



# FINAL REPORT OF

## THE 2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

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## ADDENDUM TO TUPELO PLAN

NOVEMBER 2016

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## From the Chairs

We wish to thank Mayor Jason Shelton and the Tupelo City Council for giving us the honor and privilege of leading this task force on the Strategic Plan which will serve as an addendum to the Tupelo Plan. Our working groups were created to strengthen the level of trust among law enforcement officers and the communities they serve, influence community leaders to take ownership of the city, and continue to emphasize the Tupelo Spirit to promote a unified and inclusive environment. We found this was especially relevant in light of recent events around the country that have underscored the need for and importance of lasting collaborative relationships between local police and the public. We found engaging with law enforcement officials, city leadership, and community leaders through a transparent public process to be both enlightening and rewarding, and we again thank the Mayor and City Council for this honor.

Given the urgency of these issues, the City gave our working groups an initial 90 days to identify best policing practices and offer recommendations on how those practices can build public trust and create a unified, inclusive environment. In this short period, our working groups conducted several public planning sessions and solicited input and recommendations from a wide range of community and faith leaders, law enforcement officers, academics, and others to ensure its recommendations would be informed by a diverse range of voices from communities throughout the city.

Most important, we would especially like to thank the hundreds of community members, law enforcement officers, city executives, stakeholders, academics, and civic leaders citywide who stepped forward to support the efforts of the working groups and lend their experience and expertise during the development of the recommendations contained in this report. The passion and commitment shared by all to building strong relationships between the city

government and communities became a continual source of inspiration and encouragement to the working groups.

The dedication of our fellow working group members and their commitment to the process of arriving at consensus around these recommendations is also worth acknowledging. The working group members brought diverse perspectives to the table and were able to come together to engage in meaningful dialogue on emotionally charged issues in a respectful and effective manner. We believe the type of constructive dialogue we have engaged in should serve as an example of the type of dialogue that must occur in communities throughout the nation.

While much work remains to be done to address many longstanding issues and challenges - not only within the field of law enforcement but also within the community as a whole - this experience has demonstrated to us that the Tupelo Spirit remains alive and well and we are, by nature, problem solvers. It is our hope that the recommendations included here will meaningfully contribute to our city's efforts to increase trust between law enforcement and the communities they protect and serve, as well as build a stronger, more unified and inclusive Tupelo.

Rashni Barath  
Chair  
Community Oriented Policing

Bill Allen  
Chair  
Police Advisory Board

Doyce Deas  
Chair  
Hiring and Training Policies

Rev. Gloria McKinney  
Chair  
Neighborhood Coordinator

Kresta McIntosh  
Chair  
Faith-Based Engagement

Asia Rainey  
Chair  
Community Outreach Coordinator

# Members of the Working Groups

## **Working Group 1: Further Develop a Community Oriented Policing Program**

Chair: Rashni Barath

Lead: Katarsha White

### **City Administration**

Leesha Faulkner

Lt. Bobby Carnathan

Bart Aguirre (non-voting)

### **City Council**

Nettie Davis

Willie Jennings

### **Community Representatives**

Maddie Mabry

Orlando Pannell

Pastor Bernard Wilson

Celester Davis

Pastor Stevie McKinney

Pam Turner

Charles Barber

Meko Douglas

## **Working Group 2: Research the Possibility of Developing a Police Advisory Board to Support Police Operations**

Chair: Bill Allen

Lead: Deputy Chief Allan Gilbert

### **City Administration**

Ben Logan

Maj. Anthony Hill (non-voting)

### **City Council**

Nettie Davis

Buddy Palmer

Markel Whittington

### **Community Representatives**

Kenneth Wheeler

Vicki Keene

Tony McCoy

Dr. Louis Britton

Rev. Chris Traylor

Pete Sims

Mitch Beard

David Jones

Marcus McCoy

## **Working Group 3: Review the City's Hiring and Training Policies**

Chair: Doyce Deas

Lead: Contanna B. Purnell

### **City Administration**

Kim Hanna

Ben Logan

Maj. Jackie Clayton

Det. Steven Wade

Capt. Tim Clouse

Capt. Charles McDougald

### **City Council**

Willie Jennings

Markel Whittington

### **Community Representatives**

Chevelle Champ

Jerry Coleman

Jimmy Avery

Bob Baughn

Pete Sims

## **Working Group 4: Develop Grass Roots Engagement through Neighborhood Coordinator**

Chair: Rev. Gloria McKinne

Lead: Shane Hooper

### **City Administration**

Don Lewis

Pat Falkner (non-voting)  
K.C. Grist (non-voting)

**City Council**

Travis Beard  
Lynn Bryan

**Community Representatives**

Ron Richardson  
Asia Rainey  
Terrence Cummings

**Working Group 5: Engage Faith-Based Community Groups to Implement Programs Aimed at Community Enhancement**

Chair: Kresta McIntosh  
Lead: Don Lewis

**City Administration**

John Knight (non-voting)

**City Council**

Nettie Davis  
Buddy Palmer

**Community Representatives**

Bishop Clarence Parks  
Kevin Armstrong  
James Hull  
Pastor Stevie McKinney  
Pastor Richard Price

Bishop Willie Wilson  
Patricia Knowles  
Tonya Britton  
Terry Garrett  
David Ball, Sr.

**Working Group 6: Develop Task and Purpose for Community Outreach Coordinator**

Chair: Asia Rainey

Lead: Don Lewis

**City Administration**

John Knight  
Shane Hooper  
Cassandra Moore  
Alex Farned

Daniel McKinney

Lt. Michael Russell (non-voting)

Jason Shelton (non-voting)

**City Council**

Lynn Bryan  
Willie Jennings

**Community Representatives**

Charles Penson  
Sylvia Ferguson  
Wendy Listenbee

# Executive Summary

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*Trust between the citizens and the government that is sworn to serve them is essential to the success of any democracy. It is the foundation of an effective law enforcement, the integrity of our city administration, and the fabric that makes Tupelo Mississippi's All America City. Recognition of that sworn commitment brought the Mayor and City Council to the decision to implement this plan.*

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**Responsibility for the oversight of the implementation of the following recommendations will be the responsibility of the Mayor's Accountability Task Force.**

The events of June 18, 2016, when Antwun "Ronnie" Shumpert was fatally wounded while fleeing from a traffic stop caused a rift within the community and reduced trust in law enforcement as well as city administration. Initially, the response of the city was measured due to an ongoing investigation by the Mississippi Bureau of Investigations and a subsequent hearing of a special grand jury to hear the results of the investigation. Once the investigation was completed and the grand jury decided not to indict the officer involved, the city government focused its efforts on rebuilding trust and moving the city forward in a unified, constructive manner. On August 9, 2016, the City Council approved a plan presented by the Mayor that included the six strategies, or pillars, contained in this report. The Mayor then tasked working groups composed of representatives from the community,

city council, and city administration with determining the best way to achieve these strategies and making recommendations to the city council on how to proceed.

This executive summary provides and overview of the recommendations made by each working group, which met weekly in August, September, and October of 2016. These listening sessions brought the members of the working groups together to study the problems from all perspectives. Special emphasis was paid to creating working groups that were weighted toward community representatives to ensure these initiatives were community-driven and thereby to the best benefit of the city.

The working groups' recommendations, each with action items, are organized around six primary strategies or "pillars." Further

develop a Community Oriented Policing program; Research the possibilities of developing a Police Advisory Board to support police operations; Review the City's hiring and training policies; Develop Grass Roots engagement through a Neighborhood Coordinator; Engage faith-based community groups to implement programs directed at community enhancement; and Develop a task and purpose for a Community Outreach Coordinator. These pillars will be further broken down in subsequent chapters identifying initiatives that will assist in meeting these strategies.

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### Pillar 1: Further Develop a Community Oriented Policing Program.

Pillar one focuses on the importance of community policing as a guiding philosophy for all stakeholders. Community policing emphasizes working with neighborhood residents to coproduce public safety. Law enforcement agencies should, therefore, work with community residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community. Specifically, law enforcement agencies should develop and adopt policies and procedures that reinforce the importance of community engagement and making law enforcement officers accessible to

members of the community. Familiarity with law enforcement will open the door to understanding of law enforcement policies and procedures and help build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Building this familiarity should be accomplished through face-to-face interaction with the community at public events, neighborhood association meetings, and bicycle patrols. These guidelines should never supersede the ultimate goal of ensuring the safety of law enforcement officers and the community.

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### Pillar 2: Research the Possibility of Developing a Police Advisory Board to Support Police Operations.

During the course of developing the pillars contained in this report one prevalent theme became increasingly apparent - much of the trust deficit between police and the community stemmed from a lack of communication between the police and those they are sworn to serve. Left unattended, this communication gap continues to grow and perpetuates the community's lack of understanding of why law enforcement conducts itself the way it does and further leads to rumors and innuendo that further erodes the bridge between the two entities.



To reconcile the divide left by the absence of communication, a group of citizen advocates will be created to serve as a liaison between law enforcement and the community. These will be nine members of the community in good standing with the city and committed to representing the city as a conduit between the community and the police department. Through weekly meetings, they will have the opportunity to review police policies, become educated on how and why officers perform their duties and the methods they use, and ensure that the policies in place reflect community values.

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### Pillar 3: Review the City's Hiring and Training Policies

In order for a law enforcement agency to truly gain the trust of the public and for all segments of the community to feel comfortable with approaching law enforcement, agencies must reflect the demographic makeup of the city it protects and serves. This not only applies to first responders, but to all city departments. With 37 percent minority population and 14 percent minority employee representation, it is necessary for the City of Tupelo to implement and manage an intentional recruiting program to increase the hiring of minorities across the spectrum of city government.

In today's environment, it's not enough for an agency to wait for applications to be submitted and interview the most qualified candidates. In order to reach qualified minority candidates, agencies must broaden their reach and recruit the type of individual that best moves their agencies forward and meets their goals and objectives. This can be accomplished through career fairs, public engagements, and working with community colleges and university placement offices.

Pillar Three also focuses on the training and education needs of city departments, with special attention to law enforcement. To ensure the high quality and effectiveness of training and education, law enforcement agencies should engage community members, particularly those with special expertise, in the training process and provide leadership training to all personnel throughout their careers.

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### Pillar 4: Develop Grass Roots Engagement through a Neighborhood Coordinator

One of the strongest alliances between the city government and the communities it represents are the respective Neighborhood Associations located within the city. To best facilitate this alliance, the city needs an engaged, full-time coordinator to work

with each of the associations. This coordinator will serve to facilitate the free flow of information from City Hall to the people, as well as ensuring the association meetings offer important information that benefits the community. This includes participation by police and other first responders offering advice and information that is a service to the public, and using the meetings as an opportunity to generate advocacy for programs that will ultimately benefit the city as a whole.

Pillar Four will recommend the coordinator position as a means to synchronize the meetings to ensure unity of messaging and that equitable attention be paid to all neighborhoods.

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#### Pillar 5: Engage Faith-Based Community Groups to Implement Programs Aimed at Community Enhancement

During times of prosperity and adversity, it is the faith of individuals that forms a common bond for resolution and unification. Faith-based organizations representing all faiths, religions, and denominations should be recruited to offer counsel and support to move the community forward in a positive and mutually beneficial way.

Most charitable and philanthropic efforts either originate or are greatly supported by faith-based organizations, who have shown over the years to have

the influence and capacity to exact change in communities and help all segments of the population.

Therefore, the support of these faith-based organizations and their leadership is essential in bringing the community together and creating programs aimed at community enhancement.

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#### Pillar 6: Develop a Task and Purpose for a Community Outreach Coordinator

As part of the ongoing effort to implement and strengthen outreach efforts, the city will benefit from a full-time position dedicated to creating a greater bridge of dialogue between city agencies and every citizen in our city, ensuring community voices are both heard and supported.

Community festivals aimed at creating unity and mutual support, such as the Communities Forward Festival, will be a primary obligation for the Community Outreach Coordinator. With the development of an annual outreach plan, the coordinator will have the opportunity to build strategic partnerships, enhancing partner agency relationships and connecting the community to vital resources.

This position will serve to represent the spirit of all strategies contained in this strategic plan, a catalyst to implement

and support the constant work toward a more unified Tupelo, a transparent and accessible city government, and a city always striving to live up to the title All America City.

# PILLAR 1: FURTHER DEVELOP A COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING PROGRAM.

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*Familiarity with law enforcement will open the door to understanding of law enforcement policies and procedures and help build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.*

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**The Mission of the Tupelo Police Department is to develop a police-community partnership by building community confidence, trust and respect through prompt, effective professional police service and cooperative problem-solving which results in a secure place to live and work for all citizens equally without regard to ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status.**

**We understand that the law enforcement badge stands for public trust and we will work with the citizenry to accomplish the purpose of protecting life and property and upholding the laws of our city, state, and nation.**

**As servant leaders and partners in this community, we are committed to meeting the demands of citizens and our fellow employees.**

The Tupelo Police Department has numerous assets to offer our communities. Over the years, it has established partnerships with the City of Tupelo's neighborhood associations. These associations were maintained and organized by the city's planning department (Development Services) with the police department assisting in reporting statistics of crimes committed within each neighborhood and preventative measures to take in order to deter future crimes.

With the decline in participation from residents within the associations, suggestions have been made to make sure that the rental community, schools, churches, and businesses are

included when notices are made about the meetings so they might participate. More recently, it has been noticed that many of the leaders chosen lack the basic skills to conduct meetings and their lack of knowledge of what's going on within their communities diminishes the interest of those attending. In years past, the city provided leadership training with grant funds available and that training proved beneficial.

The COP division continues to serve as a liaison while maintaining partnerships and is dedicated to making Tupelo a safer city by its continued efforts to reach out to its businesses,

whether retail, grocery, service churches or civic organizations.

**The following recommendations are offered to further develop a stronger COP program within the Tupelo Police Department. Implementation of these recommendations will be the responsibility of the Tupelo Police Department with assistance from the city's Communications Director with oversight from the Mayor's Accountability Task Force.**

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**1.1 Recommendation: Create a web based public forum for the city and each division to address needs or concerns.**

Public input is not only necessary, but critical when assessing the effectiveness of a departments' community outreach. Public input should be ascertained in a manner that is least intrusive but accessible to a large portion of the population. A web-based format will be the most effective way to allow the public to offer their opinion on their time and in an environment most suitable to them.

With the approval of the Chief of Police, a survey will be uploaded (previously used but with amendments) and promoted through the city and police department's owned accounts.

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**1.2 Recommendation: Reinstitute Coffee with a Cop program along with other community oriented programs to increase police visibility.**

In order to reduce the stigma of intimidation that some police carry in many of the communities across the country, efforts should be made to make the public more familiar with the law enforcement officers who serve them. Officers should be open to the public and make themselves available to children and adults alike.

The Coffee with a Cop program is a pre-existing program that offers the public the opportunity to interact with police officers, get to know them on a personal level, and it allows the police to be seen as individuals and not just a passing squad car.

Churches within the community should be encouraged to host the events, giving the public a comfortable environment to interact, with the invitation of officers to have one-on-one conversations with attendees.

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**1.3 Recommendation: Create a brochure with the programs/ presentations available and monthly observances offered through the Tupelo Police Department.**

The Tupelo Police Department currently offers more than 70 community-oriented programs that educate and inform the community as well as offer activities aimed at fostering a healthy mentorship for the city's youth population. Many of these events are to be requested by the

community so familiarity with the variety of events offered is essential to the program's success.

The brochure produced will have a description of each service offered and what will be needed from the hosting parties. The brochure will be distributed widely throughout the community and promoted on social media as well as through neighborhood associations.

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**1.4 Recommendation: Reinstate a bike patrol with police officers visible to the community.**

To further increase the visibility of the police to the community, the police department will create a special unit of officers on bicycle who, weather permitting, will patrol in the vicinity of downtown, in and around apartment complexes, and at special events.

The visibility this will create will allow more interaction between officers and the public while still maintaining a presence in the community.

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**1.5 Recommendation: Encourage the City of Tupelo to celebrate Law Enforcement Appreciation Day on January 9, 2017.**

The efforts to create a community-oriented policing program should not detract from the daily sacrifices made

by law enforcement officers and their families. Each day law enforcement don their uniforms knowing their lives are being placed on the line. Each night families of those officers lie awake praying they will soon hear the door open indicating that their loved one has returned home.

In recognition of the sacrifices made by these men and women to protect and serve our community, it is recommended that the city proclaim January 9, 2017 as Law Enforcement Appreciation Day in the City of Tupelo. This is to provide the recognition these brave officers have earned through their selfless service.

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**1.6 Recommendation: Encourage participation from the Chief of Police in a question and answer session with the public.**

Finally, an important addition to visibility and availability is transparency - the willingness to have an open dialogue with the public and answer any questions and concerns they might have in a respectful, non confrontational manner.

In order to best facilitate a dialogue where the most questions can be addressed in the most controlled manner, questions will solicited beforehand and moderated by a designated community representative. Questions will be allowed to be

submitted at the event on notecards and the moderator will address them as time allows.

## PILLAR 2: RESEARCH THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING A POLICE ADVISORY BOARD TO SUPPORT POLICE OPERATIONS.

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*To bridge the divide left by the absence of communication, a group of citizen advocates will be created to serve as a liaison between law enforcement and the community.*

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**The Tupelo Police Department is sworn to protect and serve the citizens of the City of Tupelo. Together with the community's help we have an opportunity to enhance the quality of life and help resolve community concerns. In order to accomplish these goals, a close working relationship between the Tupelo Police Department and the Community of Tupelo must exist.**

Understanding the underlying reasons behind the erosion of trust between the community and law enforcement led to the recommendation for a citizen advocacy board to be created, representing both the community and the police department.

Under the charter that is recommended, the board will act to provide the following support.

1. Acting as liaison between the community and the police department to help promote community awareness, understanding, and involvement of police programs and services.
2. Provide an avenue to identify problems and address issues from the community to the police department.
3. Advocate quality in law enforcement by promoting

education and training of all police department personnel and volunteers.

4. Help develop partnerships between the community and the Tupelo Police Department, in an effort to identify community concerns and issues.
5. Assist the police department with strategic planning and goals, and recommend strategies for the future.

The board and its members must remain impartial and unbiased and are encouraged by the City Council to seek opportunities to educate the community about police work and the purpose of law enforcement. The board is designed to be a link between the community and its police department to facilitate and enhance communication between the two. The Tupelo Police Department will utilize



the board for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations to the Chief of Police on matters pertinent to the Police Department.

The board will serve as a liaison between the police department and community. The board mediates problems or conflicts and serves as an advocate for programs, ideas, and methods to improve the relationship between the police and community. The board is also responsible for disseminating information to the community and to the government officials of the City of Tupelo using existing city communications channels.

The board will provide the City Council with an annual report of its activities and presentations.

To accomplish these goals, the following recommendations are offered for the creation of the Tupelo Police Department Citizen's Advisory Board.

**Following legal and administrative review, and additional citizen input, a final plan will be presented to the Mayor's Accountability Task Force for review and implementation subject to approval by the City Council.**

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**2.1 Recommendation: The board should consist of nine (9) voting members.**

The board should be constructed in a way to allow maximum community input while allowing for a majority

decision. The nine (9) voting members will include seven (7) area representatives from each ward selected by their respective councilperson with two (2) additional at-large members selected by the Mayor of the City of Tupelo.

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**2.2 Recommendation: Three non-voting members will also be part of the board representing the city.**

As non-voting participants, one (1) representative from the city council, one (1) representative from the police department, and one (1) from the Mayor's Youth Council will offer institutional guidance and youth representation.

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**2.3 Recommendation: Members should be limited to three (3) year terms.**

To ensure successive representation by the broadest cross-section of the community, members of the board will be limited to three (3) year terms. Once the board is established, it will determine a means to ensure a staggered rotation of terms.

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**2.4 Recommendation: Certain requirements must be met to be considered as a member of the board.**

Representation on the Citizen's Advisory Board should be considered a privilege, and those considered to serve should be of good character and in good standing with the city. This includes the following requirements:

- Must pass a background check conducted by the Tupelo Police Department.
- Must be a resident of the City of Tupelo.
- Must not be involved in a current active civil or criminal action with the City of Tupelo.
- Attend the Tupelo Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy and graduate within one year of appointment. Those who fail to complete the academy within one year will be removed from the board.

The board and its members must remain impartial and unbiased and will serve the purpose of seeking opportunities to educate the community about police work and the purpose of law enforcement. The board is designed to be a link between the community and its police department to facilitate and enhance communication between the two. The Tupelo Police Department will utilize the board for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations to the Chief of Police on matters pertinent to the police department.

This board will serve as a catalyst for facilitating dialogue between the communities within the City of Tupelo and the Tupelo Police Department, serve as an advocacy group for law enforcement, and a civilian voice for strategic planning and goal setting for the department.

## PILLAR 3: REVIEW THE CITY’S HIRING AND TRAINING POLICIES.

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*With 37 percent minority population and 14 percent minority employee representation, it is necessary for the City of Tupelo to implement and manage an intentional recruiting program to increase the hiring of minorities across the spectrum of city government.*

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An introspective analysis of city government indicates the need to review the hiring, training, and promotion policies the city currently uses. Part of the intent of this plan is to look at ways the city can be more equitable in its approach toward recruiting and hiring minority candidates, offer career and life enhancement training, and apply a fair and equitable approach to promotion and recognition.

**To accomplish this, the working group assigned to address this issue developed four recommendations. Implementation of these recommendations will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Department along with the City Attorney under the oversight of the Mayor’s Accountability Task Force.**

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**3.1 Recommendation: Develop a detailed plan to establish an intentional recruiting program within city departments with specific attention to the Tupelo Police Department.**

Human Resources, with the assistance of city department heads, will develop an intentional, written recruitment program to create a diverse workforce to reflect the minority population of the area. Targeted recruitment strategies should include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and should encourage minorities to pursue careers, particularly in under-represented departments, such as the police department. Human Resources, with the assistance of department heads, should develop suitable recruitment strategies for career fairs, area universities and colleges, and trade schools. A frontline supervisor should accompany Human Resources at all recruiting events.

Human Resources should develop a Monthly Personnel Report to the City Council showing minority hiring and vacancies within city departments thus, maintaining current information on vacancies and applicants. Prior to the 1-year expiration date of the fire and police department list of applicants

qualified and ranked, the particular applicants should be contacted by letter and/or telephone call by a designee from the fire or police department to ensure those applicants remain interested in the position. Those applicants should be advised to follow up with the Human Resources Department to update their applications.

Applications for employment should be available online and in a method to allow easy access for the applicant to fill out and email in to Human Resources while the department waits on the new Munis program available in 2017. Those job applications should be reviewed and standardized for all departments and should reflect civilian and professional educational requirements. The City Attorney should approve all final documents.

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### **3.2 Recommendation: Develop a timeline of proposed seminars for professional development and life skills enhancement.**

Human Resources, in consultation with department heads and the Chief Operations Officer, should develop and implement a career path program to enable career and personal development. Participation in these seminars should be encouraged to keep employees engaged in the workforce.

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### **3.3 Recommendation: Develop a detailed marketing plan aimed at raising public awareness of recruiting.**

Human Resources, in consultation with the Communications Director, should develop an appropriate marketing plan with particular emphasis on targeting HBCUs, career fairs, and area colleges and universities for recruitment purposes. Such a plan should include a promotional video that would be posted on the city's website and appropriate Facebook pages, including Human Resources. The marketing plan should be reviewed for updates annually.

Human Resources should also look to specific industry-related publications and job banks to advertise job openings. (e.g. Mississippi Firefighters Association for firefighters, etc.)

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### **3.4 Recommendation: Develop a detailed job appraisal to evaluate all employees under a standard job performance assessment.**

Human Resources, with assistance from department heads, should ensure employees are evaluated on job performance, based on goals and objectives for that particular position. Job evaluations should be conducted annually, with a six-month review to

allow the employee to know where he/she needs increased development.

A weighted evaluation form should be developed for General Fund departments, and participation in career path and life skills programs be tied to employee's evaluation.

Efforts should be made by each department head to ensure the internal promotion process is free of bias. It is recommended that interview panels, for fire and police departments, should include at least one representative from Human Resources, and a non-voting "outside" observer.

## PILLAR 4: DEVELOP GRASS ROOTS ENGAGEMENT THROUGH A NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATOR.

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*One of the strongest alliances between the city government and the communities it represents are the respective Neighborhood Associations located within the city.*

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The free flow of information between the city and the communities within its limits is critical to inform the public of emerging initiatives, and changes in city policies, all the while promoting advocacy and philanthropy.

Neighborhood Associations have and will continue to be the most effective way to disseminate this important information to the public.

To accomplish this strategy, a part-time employee has been hired and is dedicated to serving as a liaison between the city government and neighborhood associations, and has been charged with the responsibility of enhancing the benefit of attendance and the transparency of information important to all constituents.

**To meet these needs, the working group for this strategy recommended the following actions. These recommendations have been implemented and a part-time position was created and filled and charged with the**

**implementation of the remaining recommendations made by this working group.**

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### **4.1 Recommendation: Increase city employee participation in neighborhood association meetings and community events.**

The Neighborhood Coordinator will communicate regularly with the city's Communications Director to make city employees aware of upcoming Neighborhood Association meetings and community events. Events will be included in the city newsletter and all employees will be encouraged to attend.

A spreadsheet will be developed to identify what first responders live in the neighborhoods where Neighborhood Association meetings take place. Separate invitations will be made to these individuals to attend their respective Neighborhood

Association meetings, whether in an official or unofficial capacity.

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**4.2 Recommendation: The Tupelo Police and Fire Departments should be used as a means to enhance Neighborhood Association meetings.**

As part of an initiative to increase the benefit of participation in Neighborhood Association meetings, the police and fire departments provide a wealth of needed and useful information to greatly enhance citizens' lives. By increasing their participation in these meetings and determining presentations and/or demonstrations they could provide, that needed information can be provided in a concise, informational manner. Examples of these presentations could include self defense demonstrations and presentations on determining if your home is protected from carbon monoxide poisoning. Participation in these meetings would also increase the exposure of first responders to the public thereby making the public more familiar and at ease around these officers.

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**4.3 Recommendation: Create a full-time position for a Neighborhood Coordinator with a job description that will enable them to best assist council members in facilitating Neighborhood Association meetings.**

The catalyst to make all the objectives contained in this strategy possible is the Neighborhood Coordinator. This person will serve as an advocate for the community and as a liaison between the city and its constituents. The Neighborhood Coordinator will provide in depth assistance to neighborhoods in order to promote and sustain the livability, safety, and economic viability of neighborhoods, and to support the City of Tupelo's overall planning goals.

Additional duties of the position will be to assist residents in the preparation of neighborhood improvement plans that identify issues, set priorities, and outline action programs; and providing technical assistance to associations with project development, funding sources, partnership development, grants application and management, and information resources.

## PILLAR 5: ENGAGE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY GROUP TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT.

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*...the support of these faith-based organizations and their leadership is essential in bringing the community together and creating programs aimed at community enhancement.*

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Implementation of any plan designed to strengthen the civic fabric of the city will require the support and endorsement by the leaders of the city - not only elected leaders, but leaders who serve as role models for adults and youth alike. These may be business leaders or education leaders, but a special group of leaders whose input and assistance is crucial is that from the faith-based community. Faith-based leadership is renowned for being sought out for guidance, and their counsel would greatly benefit with any plan to move the city forward.

In order to engage the faith-based community, a working group was established as a sub-section of the faith-based community, representing all faiths, religions, and denominations.

The purpose of the working group is to deepen the understanding and appreciation for our diverse faith traditions; coordinate, facilitate, and

enrich interfaith collaboration on programs throughout the City of Tupelo; support, enrich, and expand existing city government initiatives by including the faith communities' perspectives and participation on programs that affect our communities; and to assist and amplify the various faith community efforts toward establishing social justice, addressing needs of mutual concern, and engaging in community service.

**The working group's recommendations that follow offer practical ways to engage faith-based leadership. Implementation of these recommendations will be the responsibility of the Community Outreach Coordinator with assistance from the city's Communications Director under the oversight of the Mayor's Accountability Task Force.**

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**5.1 Recommendation: Develop a registry of all faith-based organizations and leadership in the city.**



There are many faith-based organizations in Tupelo, and the full impact of the types of organizations and leaders within the city has been largely untapped.

By developing a registry of all faiths, religions, and denominations, the city can marshal a full interdenominational, multiracial resource that can also be used to lead newcomers to their chosen faith-based option.

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**5.2 Recommendation: Support faith-based and community groups in their efforts to create programs aimed at community enhancement.**

Considering that most charitable and philanthropic efforts either originate or are greatly supported by faith-based organizations, it is logical to engage these groups to further develop programs aimed at community enhancement. In doing this, it is important to determine the organization's mission and purpose, ensure adequate resources, manage resources effectively, ensure integrity and maintain accountability.

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**5.3 Recommendation: Increase clergy participation on boards and committees.**

To capitalize on the leadership capacity of clergy and other faith-based leaders, the city should make every effort to bring the wisdom and insight of clergy into the decision-making bodies of the city. Examples of these would be the Mayor's Accountability Task Force, Mayor's Outreach Task Force, Major Thoroughfare Program Committee, and the Planning Committee.

To receive the full interdenominational benefit from this resource, efforts should be made to bring all faith-based community leaders and organizations together. This can be accomplished through the establishment of a fellowship that involves all faiths and denominations and allows these leaders to discuss issues important to the progress of the city. This meeting can occur quarterly and at rotating venues.

It is also important that the influence of faith-based leadership add emphasis to existing programs such as the Communities Forward Festival, Community Thanksgiving Service, Community Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, the Halfway House, the Jailhouse Ministry, Discipleship, Adult Policing Academy, and Revive Tupelo.

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**5.4 Recommendation: Unify the city through interdenominational/multiracial faith-based programs.**

Unity is the theme throughout the City of Tupelo, and the faith-based community should be no exception. By bringing all religions and denominations together and unified toward a common purpose, the potential for the city's progress is limitless.

There are many ways to bring all denominations and demographics together. Some of these include religious concerts, programs aimed at aiding the city's underprivileged, and youth programs such as the Police Athletic League. Increasing the participation of all denominations and races in these events will further legitimize and strengthen them.

Another program that could bring all faith-based organization and community leaders would be a festival focused on a day of unity citywide.

In this festival, each faith-based organization will be able to display its organization and offer its message to the community. The overall theme will be "Unity Throughout the Community."

## PILLAR 6: DEVELOP A TASK AND PURPOSE FOR A COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR.

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*This position will serve to represent the spirit of all strategies contained in this strategic plan, a catalyst to implement and support the constant work toward a more unified Tupelo.*

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The City of Tupelo has a multitude of programs, festivals, and activities designed to promote and cultivate the community spirit and overall experience of living in an All America City. Currently each of these outreach efforts mostly operate independently of each other and depend on the work of volunteers who care enough about the city to put forth the time and effort necessary to ensure their success.

In order to sustain and enhance these outreach efforts, a full-time position has been recommended that will coordinate, synchronize, and develop these programs, making them stronger and more beneficial to a large section of the community.

**This position has been filled and the individual selected will start the week of October 31, 2016. The selected individual will work closely with the Mayor's Outreach Task Force to create a greater bridge of dialogue between city agencies and every citizen of our city, someone entrusted with the job of ensuring that community voices be both heard and supported.**

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### **6.1 Recommendation: Create a full-time position to serve as Community Outreach Coordinator.**

This city employee would be in position to build strategic partnerships through an annual outreach plan, establish and enhance partner agency relationships and connect the community to vital resources.

Working with the Communications Director, the Community Outreach Coordinator will assist in essential support tasks such as helping to build community-relevant content throughout the city's online presence and uprooting initiatives facilitated by the Tupelo Police Department.

Within the annual outreach plan, the coordinator would organize and implement innovative initiatives focused on fostering community involvement and engagement.

To ensure the Community Outreach Coordinator is accessible to the people, it is also recommended that the physical office for this position be housed in the Police Athletic League facility. It is vital that community members find this public servant in arm's reach, as an advocating presence ready to be a link to resources and a voice for the community's ideas and concerns.

The impact of this position will be measured through community surveys, analysis of participation in outreach initiatives, and through evaluation by the Communications Director. Parameters have been set within the job description for choosing a community-focused individual with emphasis on experience in community service, coordination and communication.

It is believed that the addition of the position of Community Outreach Coordinator will benefit the community through its intentional focus on strengthening dialogue between the City of Tupelo, its agencies, its community partners and the people. The task and purpose of this job is to close the distance between city government and the people it serves.