



# **VOICES OF FAUQUIER**

Understanding Our Values through Conversation,  
Collaboration, and Action

## **Recommendations Report**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fauquier County is an historic and quaint community located in Northern Virginia and is a part of the Washington, DC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Located in a rapidly developing area, Fauquier County has experienced significant growth over the last two decades. According to the US Census, between 2000 and 2010, Fauquier County's population grew by 18.3 percent or 10,064 persons,<sup>1</sup> with over 50 percent of this growth occurring in the county's service districts (Bealeton, Marshall, New Baltimore, Opal, Remington, and Warrenton). With growth and the rapid changes occurring throughout the MSA comes the need to plan for the future - given the uniqueness of Fauquier County's physical and cultural landscape, Fauquier County residents and neighbors engaged during this process recognize the need to preserve this culture while also developing a vibrant community that attracts residents both young and old. They also recognize that developing a proactive and thoughtful community vision is key to creating a community where everyone thrives.

Information gathered during this process, from one-on-one conversations, a community survey, and publicly available data, revealed several underlying tensions with how individuals experience Fauquier County and their vision for the future. On the one hand, residents value the county's small-town feel, as this allows them to connect with community members in meaningful ways. On the other hand, some believe there is a huge to address the needs of those from more marginalized communities - this includes communities of color, specifically a growing Latinx and declining African-American community, youth, and working-class families who find it increasingly difficult to access opportunity in the county.

After several months of engaging residents throughout Fauquier and working with a small team of residents, findings indicate that there is an opportunity to continue this work with a more focused and strategic direction and by aligning these priorities with formalized plans throughout the County. The following includes a summation<sup>2</sup> of key themes, community needs, and opportunities areas. This is followed by a list of recommended strategies to guide the officials and decisions makers as they work to ensure all neighbors of Fauquier County have access to opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Plan – Population and Demographics

<sup>2</sup> Full Preliminary Findings Report can be provided upon request from The PATH Foundation

# PROCESS OVERVIEW

Residents who live and work in Fauquier County have been empowered to become involved in shaping the future of their community. Educational institutions like Fauquier County Public Schools (FCPS) and Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC), organizations such as the Path Foundation, various non-profits, and county officials recognize the need to adequately provide access to opportunity to all community members in Fauquier County. This recent collaboration is part of a long history of conversations around better understanding the community.

In late 2018, working with the Path Foundation, a group of residents comprised of representatives from FCPS, LFCC, the Department of Health, and local nonprofits engaged with The Spark Mill, a Richmond, VA - based consulting firm, to better understand various voices throughout the community. The goals of this process were to:

1. Identify opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all individuals and families throughout the county
2. Engage diverse voices throughout the community
3. Understand what community members view as important issues to tackle
4. Identify transformation opportunities to guide this work throughout Fauquier County
5. Provide Recommendations for Next Steps for the development of a county wide activities that center equity and inclusion

## FAUQUIER COUNTY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSATION TIMELINE

### 2016, PATH FOUNDATION SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMITTEE

*The Path Foundation facilitates the creation of the Social Responsibility Committee, which is comprised of community leaders passionate about social change throughout the county.*

### 2016, FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*FCPS Administrators develop policies and initiatives to intentionally address equity and meet the needs of underrepresented youth, including joining UVA Kaleidoscope program to help identify underrepresented groups in gifted services*

### 2017, FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**CAPACITY BUILDING**  
*FCPS focus on building capacity to address educational inequities, including accessing HR hiring practices, conducting equity audits, and hosting an "Equity and Cultural Responsiveness" Conference*

### 2017, RAPPAHANNOCK- RAPIDAN HEALTH DISTRICT

**COMMUNITY HEALTH  
ASSESSMENT**  
*The Department of Health develops implementation strategy to address the county's significant health needs.*

### 2018, PATH FOUNDATION

#### ROBERT PUTNAM VISITS

*Building on his recent book, Our Kids, social scientist, Robert Putnam, talks about the widening opportunity gaps that separate kids from "have" and "have not" backgrounds.*

### 2018, PATH FOUNDATION COMMUNITY FORUM

*The Path Foundation hosts a community forum led by facilitator Dr. Robin Stacia from Sage Consulting, LLC.*

2019, VOICES OF FAUQUIER  
*Joint Project of Foundation, public schools, nonprofits, and interested community partners is launched.*

# REPORT OVERVIEW

## Organization

### Themes

In this section, we articulate the themes that emerged from the stakeholder data. A theme is a topic or idea that we heard in multiple stakeholder conversations. For each theme you will find a brief narrative along with supporting quotes, and where applicable, data from the survey. Items in quotes are direct quotes from interviews and survey responses.

### Community Needs

This section provides a brief overview of community needs that stakeholders identified.

### Transformation Opportunities and Priorities

Based on themes and community needs, transformation opportunities provide areas for the County to consider as it works towards developing an equitable and thriving community.

### Recommendations

Based on Transformation Opportunities, these provide recommendations for guiding work throughout the community amongst government officials and decision-makers.

# THEMES



## Neighbors Embrace the Concept of Needs and Access, but are Resistant to Embrace Necessary Changes

There is no doubt that change is difficult and often resisted. In a community like Fauquier County that prides itself on history and heritage and where people are attracted to the relative stability, change is scary. During our conversations with stakeholders throughout the community, many talked about their growing awareness of the needs and challenges within the county, especially for those within marginalized communities. They also recognized the need to increase access to opportunities and resources for residents. However, many were resistant to the reality of these changes – some fear too much growth and others believe that the significant changes will disrupt their way of life.

## The Divide Between North and South is Perceived as the Gap Between Rich and Poor

Whether perception or reality, it is evident that many community members believe in a divide between those in the northern part of the county and those in the south. This divide is believed to significantly impact not only the way of life of residents, but also their ability to access opportunities and valued resources. This includes access to affordable housing and advanced technology infrastructure, among other resources. Most importantly, the geographical divide is the lens through which your community vehemently views the lives of “the haves and have not.” While the north part of the county is thought to be wealthier, stakeholders often characterized the south as the part of the county for those less wealthy and more marginalized. While some of this may be rooted in fact and due to the county’s history and migration patterns, interviews revealed that residents believe that there is a need to address this divide and to decrease the inequalities and inequities that exist between the areas.

## Preservation of Rural Environment, Culture, and Heritage

When asked what they loved and appreciated most about living in Fauquier, many stakeholders we interviewed referred to the county's heritage and culture, and its rural environment. As discussed in a previous theme, this is what many fear losing to growth, and while they agree that change should occur, they want to preserve the county's character. It is also worth mentioning that the history and heritage of the county is not without critique. While some community members value this, they believe it is important to honor the history of all residents throughout the county, including African Americans and their role in the development and success of Fauquier.

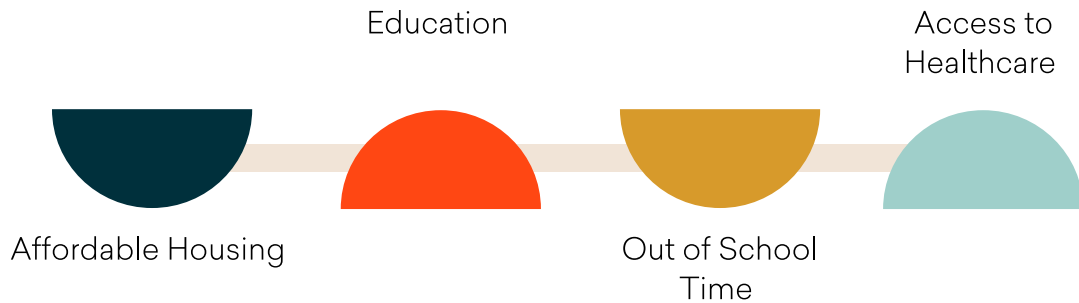
## Lack of Affordability Linked to Talent Retention

The lack of access to affordable amenities, particularly housing, is a significant issue in Fauquier County, especially for working class residents. Many key stakeholders we interviewed discussed the difficulties in retaining these residents, many of which have started to move to surrounding areas that offer a more affordable lifestyle. In particular, teachers and education professionals are important groups that have difficulty affording to live in the county. While an issue of pay compounds this, it also highlights the need for more workforce housing and overall more affordable amenities. As is discussed throughout this report, although the assumption is that affordable housing is only necessary for the very poor, throughout Fauquier County, the need is pervasive.

## Racial Tension

The history of the Confederacy plays a significant role in your county's narrative. While some appreciate this history, others have felt alienated, specifically African-Americans, who believe that the memorialization of the Confederacy does not adequately reflect their own. Our conversations with stakeholders suggest that while history plays a role in the alienation of people of color throughout the county, there are also underlying tensions as it relates to race relations in the current political environment. This has not only impacted how people of color experience Fauquier County, it has led to them moving else where, which is reflected by your declining African-American population.

# COMMUNITY NEEDS



## Affordable Housing Advocacy

Affordable housing is crucial to the success and vitality of any community, and as discussed above the need for affordable housing is great throughout Fauquier County. In 2006, Fauquier County Board of Supervisors created the Affordable Housing Committee in response to the 2006 Affordable Housing Task Force Report which found that, “95% of the full-time permanent (FTP) employees of Fauquier County General Government, at fiscal year (FY) 2007 salary levels, cannot afford (based on their individual salaries) to purchase a home in Fauquier County at the 2004 median housing sales price.” Since 2006, housing prices have increased, which means continued effort and advocacy are needed to ensure that affordable housing remains a priority for Fauquier County officials. Additionally, as a significant portion of your population is above the age of 50, aging in place is contingent upon their ability to access affordable housing. Finally, housing affordability is key to helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness throughout your community.

## Education

Members of your community value education and see it as a tool to transform the lives of those that are most marginalized. Despite this, your educational system faces a number of issues as it pertains to its workforce and access to opportunity for students.

### Teacher Pay

Many educators within Fauquier County are unable to remain in the community due their salaries. While the average teacher’s salary is higher than most of its surrounding counties, the high cost of living makes it difficult for teachers to be able to afford to live within Fauquier, as is seen with other professions.

## Free and Reduced Lunch Program

According to the Department of Education, between 2008 and 2019, there has been an almost 10% increase in the number of Fauquier County Public School children who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch programs. In 2019, almost a third of children (26.7%) attending public schools qualified for this program. As the cost of living continues to climb, this number is projected to increase as well.

## Affluent Families Diverting from Public Schools

Access to wealth and resources brings school choice, specifically the choice to place one's child into the private school system. During our conversations with key stakeholders, they discussed the growing number of families choosing to homeschool their children or to enroll them into private schools throughout the county. While this is a personal choice, some community members believe that this creates a deeper divide between the rich and the poor and that investing in the public education school system can be a way to ensure that all children are successful.

## Out of School Time

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), in 2017 about 38% of your population was below the age of 18 years old. Many individuals we interviewed believe that out of school time is important for keeping them on track for success and out of trouble. This includes providing them access to recreational activities, such as sports, as well as before and after school options for younger children and their families. By offering young people more to do, community members also believe this can encourage young people to remain in the county after graduating from high school.

## Access to Healthcare

Access to affordable and high-quality healthcare is a major need throughout your community, especially for your aging and growing Latino population, which grew almost 20% between 2013 and 2018 (ACS). Issues that emerged during our conversation with key stakeholders involved the limited facilities throughout the county that accept Medicaid, which is important for low-income individuals and families accessing healthcare. Additionally, as more medical facilities begin to utilize advanced technology, telehealth has the ability to expand access to medical services. However, limited access to broadband and internet in areas throughout the county create barriers for those who require long distance contact with a medical provider.



# TRANSFORMATION OPPORTUNITIES



The information presented above provides necessary context for your work throughout the community. In this section we identify potential opportunities for this group to consider as it works to prioritize which issues to address and to determine next steps. Recognizing that you can approach this work in multiple ways, transformation opportunities can be seen as your guideposts for encouraging further action throughout the community.

## Giving People the Lens

Members throughout your community also believe there are opportunities to equip individuals with tools to understand, discuss, and address inequity throughout Fauquier County. They see this work, providing people with the lens, as a crucial starting point. They also believe that there are specific groups throughout the community that can shape these conversations, including educators, law enforcement officials, and government officials.

## Continued Investment in Fauquier County Public Schools

Because your community members value education, Fauquier County Public Schools is a space for your community to continue to do and promote equity work. This includes removing barriers for students and families to access educational resources. This also means continuing to invest in training educators to understand and address inequity in and outside of the classroom. Finally, as teacher compensation continues to be a concern, there is an opportunity to ensure that this issue stays on the radar of local officials, recognizing that retaining quality teachers enhances the quality of education students receive.

## Advocacy for Affordable Housing Development

Affordable housing is a key concern for members of your community. They recognize the need for affordable rental and ownership opportunities for residents and believe that affordable housing is important for residents' quality of life. While Fauquier County has certainly begun to make strides in the development of affordable housing, as housing prices and the cost of living increase throughout the county, it will become more important for community members to advocate for affordable housing development. This is an opportunity for your group to become active in engaging with local government around this issue.

## Barrier Reductions + Assessment of Community Engagement Strategies in Marginalized Communities

*“There is a feeling that there are core groups that make things happen and get things done and it is because they are engaged. Everyone could get engaged and interact with board members and be a better representation. Board members have a strong sense for what they are striving for. The public hearings are the way to change their minds if that is possible. The citizen engagement is not super high outside of the same ones.”*

As was seen throughout this process, engaging with the most marginalized individuals in Fauquier County can be extremely difficult. As you continue to do this work, it is important that you be intentional about your community engagement efforts. This includes investing in barrier reductions so that marginalized groups can be involved in community conversations and a part of developing solutions.

## Investing in Tomorrow

Fauquier County's young people are a tremendous asset to the county. If given the tools and resources they need, including access to jobs and activities for out of school time, they can be crucial in shaping the future state of your county. Therefore, it is important to understand their perspectives and experiences, and to invest in their educational as well as social development.

## Providing Data to Decision Makers

In many interviews, respondents cited the lack of clear data on marginalized communities as a barrier to decision making. Because of the economic disparities present in the county, advocates must source data to present to policy makers, elected officials, and government officials in order for change to occur.

## Identified Opportunity Areas

Throughout conversations with individuals who live and work in Fauquier County surfaced opportunities to disrupt inequities they believe exist in key systems throughout the county and limit residents' ability to access opportunities that will allow them to be successful. While there is significant research on key social indicators that positively impact an individual's life, Fauquier County residents specifically mentioned education, housing, economic development, infrastructure, transportation, and health as systems that can increase access to opportunity.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the aforementioned transformation opportunities, these recommendations provide Fauquier County’s officials, community leaders, and decision-makers with strategies for moving forward and continuing to promote equity throughout the community. The success of these efforts throughout Fauquier will come from ensuring that residents’ needs are considered when formal plans are developed. These recommendations provide strategies for creating systemic change, specifically with regard to education, affordable housing, health, and technological access. Finally, given the success of your neighboring community, Fairfax County, and their One the Fairfax Plan, these recommendations pull from some of their processes and provide resources they used in developing their own plan.

## IMPACT: RESIDENTS AND DECISION MAKERS MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

### 1. INCREASE EQUITY FLUENCY AMONG NEIGHBORS AND POLICY MAKERS

- 1.1. Identify champions in various institutions who are committed to advancing work around equity throughout Fauquier County
- 1.2. Develop a shared language around equity amongst community members, neighbors, and key decision and policymakers
- 1.3. Foster formal and informal spaces for community members to have conversations around community needs and equity by formalizing a “Voices of Fauquier Council”
- 1.4. Integrate the committee into institutional conversations regarding race and equity<sup>3</sup>
- 1.5. Target county officials for trainings around race, poverty, and equity<sup>4</sup>
- 1.6. Collaborate with surrounding counties to learn about successes and opportunities regarding educational and training tools around equity

### 2. IMPROVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

- 2.1. Assess engagement efforts throughout the county to ensure they reflect best practices<sup>5</sup>
- 2.2. Examine current barriers to engagement to understand how to best address the needs of individuals and families from marginalized communities
- 2.3. Develop funding pools to enable efforts to afford to provide barrier reductions including transportation, method of engagement, childcare, and food.

### 3. LEVERAGE DATA TO DRIVE POLICY

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<sup>3</sup> i.e. “Together We’re the Answer” model that Fairfax County used to bring together officials to collaboratively think through why African Americans are overrepresented in the foster care system.

<sup>4</sup> The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Governing for Racial Equity and Inclusion Conference (See Agenda - [https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/Forums-Events.aspx\\_](https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/Forums-Events.aspx_)

<sup>5</sup> Groundwork USA: [https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWUSA\\_Best-Practices-for-Meaningful-Community-Engagement-Tip-Sheet.pdf](https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWUSA_Best-Practices-for-Meaningful-Community-Engagement-Tip-Sheet.pdf)

- 3.1. Pair data with voice by highlighting voices of impacted residents and relevant data points for policy makers
- 3.2. Advocate for a County wide Strategic Plan as a way to integrate existing plans
- 3.3. Support existing community needs assessments and advocate for the equitable collection of data

## IMPACT: RESIDENTS HAVE GREATER ACCESS TO SERVICES NEEDED TO THRIVE

### 4. CONTINUE INVESTMENT IN FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 4.1. Develop a campaign to highlight the success stories of equity and inclusion measures in Fauquier County Public Schools
- 4.2. Create a plan for next steps with school administrators and policy makers
- 4.3. Invest in an institutional analysis to examine educational policies<sup>6</sup>
- 4.4. Advocate for pay raises for teachers to increase quality instruction by attracting and retaining the best employees
- 4.5. Foster coordination among out of school time providers to increase breadth of coverage in the county

### 5. INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

- 5.1. Foster partnerships with Board of Supervisors and Town Council to provide opportunities to share voices of those impacted by a housing deficit
- 5.2. Leverage the Affordable Housing Taskforce to advocate for the development of affordable housing throughout the County, to include access to funding, legislation, and community education around affordable housing.
- 5.3. Create a housing campaign to define affordable housing and its impacts on neighbors by drawing attention to real wages and their ability to pay for housing

### 6. REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES

- 6.1. Increase support and funding for medical providers who accept Medicaid
- 6.2. Promote work around social determinants of health as it relates to advancing equity throughout the County
- 6.3. Investigate innovative solutions to transportation barriers to expand services throughout the county

### 7. INCREASE BROADBAND ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS AROUND THE COUNTY

- 7.1. Advocate for increased access to the internet by highlighting lack of access and its impact on marginalized communities
- 7.2. Increase community narratives around health and educational impacts due to a lack of internet access
- 7.3. Promote digital access and literacy to all neighbors of Fauquier County to strengthen community engagement opportunities for marginalized individuals

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<sup>6</sup> Center for the Study of Social Policy

# RESOURCES

## Training and Tools

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>

Governing for Racial Equity and Inclusion Conference

[https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/Forums-Events.aspx\\_](https://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/Forums-Events.aspx_)

Center for Social Inclusion

<https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/tools-resources/>

Racial Equity Tools

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/fundamentals/resource-lists>

Race Forward

<https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools>

Center for the Study of Social Policy

<https://cssp.org/publications-resources/>

Intercultural Competence

[http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/AIA\\_Guides\\_for\\_Equitable\\_Practice\\_01\\_Intercultural\\_Competence.pdf](http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/AIA_Guides_for_Equitable_Practice_01_Intercultural_Competence.pdf)

A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege

<https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/>

Commonsense Education

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/top-picks/diversity-equity-and-inclusivity-resources-for-classrooms>

Teaching Tolerance

<https://www.tolerance.org/>

Promoting Health Equity

<https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/SDOH-workbook.pdf>

Health Equity

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-equity/health-equity-resources/>