Equity Advisory Group Findings, Community Discussion
Presented at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, October 20, 2021

Quality of Life and Neighborhoods

What the Advisory Group Found

Barriers:

- Structural Barriers/Root Causes that Contribute to Poverty
  o Income and tax inequality
  o Stagnating low wages
  o Reduced public investment
  o Inadequate public benefits, detrimental exclusions, and restrictions
  o Lack of access to quality education
  o Lack of access to affordable health care and housing
  o Institutional racism
  o Criminalization of the poor
  o Restrictive immigration policies
    o Predatory practices

- Exclusionary and Restrictive Practices and Policies
  o Truancy and zero tolerance policies that lead children to drop out of school
  o Traffic fines and fees leave 500K without a valid license
  o Government fees and fines that must be paid in lump sum
  o Making criminals out of victims like young people trafficked into prostitution, gang activity
  o Releasing prisoners without education, skills, money, housing, health care or identification
  o Erecting barriers to employment, benefits, and housing for former felons
  o Putting children into foster care because the parent is poor

Suggestions:

- Complete a current housing needs assessment to include available and healthy housing
- Increase pathways to equitable housing options and homeownership including educational component outlining the benefits and sustaining homeownership
- Connect residents and assets/resources through impact centers
- Explore and expand wellness and recreational assets
  o Nutrition
  o Cultural sensitivity

What the Community Told Us

Obstacles:

- Discrimination
- Political and financial support
- Pristine housing units exposed by condemned properties
• Response to housing grievances
• Homelessness, mental illness, drug addiction, gun violence
• Lack of resources for:
  o Healthy food
  o Youth
  o Preventative services
  o Investments
• Lack of agencies such as Boys & Girls Club (West and East Utica), YWCA Girls Programs, and Neighborhood Centers
• Language barriers and access to resources
• Access to Healthcare Providers that accept Medicare and Medicaid
• Urban Renewal

Solutions:
• Create and provide educational opportunities such as:
  o Parental classes
  o Homeownership
• Improve infrastructure such as transportation, street cleaning, and sidewalk repair
• Rehab and refurbish residential and abandoned homes
• Implement Homeless First programs
• Provide wrap around services
• Read book “My Grandmother’s Hands”

Quotes:
“We need a Human Rights Commission.”

“75% of the hardest to house population are released from Program.”