RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF KNOXVILLE TO
ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE
FOR PAST ACTIONS HURTNG
AFRICAN AMERICANS AND TO
ADDRESS EQUITY RESTORATION

RESOLUTION NO: R-367-2020

REQUESTED BY: Vice Mayor McKenzie

PREPARED BY: Council

APPROVED: 12-15-2020

APPROVED AS AN EMERGENCY
MEASURE: 

MINUTE BOOK: 84 PAGE

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Knoxville acknowledges we are a City that embraces racial diversity and seeks to treat everyone equitably with respect and dignity; and

WHEREAS, City Council recognizes that in order to begin healing and restoration in our African American community, we must acknowledge the hurt in our history inflicted on African Americans; therefore, City Council acknowledges the history of racial injustice and disenfranchisement toward African Americans in our City; and

WHEREAS, City Council acknowledges in 1959 through the federal program known as Urban Renewal, Black communities, Black businesses, religious and education institutions were demolished to allow for expanded public infrastructure to support the downtown city sector; and

WHEREAS, the tremendous losses included over one-hundred Black businesses, fifteen churches, and the displacement of more than 2500 people; and most importantly the loss of community, security and the opportunity to thrive; and
WHENAS, Urban Renewal brought unprecedented anguish to a community that had previously suffered destruction and injustice following the Race Riots of 1919 (better known as “The Red Summer”). Black citizens who lived through both historic events bore witness to the racism, oppression and trauma that plagued many Black communities; and

WHENAS, during Urban Renewal many Black families and businesses were forced to relocate from long established communities with no clear path to economic prosperity in Knoxville; and

WHENAS, poor Black families declined further into poverty and were moved into the newly developed housing projects and Black families left isolated in segregated areas were denied the opportunity for home ownership because of “redlining;” and

WHENAS, the unintended consequences of Urban Renewal resulted in the creation of generational poverty in Knoxville’s Black communities; and

WHENAS, while Urban Renewal ended in 1974, the implications of segregation and Urban Renewal are still visible today as 42% of Black residents in Knoxville are living in poverty which continues to create a significant wealth gap; and

WHENAS, City Council intends to create an African American Equity Restoration Task Force to identify strategic solutions to improve areas of disparity and disenfranchisement in the Black community and work with existing agencies in the community; and

WHENAS, the African American Equity Restoration Task Force will be comprised of business, community, financial, education, faith, healthcare, youth and city leaders; and

WHENAS, City Council requests the administration to allow the Community Empowerment Department to work with the African American Equity Restoration Task Force to identify strategic solutions to improve areas of disparities and disenfranchisement in the Black community, work with existing agencies in the community, and develop policy and programs that will establish opportunities for generational wealth building in the Black community; and
WHEREAS, City Council requests that the administration make a financial commitment of $100 million by applying for local, private, state and federal grants over a ten year period to support strategic solutions as recommended by the African American Equity Restoration Task Force.

WHEREAS, City Council requests that the administration create within the budget a designated part wherein all monies are accounted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KNOXVILLE:

SECTION 1: City Council hereby acknowledges and apologizes for its predecessors participating in and sanctioning the enslavement of Black people.

SECTION 2: City Council apologizes for its predecessors participating in and enforcing segregation and its accompanying discriminatory practices.

SECTION 3: City Council apologizes for its predecessors carrying out an Urban Renewal program that resulted in destroying Black businesses and Black communities.

SECTION 4: City Council acknowledges that systemic racism was created over centuries and will take intentional measures and time to dismantle.

SECTION 5: City Council urges the administration to commit to the investment of resources in order to create opportunities for economic equity for Knoxville’s African American population to thrive.

SECTION 6: City Council urges the administration to commit to hold all City offices accountable for ensuring equity is achieved in all departments.

SECTION 7: City Council acknowledges having an African American population of 17% while 42% of that population lives at the poverty level is unacceptable and commits to address this disparity.

SECTION 8: City Council express its intent to create the African American Equity Restoration Task Force to study the situation and to help develop future policy.

SECTION 9: This Resolution shall take effect from and after its passage, the welfare of the City requiring it.
City Recorder

Presiding Officer of the Council
AGENDA SUMMARY A Resolution to acknowledge and apologize for past actions hurting African Americans and to address equity restoration.

COUNCIL DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED

All

BACKGROUND

Requested by Vice Mayor McKenzie

OPTIONS Approve or Deny

RECOMMENDATION Approve

ESTIMATED PROJECT SCHEDULE

PRIOR ACTION/REVIEW

FISCAL INFORMATION

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution- African American Equity Restoration (DOC)
- Restoration docs (PPTX)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RESULT:</strong></th>
<th>APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVER:</strong></td>
<td>Gwen McKenzie, Vice-Mayor, Sixth District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECONDER:</strong></td>
<td>Tommy Smith, First District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AYES:</strong></td>
<td>Fugate, McKenzie, Parker, Rider, Roberto, Singh, Smith, Testerman, Thomas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AFRICAN AMERICAN EQUITY
RESOLUTION
Reference Documents

Reference Source: Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Rev. Renee Kesler, President
1927 Dandridge Ave, Knoxville, TN 37915
Beckcenter.net

12/7/2020
Urban Renewal often dubbed Urban Removal or Negro Removal, was established under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. The Federal government granted assistance and loans to local communities wanting to eliminate slums, urban blights, and substandard housing. Yet, the devasting consequences, that disproportionately targeted minority communities through eminent domain, resulted in the displacement of many families. Urban Renewal will come to an end in 1974 but, the ramifications of Urban Renewal continues.

Knoxville’s Urban Renewal projects (1959-1974) affected the largely African American population, and consisted of the Willow Street Project, the Mountain View Project and the Morningside Project.

Beck was established in 1975 as a result of Knoxville’s Urban Renewal projects. It destroyed shacks and stately homes alike, businesses and churches. The projects relocated and displaced many black families. Much of the heritage of the black community was erased from the map. Edifices that once stood as monuments to the struggles of early leaders no longer exist. Absent of the establishment of Beck, these places and the people may never have existed.
Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant (IMLS)

• The collection in the Beck Archive Studio, not currently available to the public, consists of 50,000 objects documenting over 200 years of local African American history and culture.

• The Urban Renewal Project grant, awarded by IMLS under the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture, is allowing a more in-depth assessment of the people, places and effects of Urban Renewal and its continuing impact.

• The grant is enabling Beck the opportunity to preserve and catalog its one of a kind collection and make it accessible to the community its collection of materials related to Knoxville’s Urban
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107
AFRICAN AMERICAN BUSINESSES PRE-URBAN RENEWAL

15
AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES AFFECTED BY URBAN RENEWAL

2,500+
FAMILIES DISPLACED THROUGH URBAN RENEWAL WITH MORE THAN 70% AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES
To build the Coliseum 72 Residences, 9 Businesses and 2 Churches were removed.

The Civic Coliseum 1961
URBAN RENEWAL (REMOVAL)

BEFORE | AFTER

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Established after Urban Renewal — The Beck is where Knoxville’s Black History is preserved

Beck Museum

We Look Forward To Seeing You