



**CONCORD AND CARLISLE
THROUGH A DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION LENS
November 10, 2022**

**Summary of “Where do we go from here?” Breakout Groups
How do we make Concord & Carlisle more welcoming to non-white groups?**

Use of Media to educate and increase awareness of Concord’s diversity:

- Highlight non-white members of the community in stories in the Concord Bridge, including sports stories. Show more diversity.
- Publicize more of the little-known history of Concord, perhaps in conjunction with the Robbins House (e.g., report on Brister’s Hill or Jennie Dugan and other persons of color (POC) in Concord’s history).
- Reach out to the Nipmuc Nation (<https://www.nipmucnation.org>) or one of the other indigenous peoples who were traditionally in this area, to present their own vision of Concord’s history.
- The new Concord Bridge offers a great opportunity to educate the community about ways where we do not measure up in terms of DEI. A regular column on this topic would be of value. Perhaps a series of interviews with people who are underrepresented in Concord’s population; i.e., people who live here who may contribute stories of how they are excluded and unfairly treated. Perhaps include interviews with people who have chosen to live in neighboring towns that are more diverse than Concord.

Opportunities to celebrate and improve diversity in our community:

- The Town should consider having a celebration (similar to AG Day) to highlight the different cultures present in our community. This was done in the past as part of the UN Day celebration/street fair, with food trucks, ethnic crafts, ethnic music, etc.
- Undertake planning for the 250th Anniversary through a DEI lens. Work in conjunction with committees, transportation officials, National Park Service and others to ensure that diverse people, histories, stories and perspectives are considered in commemorations, celebrations and monuments. Optimize opportunities to get more people from more diverse metropolitan areas to Concord. Create opportunities for transit solutions that make Concord and MMNHP more accessible.

- Champion diversity as a community asset, with value for all, not a cause of “noblesse oblige.”
- Celebrate Racial Amity Day or Juneteenth Day more visibly. Include more ethnic booths at Picnic in the Park. Re-enactment of Frederick Douglas speech (Robbins House to assist).
- Encourage more diverse productions and events throughout Concord (51 Walden, Chamber of Commerce, Public Celebrations Committee, Emerson Umbrella).

Housing Issues – how have other towns accomplished more diversity? Housing Issues in Concord:

- Acton has active and visible minority communities (notably Indian and Brazilian)—how have they been supported or welcomed? Can the LWVCC reach out to counterparts in Acton to find out?
- Acton, Sudbury & Lexington have all been more successful in developing diverse housing. How was this managed? Can LWVCC research this?
- Why have some affordable housing projects in Concord failed? Can a “lessons learned” document be prepared? Invite developers to propose family housing for the former Christopher Heights site.
- Address tension between conservation advocates and affordable housing needs—tendency for land conservation efforts/arguments to be exclusionary.
- Work to make home buying more open (zoning requirements). Other municipalities have adapted/adjusted/amended zoning to make local housing available to more people—why can’t this be done in Concord? Take open land and create a combination of conservation and some percentage of it dedicated to affordable housing. Be more creative. Seek models in other towns.
- We see and enjoy large areas of conservation land in Concord. Concord decision makers (Select Board, Land Conservation Trust, NRC and others who promote conservation) to incorporate affordable housing into land conservation plans, as was recently done with the Assabet River Bluff conservation land.
- Alongside Concord’s large tracts of conservation land are large houses with big yards. Current zoning regulations are not sufficiently restrictive to this large-scale development, and we should challenge them. Diversity and inclusion call for regulations that provide for smaller and truly affordable homes throughout town.
- Provide more opportunities for mixed-use zoning, where businesses and residences are combined. A successful example of this is the Whole Foods market area in Sudbury. Concord should work to revive and revisit the recently defeated recommended zoning changes at the intersection of Sudbury Road/Thoreau Street—that ended up being more of an effort to keep people out rather than an attempt to be more inclusive.

- Encourage making apartments available near transportation centers. Perhaps some of the buildings on Bradford Street could be converted into apartments.
- Make affordable housing more available to more people is an outstanding and urgent theme. There is a need for zoning changes in order to make multiple unit housing easier to build. Duplexes and accessory dwelling options were suggested. Extending the “by right” options for multi-unit and accessory apartments beyond Zoning District C was emphasized. Identify the areas where more dense zoning can be accommodated. Needed sewage improvements are essential to consider if this is going to happen.
- How can we change zoning to encourage higher-density housing options?
- Develop opportunities and incentives for people with large land tracts to donate some of their land for multi-family housing.
- What type of affordable housing do we want to create? The need to provide for families and for people who work here is one need to address. Do not consign affordable housing to “project-like” developments. Important to spread affordable housing throughout town. Don’t just avoid 40B—the goal is to provide housing. Okay to preserve some open space in the process, but the two goals can work together.
- Addressing economic diversity first (including increasing affordable housing inventory) is important—the ethnic diversity will fall into place.
- Consider the Town purchasing land and granting a long-term lease of the land to a developer, to decrease the cost of development.
- How do we make Concord more welcoming to people of color—building more affordable housing is only the first step—how do we make sure that Concord is a place where minority groups want to live? Is it enough to make affordable housing available?
- Family housing ownership—consider partnering with builders who are willing to look at developing land bordering conservation areas.

School Issues:

- Work with school officials, community groups (COAR, METCO) to increase outreach to school families who are diverse. Connect host families and organizations (Library, Emerson Umbrella) to provide programs that integrate METCO families into activities in Concord.
- What is the educational impact of more affordable housing?
- Return METCO to all elementary schools, not just at Alcott.
- Better incorporate METCO families into the community, as well as people of color who live here.
- Micro-aggression incidents at schools—make data about incidents more transparent. Consider restorative practices.

- Encourage Concord students/families to go into Boston on city tours/historical sites/Jericho Road.

Actions to be taken by Town of Concord officials:

- Request that the Town of Concord remove offensive terms from street signs and other named places. Perhaps replace or add some signage to highlight the lesser-known history of POC in Concord.
- Provide funding for the Town’s DEI Commission (Town Manager & Select Board).
- Provide DEI training for all areas of the Town’s workforce (not just managers).
- Increase public awareness of DEI issues. Police should explain “suspicious behavior” in Police Blotter.
- Provide more coordinated care/social support for newcomers (social services; welcoming committee; coordination with police, businesses, schools).
- Increase diversity in Concord’s workforce. What steps/efforts are being made?
- Improve signage to incorporate languages other than English into traffic and safety signage.
- Fund/invest in minority-owned businesses, pop-up restaurants, food trucks, shops.

Opportunities for Education and increasing awareness of DEI issues in Concord:

- Develop forums for adults to have difficult and frank discussions about DEI, race and racial justice. One example—plantation bell discussion at Concord Museum with Robbins House. Another example is the multiple community engagement events around the Umbrella’s The Colored Museum show and gallery exhibition, including the Robbins House, Town African American History tours, and Black Artist talkbacks. Today’s children have more opportunities to encounter diverse perspectives and discuss topics of race, equity, difference and acceptance than most adults had as children.
- Consider creating “sister organizations” with urban groups (e.g., urban sister churches); create real exchanges where organizations visit and engage in each other’s communities.
- Incidents discussed where persons of color were harassed, such as neighbors calling the Police because a person of color was sitting in his/her car eating a sandwich, and recent incidents at the schools.
- Offer a self-education course on “Dismantling Racism in our Towns,” possibly through Adult & Community Education.
- Sponsor a community author series on DEI issues (Library, Concord Bookshop).

- Encourage faith communities to study “white privilege” and engage in dialog. Encourage collaborations across our faith communities.
- Diversity is an asset that should be valued in our community—change the dialog.

General comments and recommendations:

- Acknowledge and recognize the shifts in age and ethnic demographics. Noted increase in South Asian families with younger children who don’t always feel welcomed. Enlist schools to help create welcoming environments, possibly expand programs, holidays, and commemorations to be more inclusive.
- Ethnic and economic equity are different threads and both need to be discussed.
- What is “whiteness?” What assumptions are we making about our own views of the world, without knowing or acknowledging the world view and experiences of other groups? How do we motivate the faith communities to make this a primary area of discussion and reflection?
- Consider the relevance of Transcendentalism or Nature as a unifying force, as mentioned by visionaries of various race identification—white, black, indigenous.
- Focus on universal and unifying experiences, such as nature and music as a means to get out of our habitual and presumed ways of thinking; i.e., make room to hear and understand others better.
- Question using the term “welcoming,” as if we were the primary hosts; patronizing phrase. “Belonging” and “inclusion” may be more appropriate.
- Encourage folks to speak up when they see a problem or something wrong. Be truthful in our discourse with each other.
- Does Concord have a “culture of apathy” towards DEI issues?
- There should be more transparent reporting of racially-charged incidents in the Schools, Police, Businesses, Town Offices, etc.
- There is no public transportation from the commuter rail to other parts of Concord.
- Bring back “welcome wagon” or something similar (through neighborhood groups, churches, newspaper) to better “plug in” newcomers to the community and provide a safety net. Include renters.
- Recognize that July 4th means something different to an enslaved person, as does Thanksgiving to an Indigenous person.