

Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's transition team lays out hundreds of suggestions for first 100 days

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CLEVELAND, Ohio – Prioritizing mental health crisis responders, committing to 100% renewable energy by 2030, and bringing neighborhood-based City Hall satellite offices to libraries or recreation centers are among the hundreds of recommendations put forth by Mayor Justin Bibb's sprawling transition team.

The recommendations are intended to inform the mayor's priorities for his first 100 days in office. And he's already executed a handful of them over his first three weeks on the job, including his pledge to [invest millions](#) in lead-safe housing, and changes to the way Cleveland [police use the diversion center](#) for those with mental health or substance use disorders.

It's likely Bibb will execute or lay the groundwork for many more of the team's recommendations over the coming weeks and months as he settles into office, but it's unclear which ones the mayor will pursue, and which ones he'll ultimately toss aside.

The recommendations are outlined in draft reports submitted by the 75-plus members of Bibb's transition team and obtained by The Plain Dealer and cleveland.com. A Bibb spokeswoman emphasized that the documents are an unfinished work-in-progress, and a final version is expected to be released in February.

But the draft copies do provide the first substantive look at the work of [Bibb's transition team](#), comprised of business, education and healthcare leaders, activists, community development officials and others from across the city. The team included 10 subcommittees focused on various topics. Their draft reports contain sweeping reforms that could change operations across many departments, along with more granular recommendations aimed at tackling specific issues.

And several of the subcommittees offered similar recommendations aimed at some of the city's most vexing and challenging problems. That includes the need to make homes and child-care settings lead-safe, addressing racism as a public health crisis, providing affordable internet access to all, and making City Hall more transparent and responsive to the concerns of Clevelanders.

Here's a look at some of the recommendations:

Economic development

*Use city assets like recreation centers, school and government buildings to support broadband access, energy resiliency and environmental sustainability. (While the draft report doesn't provide examples, that idea could include rooftops outfitted with solar panels, or equipment to provide internet service to nearby homes.)

*Implement a "reentry business enterprise" certificate program, to get more city contracts into the hands of business owners formerly involved in the criminal justice system.

*Re-envision the community benefits agreement law and make it more focused on outcomes, rather than goals. Developers, for example, could get incentives for hiring more minority-owned businesses than the city's minimum threshold. Or, the law could prompt developers to invest more in historically red-lined areas. (Another committee suggests waiving fees to register as a minority-owned business.)

*Evaluate the feasibility of making RTA free for all riders in Cleveland

Health

*Across all city departments, focus more on the social determinants of health, such as connecting people with transit, housing and better environmental conditions. That approach would require a "robust legislative agenda" – including enacting a law preventing landlords from discriminating against tenants who pay rent with housing vouchers, and a pay-to-stay law, which would allow those threatened with eviction to remain in their homes if they pay down debt.

*Create new health-related boards or commissions, potentially including a "Children's Council," an "Opioid Strategy Board" or a Board of Health (presumably instead of the city's current public health structure, which is a health department controlled directly by the mayor.)

*Track, map, and make public data about Covid-19, lead poisoning, infant and maternal mortality, gun violence and substance abuse.

Modernizing City Hall and Open Government

*Make city information multilingual and accessible for all, and provide both digital and analog ways for individuals to connect with city departments and services

*Create new positions to improve customer service and how the city responds to issues or needs of residents, businesses, visitors and city workers.

*Set aside \$30.8 million in federal aid in 2022 for "participatory budgeting," so residents can explicitly guide spending priorities

*Create an "open data portal" so the public can easily find important city data

*Find ways to more clearly communicate with residents, improve the city's outdated and cumbersome website, and provide city forms and applications online.

Education

*Convene an education-focused Covid-19 task force to address schools' pandemic-related needs. And focus on preventing the spread -- one example: kick off a vaccination campaign, where a different school each day serves as a vaccination site.

*Convene schools, healthcare providers, the county, and the Alcohol, Drug, Addiction and Mental Health Services board to find ways to address growing mental health issues among students, from pre-K through secondary school

*Make changes to the structure of city government to support youth, including the creation of a Mayor's Cabinet on Children and Youth to address the overall well-being of young people, ages 0 to 24.

*Use the bully pulpit of the mayor's office to address chronic absenteeism among students (intensified during the pandemic), champion literacy, maximize residents' use of the child tax credit, and help close a \$30 million funding gap for the Say Yes to Education scholarship program.

Equity in Action

*Hire a diverse cabinet and look to practically address issues of equity across departments. One way to do that could be creating two top-level cabinet positions focused on equity in the community and equity within city departments

*Develop a comprehensive strategy for Cleveland's Hispanic community, including goals for hiring more Hispanic people into the city's workforce, and purchasing city goods and services from more Hispanic businesses.

*Create offices of Asian outreach, immigrant affairs, and a Black Women's Equity Office. Hire City Hall liaisons for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly one for the Public Safety Department.

(*Though not part of the subcommittee's main set of recommendations, the group additionally suggested "Creating a Universal Basic Income" pilot project, similar to ones in Pittsburgh, St. Paul and other cities.)

Neighborhoods

*Direct city investments "explicitly towards neighborhoods...in greatest need."
(Another committee suggested prioritizing "equitable distribution" of community development funds throughout all neighborhoods.)

*Coordinate programming schedules of schools, libraries and rec centers to make it easier for parents to send kids to safe places outside of school hours

*Repeal a city ordinance that prohibits violent offenders from living at halfway houses, so residents returning from incarceration have shelter

Environment

*Create a “Department of Transportation/Mobility” to improve coordination of various initiatives

*Hasten the city’s goal of reaching 100% renewable energy. (Goal is currently 2050; committee suggests changing the deadline to 2030.) That goal can be achieved, the report said, by renegotiating the city’s existing energy contract with NOPEC to require renewables as the prime source of power.

*Suspend utility and water shut-offs for marginalized households, including those with infants or pregnant women.

*Create a standalone parks department

*Establish “land trusts” for proven urban agriculture projects (For example, most community gardens operate on year-to-year leases, making long-term planning difficult.)

Safety

*Assign an assistant public safety director “with clear responsibility to build a mental health crisis response team”

*Re-evaluate the academy process and in-service training for safety personnel and convene a panel to re-evaluate the city’s community policing strategy

*Begin contract negotiations with police, fire and EMS unions. Aim for equitable terms that mirror community values

*Review EMS billing practices to ensure insurance companies are paying their “fair share.”