

Community Dialogue Action Plan with Updates **Updated on October 3, 2023**

The city received extensive input and ideas from over 200 residents during the course of the Community Dialogue meetings and outreach in 2020. Based on that input and discussions by council committees and staff, the full Lakewood City Council approved a Community Dialogue Action Plan on January 26, 2021.

1. Create a Council Committee on Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This Committee will provide an ongoing mechanism for the council to review, discuss and recommend actions related to racial equity and the goals of the Community Dialogue. Creating a permanent Council Committee devoted to this subject signifies the Lakewood City Council's serious and ongoing desire to carry out work on this important issue.

UPDATE: The council created this committee on January 26, 2021 and the committee held ongoing meetings in the years since, providing guidance to staff on the Action Plan.

2. Create a regular public Roundtable on Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The REDI Roundtable meetings will allow any member of the public to attend, discuss and recommend actions related to racial equity and the goals of the Community Dialogue. This will allow all interested residents to have an ongoing mechanism for discussion and input on these important matters. It's envisioned that two City Council Members will attend each Roundtable and do so on a rotating basis, with one member usually being a member of the REDI Council Committee.

UPDATE: Initially, two Town Hall meetings on Zoom were held in September 2020. Then, the first REDI Roundtable meeting took place on Zoom on April 24, 2021 where residents offered feedback on the Action Plan and discussed other subjects. Additional Roundtables (in person) were held in October 2021 and 2022, with another scheduled for October 2023. Future meetings will take place regularly to keep the community updated and to continually seek input from Lakewood residents.

3. Create a Lakewood Multicultural Festival and Food Festival. This was suggested by several members of the public during the Community Dialogue. The City Council thought it was a great idea, and directed staff to begin planning for an annual event in Lakewood as soon as possible in accordance with public health safeguards.

UPDATE: With the goal of highlighting the wide range of cultures that Lakewood is proud to have as part of its community today, the City of Lakewood organized and held its first Fest-Of-All music and food festival on Oct. 9, 2021 outside Lakewood Center mall. Over 10,000 Lakewood residents and guests attended. The city received extensive positive feedback from residents about the event. Some residents were quoted as saying that they "loved the vibe" and the experience provided "good food, good people, good music, all the things people love."

The second Annual Fest-Of-All took place October 8, and the third Fest-Of-All is scheduled for Saturday, October 14. Staff again expect 10,000-plus attendees this year. The event will feature a

selection of international food cuisines through a combination of food trucks and food booths. There will again be two stages; a musical stage with two bands showcasing international and popular music and a cultural stage with five performances of various dances and demonstrations of a regional nature. A Children's Cultural Booth will offer children exposure to crafts and activities from around the world. Newly added in 2022 was an art and poetry showcase for elementary through high school students. Submissions will be on display inside Lakewood Center the week leading up to the event and will be brought outdoors to showcase the day of. Finally a Passport to the World is offered for youth. The passport will encourage kids to visit the community and display booths where children will receive prizes for completing their passports.

4. Provide training on racial sensitivity and inclusion to City officials and staff. The City has provided anti-discrimination training to its staff for many years, and the City provided an additional round of training to all staff in the summer of 2020 following the George Floyd killing. However, following up on the recommendations from the Community Dialogue, the City Council directed staff to research additional training that could be provided. The City has joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) which will provide Lakewood with access to best practices and specialized training in this area.

UPDATE: The City held a four-hour long racial diversity and sensitivity awareness workshop for all City staff, council members and officials in August 2021. It was very well received by attendees, and the training was led by Eric Bailey, who facilitated Lakewood's Town Hall Community Dialogues in 2020. The city intends to continue with regular similar trainings in the future and have these important REDI-related conversations and events with our staff.

5. Enhance the City's work with teens on racial equity. The City operates two Teen Centers in Lakewood and manages the Lakewood Teen Action Committee, comprised of approximately 30 teens, who meet regularly to discuss current topics and carry out volunteer projects. The LTAC has not met since COVID began, but City staff propose to incorporate racial equity discussions in the LTAC in the future and to publicize the LTAC and the Teen Centers more to our residents to increase participation and knowledge of the programs.

UPDATE: The city's Teen Center plans to expand the focus of the Lakewood Teen Action Committee (LTAC) to racial equity and diversity discussions and topics. The LTAC operated the Children's Cultural Booth at the Fest-Of-All event, and the City is considering ways that the Youth in Government program can have a REDI-related topic of research for the coming year. An initial discussion with some LTAC members yielded ideas on where they could volunteer that address diversity and inclusion and plans for upcoming meetings will cover a broader range of REDI-related topics.

Staff continue to rebuild teen programs as youth return to school and recreation programming following the pandemic. The Lakewood Teen Action Committee and Youth in Government are currently in the registration phase with the start of the new school year. Once participants are selected, teens will have the opportunity to discuss ongoing hot topics amongst their counterparts. REDI topics will be discussed, specifically within the Youth in Government program.

6. Organize more community talks with the Sheriff's Department. Several members of the public recommended this during the Town Halls. Over the past three years, the city has greatly increased the number of such talks and gatherings, including Coffees with a Deputy, a new Ice Cream with a Deputy, and several community meetings with deputies and city public safety staff during 2019. Obviously, many of these gatherings could not take place in 2020 once COVID hit. But this year, the city has started organizing virtual meetings on Zoom and has stepped up its publicity of those meetings so that more residents are aware of them. This will be a good way to encourage more people to participate and build on Lakewood traditionally strong community law enforcement relations.

UPDATE: In 2021 the city held numerous in-person or Zoom meetings for the public to meet Sheriff's personnel and city public safety staff and discuss any issues of concern...as well as hear safety tips on topics like reducing your risk of auto thefts and home burglaries. The Zoom meetings allowed residents to participate easily from the comfort of their homes. The in-person meetings allowed residents to have a more personalized interaction with Sheriff's personnel and city public safety staff. Starting in 2021, the city also began organizing a National Night Out every August attended by hundreds of residents and public safety personnel, as well as regular "Coffee with a Deputy" seasonal events. Find out about the next event by checking the calendar at www.lakewoodcity.org/PublicSafetyEvents.

The city is implementing a similar level of vigorous outreach and engagement in 2023 as it had done in the previous two years. We have successfully returned to in-person meetings and events for the public to meet Sheriff's personnel and city public safety staff to discuss any issues of concern...as well as hear safety tips on topics like reducing your risk of auto thefts and home burglaries. The in-person meetings allowed residents to have a more personalized interaction with Sheriff's personnel and city public safety staff. In 2022 and 2023, the city also organized a series of eight Neighborhood Watch Connect meetings during the summer where residents had an opportunity to hear about the city's Public Safety team and policing model, crime prevention programs including Neighborhood Watch and learn about homelessness and traffic safety in Lakewood. Find out more information about Public Safety crime prevention programs and events at www.lakewoodcity.org/PublicSafety.

7. Create neighborhood-level or park-level events for residents to meet their neighbors. Another recommendation from residents in the Community Dialogue was the idea of creating some smaller sized events at the neighborhood level where residents could meet each other.

UPDATE: The City Council thought this was a great idea, and staff has been looking into how to do these with respect to public health precautions. A topic of the August 2021 REDI Committee meeting was a proposal for morning walking clubs and evening coffee/ice cream socials at each Lakewood park, where residents could meet and talk with each other. Proposed events starting in Spring 2022 include family game nights at several parks and community walks, each with light refreshments and an opportunity to get to know neighbors.

Two Family Game nights took place in the spring of 2022. There were 48 participants at the first event, and 27 at the second. Participants had the opportunity to engage with neighbors in friendly, competitive fun. Two additional family game nights were organized in the fall of 2022.

Two Community Walks took place in April 2022 and then again in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. There were approximately 60 participants at the first event, and 40 at the second. Participants joined neighbors on a walk around the park, finishing with refreshments and discussions. Council Members frequently join residents on the walks, engaging in meaningful discussion on topics pertinent to each location.

8. Publicize the public complaint process for the Sheriff's Department and the business discrimination process of the state and federal governments. Several residents raised concerns in this area, including allegations of racially discriminatory behavior by local businesses. The City Council directed to staff to publicize the complaint process that exists for the Sheriff's Department and the state and federal business discrimination agencies so that Lakewood residents are fully aware of how to protect their rights in these matters. The city will also publicize its longstanding fair housing consultant who assists residents who believe they may be victims of housing discrimination.

UPDATE: There was a news story on this in the city's eMagazine the week of April 19, 2021...and an article in the Lakewood Community News on May 1, 2022. The city has republished the articles in 2022 and 2023, and will continue doing so on an annual basis.

9. Unite members of different community groups in volunteer service projects. In follow up to another recommendation of the Community Dialogue, the City looked at ways to intermix members of different community groups at future Volunteer Day and other volunteer service projects. The hope was to promote interaction with lots of other community groups, with the goal of increasing awareness, friendship and collegiality among as many groups and people as possible in the city.

UPDATE: City staff implemented this idea for the Day of Service on September 11, 2021. Eight groups were paired at four sites to serve residents on this meaningful day. In April 2022, at the traditional Volunteer Day, staff offered all groups the opportunity to pair if they would like. Creating partnerships proved more difficult at this full-scale event where volunteer groups—especially youth driven organizations—came with a desire to tackle sites best matching their abilities and interests. Some sites required tools and skills of a highly technical nature, making some pairings prohibitive from the outset. Staff have made it a standard for screening volunteer groups to solicit their interest if pairings remain an option at all future volunteer days.

10. Educate residents on the city motto of "Times Changes, Values Don't." The motto was mentioned by a few residents in the Community Dialogue, and it became clear that some people may not realize that the city's motto is not from the city's founding in 1954 but instead was created in 2004 and was meant to convey timeless community values such as recreation for all, beautiful neighborhood parks, well-maintained streets and infrastructure, volunteerism, and public safety as well as diversity and tolerance.

The motto was not meant in any way to reflect the housing and other discrimination that regrettably existed throughout the nation in the 1950s, including in Lakewood. Public education on the city motto will be an opportunity to educate residents on the history of discrimination in our nation...including Lakewood in the early 1950s...and also on the positive progress towards diversity that has been made in the years since, especially in Lakewood, which has been identified as one of California's "most diversifying cities." This public education effort will be another opportunity to articulate for our residents the goals of Lakewood's Community Dialogue process.

UPDATE: The REDI Committee directed staff to publish a news article on this topic, which will be published in January 2022 in print and electronic formats. The article was again used in mid-2022 when the city applied for and won a Helen Putnam Award of Excellence for its REDI programming from the League of California Cities. The city plans to continue to inform residents of the very regrettable history of housing and other discrimination in Lakewood and many suburbs in America in the 1950s, and of Lakewood's thankful evolution to become one of California's most broadly diverse communities, with a mission statement that includes being a welcoming community to all.

Actions already taken by the City that should be continued.

UPDATE: In early 2021, they approved a resolution committing the city to annually commemorate and provide public education on nine calendar months and days related to "race, equity, diversity and inclusion." The city now actively recognizes these months through proclamations, news articles and social media posts.

Those calendar commemorations include:

1. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday...which, the city has long recognized, but is now committing to do so with significant public education (January).
2. Black History Month (February)
3. Women's History Month (March)
4. Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May)
5. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Pride Month (June)
6. Juneteenth Day (June 19)
7. National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15-Oct 15)
8. National Disability Awareness Month (Oct).
9. Native American Heritage Month (Nov)