Review how bank financing can better represent the underserved businesses in our City and encourage more aggressive risks
- 3) Identify and consider additional LAMTD route extensions where job or training program needs exist but are not currently provided
- 4) Intentionally invest more aggressively in northwest Lakeland and near downtown minority businesses to expand their local scope
- 5) Create business partners for nearby schools to help provide finances for the educational needs for which there is not enough DOE budget

Hiring Practices:

- 1) Provide job fairs for companies who hire a minority workforce to expose candidates to job and career opportunities.
- 2) Encourage the Ban-the-Box initiative within Lakeland businesses to enhance the second chance opportunities to restore ex-prisoners into the workforce. This initiative is done by many national companies today (such as Facebook, Wal-mart, Target, and Starbucks.)
- 3) Address minority wage differentials as the median wages for Black workers in Tampa Bay are \$16.42 an hour, which is 21% less than white workers at \$20.90. (SOURCE: Tampa Bay 2020 Regional Equity Report just released)

Leadership Development:

- 4) Create programs like "Focus on Leadership" as specialty development programs for growing minority leadership training
- 5) Encourage increasing numbers of minority participants to attend the Chamber of Commerce's Policy Leadership Institute

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Mentoring:

- 1) Determine students who wish to have mentors and match with the most highly qualified mentor available
- 2) Utilize existing mentoring programs as effectively as possible

Training:

- 1) Utilize Catapult Co-Starter Courses for potential entrepreneurs
- 2) Provide existing business owners additional targeted training through Catapult, Score, Bridge or other aligned-for-needs entities
- 3) Host meetings at locations where they are deemed most effective for attending constituents
- 4) Assist newer food truck ventures in having an opportunity to be on-site regularly at Yard at Mass
- 5) Create restoration programs for convicted felons to help them be re-hirable

Community Opportunities:

Courageous Community Conversations:

- 1) Utilize the opportunity to meet and build relationships with citizens with different backgrounds across our community
- 2) Courageous Community Conversations will begin virtually or in-person (starting in October) to have four monthly meetings with the same 10 – 14 person group of ethnically mixed participants. Seek to start with at least 40 – 50 groups.
- 3) At the last meeting, each group will record a video recapping what was learned from one another and highlighting deeper appreciations gained.
- 4) The second round of Conversations will start in the Spring. Many of the first round participants will be encouraged to host and participate in the second round allowing several thousand Lakelanders to build relationships across the community.

NOTE: To sign up to participate in Courageous Community Conversations, email Kelvin McCree, Coordinator @ kelvin@mylaserfocus.com

Faith-Based Programs:

- 1) Organize and support after-school programs for additional homework training and computer access, as available

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- 2) Post awareness of community opportunities for prayer such as Day of Unity occurring on September 26 which addresses the spiritual needs of desiring Citizens
- 3) Utilize Dream Center increasingly to help equip job training and funnel personnel needs from companies as well as to ID transportation and other physical requirements for employment

Not for Profit Organizations:

- 1) Increase exposure to the many existing NFP organizations and programs with a single website highlighting what makes each program unique (this can become part of A – Z Lakeland discussed later)
- 2) Encourage broader recruitment and participation within existing civic clubs and also increase minority exposure of existing businesses and services through the programs clubs seek to present
- 3) Utilize organizations like Junior Achievement more effectively throughout the City schools (and the County)

Sports Programs:

- 1) FCA – utilize their staff to equip coaches with many character programs, as coaches serve as heroes and role models in many students' lives
- 2) Support and expand the FX Kids Inner City Sports program (currently very useful in building quality young adults in Winter Haven)
- 3) Promote efforts, where possible, like Kidane Henry's Crystal Lake Middle School Soccer Academy concept.
- 4) Consider other mentoring program opportunities for non-sports students, as well.

City of Lakeland:

Career Camps & Leadership Opportunities:

- 1) Examine the availability of National Leadership Training Programs
- 2) Create Career Exposure Summer Camps
- 3) Provide input opportunities for younger minority voices through targeted social media or discussion forums via COL Communications Dept

Eliminate the Digital Divide:

- 1) Fully secure the bridging broadband investment required to eliminate all areas of the Digital Divide currently existing within the City of Lakeland

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- 2) Work to ensure enough device access is available for students through the input from existing neighborhood associations or local churches

Capital Improvement Project Funding:

- 1) Look for balance in expenditures across all quadrants of the City
- 2) Address most critical needs on a neighborhood area basis where it is determined to be deficient
- 3) Continue to expand the City's Affordable Housing units and include programs that can accompany some of the more missional P3's (such as LiFT Academy in Seminole, FL)
- 4) Consider creating an Affordable Housing Trust Fund as a second source of funding for Affordable Housing
- 5) When corporations are receiving incentive benefits from the City of Lakeland to bring their business, enhance their earn back opportunities by crediting Lakeland employees with a 2-for-1 credit for earn back purposes. Make COL citizens a more attractive reward for them.

Housing Opportunities:

- 1) Recognize the need to provide an increasing number of affordable housing opportunities and solicit the public-private partnerships even more aggressively.
- 2) Create neighborhoods that are diverse, dynamic, and creative.
- 3) Continue to offer and enhance northwest Lakeland's fill-in empty lot housing options.

Human Engagement Opportunities – practical steps immediately available:

- 1) On the street, greet people with a smile and hello when passing one another. Adopt the 10-foot rule: If people are within 10 feet, greet them and look them in the eye. It makes us all feel grateful and that we are visible.
- 2) When in the room for a meeting with people you know, look for those in the room that no one is talking with and greet them.
- 3) When you hear a racist stereotype or joke, challenge it. Be unwilling to allow someone else to demean another and express why it is essential not to do so.
- 4) Find books to read about other races or written by different race authors than your own. Celebrate diversity through literacy.
- 5) Get comfortable with being uncomfortable when talking with other races. It is better to say "the wrong thing" than be silent. Be willing to learn along the way.
- 6) Make sure others know their opinions matter to you.

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Increase Intern Opportunities:

- 1) Create at least 20 Summer Internship Opportunities within the staff functions of the City of Lakeland to provide exposure to future job opportunities
- 2) Encourage expansion of minorities on Citizen panels and boards increasingly

Policing – Community Commitment from our Safety Guardians:

- 1) Continually enhance Ethics & Relationship Training to eliminate antagonistic actions and ensure fair and impartial policing protecting an individual's dignity whenever possible; apologize if handled inappropriately
- 2) Use hiring practices seeking candidates with integrity and character; encourage Citizen recommendations of local minority candidates interested in serving; work to increase racial diversity
- 3) Maximize technology, which minimizes profiling, and consider Body Cameras as an option for LPD. Discuss the merits as a Commission and identify Implementation Steps required to do so.
- 4) Request LPD Citizens' Advisory Council provide quarterly updates to Community groups interested in attending – increase opportunities throughout the year to listen to ongoing concerns
- 5) Protect and support officers wellness and safety as a City
- 6) Enhance LPD's use of social media to communicate with Citizens
- 7) Educate Citizens as to why defunding police is destructive to a community vs. recognizing that flagrant offenses are a heart problem

Other Resources:

A – Z Lakeland Library & Other Means:

- 1) Consider Ahmad Taylor's recent recommendation to create an easy-to-access online resource tool that consolidates information about essential community resources that will help expose students to a wide age-range of career opportunities and NFP organizations.
- 2) Utilize LkldNow, LAL Today, The Ledger and other media sources to inform our community on enhancing racial-engagement opportunities
- 3) Consider a minority art celebration in the Spring which enhances cultural celebrations and themes struggles and accomplishments

Polk County School Board Career Tool:

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- 1) Utilize PCSB Kuder access site for further refining career guidance by students
- 2) Parents can work alongside students to maximize the use of this resource and build a student profile aligned to their skills and interests
- 3) Provide technological tools required to equally meet the needs of all students (tablets for distance learning, etc.) and identify other school needs as individuals or businesses help to sponsor schools through the Chamber of Commerce's ***Reopen Lakeland*** program.

Racial problems, at their core, are a depravity problem, as was mentioned during our Community Forum on Race Relations Unity. As a result, racial strife can result when one race of individuals attempts to overpower another when, in fact, as our Constitution provides for the fact we are all created equally. Overcoming prejudice, personal bias, and assumptive stereotypes are habits we must all hone as individuals. We do this best when we build relationships.

Relationships are so meaningful. Yet, as we continually strive to provide more parity, the individuals must seize those opportunities as they occur. As a society, we cannot "fix" everyone's problems, and life is challenging and messy. As involved friends, however, we can come alongside those struggling and encourage them towards more success. We can encourage them to persist when they may not fully believe in themselves. Other people did that for most of us! Investing in an individual matters to that person and can help change the outcomes of their life.

Lift Lakeland provides a footprint to accelerate our journey together. As we move to increase equality intentionally, we also increase inclusion. We do this by using existing organizations, existing programs, and caring citizens to affect most of the change. ***Lift Lakeland*** helps us do so more intentionally. How do we make that happen? One person at a time . . . one opportunity at a time . . . one organization at a time . . . one heart at a time.

As we do this, we become a better us. Individually, we invest in the change we want to see, and Lakeland becomes an even better place to live!