



Close race & class gaps: housing, educational attainment, health

What's working

We're doing a better job of preserving public housing.

- The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority has made improvements to its buildings.
- We are working on an energy conservation strategy to replace boilers in high rises.

Until the current economic downturn, we had closed the unemployment gap between Minneapolis and the rest of the metro area.

Young people are being tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

- Seen on da Streets has tested more than 10,000 14- to 25-year-olds for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- We've started a clinic that serves the Hispanic community.

There's a broader understanding of how gaps in housing, health and education are connected.

- Because we know there's a measurable health impact for improving housing in a cluster, we're intervening in a more holistic way.
- In transit-oriented housing developments, people have more opportunities to walk, so their health improves.
- Providing social worker services to high rises helps aging residents with deteriorating health stay in their units rather than go to a nursing home.
- Minneapolis public housing and the school district are working together to ensure kids are properly housed. When kids are housed, school attendance and academic performance improves.

Violent crime is down.

- Thanks to a community-based effort, violent crime involving youths dropped. In 2006, 50 percent of all violent crime involved youths. In 2008, 20 percent of all violent crime involved youths.

What isn't working

We aren't satisfying affordable housing needs.

- When we opened applications, we burned out two servers due to so many applications. Every day, there are 50 or 60 people in our lobby who want to apply for housing.
- When the project on Park Avenue opened, we had 500 applications for 40 to 50 units.

There are housing disparities in Minneapolis.

- People of color make up 80 percent of our housing project residents.
- Most of the foreclosures are on the Northside.

Our educational quality is poor.

- American Indians are worse off than we were in the 1970s. Kids aren't starting school ready, the school experience is uncomfortable and they aren't graduating. Ignoring the problem won't make it go away.
- Minneapolis schools are getting worse and worse. I am a Minneapolis resident, and I'm sending my kids to a charter school in Saint Paul.
- We can't achieve our goal of increasing the diversity of health care providers because kids aren't graduating from school.

We don't teach kids about sex or money.

- Schools are afraid to teach about reproductive health. They offer daycare for students' babies, but they don't teach kids how to prevent pregnancy or STDs.
- We don't teach money management in schools.

It's difficult to get involved with the school district.

- The efforts to improve education happen behind closed doors. Why isn't public housing sitting down with the schools to talk about issues? The schools are too isolated and closed off.
- Black professionals would love to talk to kids on career days or Black History Month. I get asked to speak to students at other school districts, but not in Minneapolis. The school district is missing opportunities.

We don't think or act broadly enough.

- We address problems like we're on a bus tour of Alaska. There's an elk on the side of the bus, so everyone rushes to that side of the bus. Then a bear appears and everyone rushes to the other side of the bus. This is what we do with homelessness, youth violence, prostitution or other societal problems. Rushing to the issue of the day, rather than addressing problems in a sustained way, means we don't make any progress.
- There's no integration of educational efforts with housing and health initiatives.
- A lot of energy went into the Itasca Project to get a report done, but there's no evidence that any action was taken.
- There's no forum to address the remarkable disparities between Minneapolis and other cities.
- There are no opportunities to think about how we can grapple with the root causes of our disparities.

Close race & class gaps: housing, educational attainment, health

What should be done next

Forge partnerships and help people get involved.

- Call the Itasca Project together and ask them to turn ideas into action. It will be different than before because businesses don't have the same amount of money they had earlier. However, businesses will be hurt if they don't get into the act now. They have to see the relationship between societal problems and their bottom lines.
- Be more purposeful about seeking out partnerships and building relationships. Bring fragmented groups together to address systemic problems.
- Urge people to get involved in task forces and committees.
- Tap into young people's rising awareness of healthcare disparities and their interest in

social justice. Get them involved and take advantage of their enthusiasm and energy.

- Host a forum to figure out why we have such disparities in education, housing and health.
- Create a 12-step program for our systemic problems. The first step is acknowledgement. Now we have to figure out the other 11 steps.

Find ways to teach people about sexual health and money management.

- Return sex education to the schools.
- Offer grants to schools to focus on these topics. School staff are hungry for help.
- Create a trusted advisor service to help people of color navigate the mortgage industry.
- Require homebuyer education for any financial assistance given to help people with mortgages.

"Sex education is where we're really missing it.

Abstinence does not work.

It's unbelievable how little we

prepare our kids."

- Health outreach worker
