

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN AMERICAN CITIES:
A CONVERSATION WITH CHICAGO MAYOR LORI LIGHTFOOT

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THE HONORABLE LORI E. LIGHTFOOT
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. LIU: Welcome. I am Amy Liu. I am vice president of the Brookings Institution and director of the Metropolitan Policy Program here. And I want to thank you for joining us this afternoon. Today's event is the first in a three-part series that we at Metro are hosting to raise the profile of local leaders in rebuilding local economies in better, more equitable ways. This first forum will examine a broad vision and the framework for achieving an equitable recovery. And I am delighted that we are featuring two leaders who get this vision fundamentally, and that is Mayor Lori Lightfoot of Chicago, and Helene Gayle, president of the Chicago Community Trust.

For our second event we will be joined by Robert Smith who is the founder and CEO of Visa Equity Partners to discuss the importance of Black businesses and community wealth creation. So do come back to join us on October 21st for that. And our third event will examine new initiatives and talent and skills development in this pandemic recession and beyond.

So why are we elevating local action? Well, because we are living in a time when the nation needs leadership more than ever. And it is a blessing that there is a great deal of leadership in our cities and metropolitan areas where progress matters more than partisanship and collaboration transcends division. While the presidential debate tonight will explore the critical issues of public health, the economy, racial reckoning, and other new developments it is local leaders who are doing the doing, not just talking.

I see public, private, non-profit sector leaders in communities who are engaged in the tireless and often behind the scenes work to meet the challenges posed by this pandemic. They are determining how best to ensure CARES Act funding reaches vulnerable families, schools, small businesses. These leaders are moving beyond the emergency response to lay the groundwork for a longer-term recovery where every neighborhood, and every worker is part of a dynamic wealth creating economy. And local leaders, CEOs, community groups, are having genuine conversations about anti-racism including what to do about it individually and collectively.

It is these hundreds of local efforts that add up to the American promise and will drive the

American future. And that is why our team at Brookings Metro released the COVID-19 Recovery Watch earlier this summer which you can find on our website. We wanted to give local leaders the actionable ideas, the data tools, the inspiration, to advance a higher-quality economy with racial inclusion. Now, to be clear, this is not boilerplate economic rebuilding. The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, and too many others have raised sharp awareness that we can no longer normalize injustice, whether it's in policing, or in all other rules that have locked many Black workers and businesses out of wealth and opportunities.

So going forward, our collective efforts will center on Black and Brown talent and businesses in quality job creation, in community rebuilding and in a more resilient society. It will require changing our metrics, it will require changing our practices, it will require changing the power dynamics and our civic tables. And that's because the moment demands nothing less. I want to thank the Kresge Foundation, the Roth C. Wilson Foundation, and the Robert Wood Foundation for making the Metro Recovery Watch and this event series possible. I also want to thank Kresge for their vision and leadership in their Shared Prosperity Partnership, which is a collaboration with Brookings Urban Institute and Living Cities to support inclusive growth strategies in cities like Chicago.

And speaking of Chicago, I am thrilled that today's program is focused on the leadership and efforts underway in Chicago, which is a hyper-diverse, immigrant rich, global city. Mayor Lori Lightfoot convened an inclusive recovery task force earlier this year. And when that group released its recommendations, the task force called this crisis, "A once in a generation opportunity to make the city work even better by creating a new economic model based on inclusive growth. That takes a holistic approach to development across both downtown and our neighborhoods." And that's what today's session is all about. And I know I am looking forward to hearing more from the mayor shortly about her vision and initiatives.

Now, to lead that conversation is someone I greatly admire. Helene Gayle is the president and CEO of the Chicago Community Trust which is one of the nation's largest community foundations, and a close collaborator with the City. Under her three-year leadership, the trust has

adopted a new strategic focus on closing the racial and ethnic wealth gap in the Chicago region. Now, prior to the trust, Helene had an impressive career in global health, including a 10-year stint at the CDC. So it is not a surprise that when the NAH and the CDC, with the national academies decided to convene a special committee to assist policymakers in planning for equitable allocation of vaccines against COVID-19 they asked Helene to serve as its cochair. Helene is also a trustee of the Brookings Institution, and I'm grateful for her leadership on that.

Now, before we hear from Mayor Lightfoot and Helene, my colleague, Joe Parilla, briefly walk through our framework for equitable recovery. Joe is an expert on inclusive economic growth and business dynamism, and he is the brains and energy behind the Metro Recovery Watch.

So again, thank you for joining us this afternoon. Joe, the floor is now yours.

MR. PARILLA:. Thank you so much, Amy, for the very generous introduction. And I should amend that a bit by saying that is very much a team effort in that I had the work of -- I'll be presenting the work of many colleagues and scholars at Brookings as well as some of our practitioner friends.

But I thought Amy set the context perfectly. And really, two months ago we launched in this new suite of products, all focused on economic recovery, and we wanted to set a vision that braided together this need to rebuild better meaning rebuild in ways that generate higher quality jobs and wealth creation opportunities, but also rebuild better in a way that advances racial inclusion in our cities. And the context for creating more and better jobs is clear. This spring, in the span of weeks a decade's worth of jobs and growth is wiped out by the measures -- the necessary measures taken to safeguard the country against COVID.

In the context for intentionality around racial equity is also clear. Black and Hispanic or Latino households have been much more likely to report being affected by job loss during the crisis, and Black workers in particular are disproportionately working in frontline occupations such as grocery stores, and childcare centers, and healthcare facilities putting themselves at risk to maintain critical services.

And so we wanted to outline three principles for recovery planning. And the first derives

from our concern that this crisis and eventual recovery period is going to exacerbate these challenges rather than ameliorate them. And therefore, we argue that the first principle of recovery planning efforts should be the adoption of a shared vision. In our case, we think it's a higher-quality, more racially equitable economy. And that vision should be embedded in quantifiable goals and metrics, and those goals and metrics should inform and guide, and assess the success of these recovery strategies. We need to know where we're going, and then measure whether we get there.

With a vision in place, the second principle focuses on building out the complex capabilities necessary to launch and implement recovery strategies. Now, we think capacity is developed through two things, resources and collaboration. And collaboration requires trust across a diverse range of stakeholders, and the good news on that last factor, trust, is that 70 percent of Americans trust their local leaders, which is about double the share of Americans that trust Congress. But maintaining that trust is going to require continuous engagement of a diverse and I want to be explicit here, a racially diverse set of actors in decision making as cities contemplate their recovery strategies.

And it's through these broader, diverse coalitions that we think recovery strategies will have the credibility and the body and to obtain and attract the longer run multi sector commitments that are going to up the odds of success. That if you can build these coalitions, more people can attach themselves to them, more funders can attach themselves to them, and it upset the odds of success.

And then, with these broader coalitions set against a vision for recovery, we need to invest to broadly in the drivers of inclusive growth, which we bucket in these three areas. And I'll conclude my remarks by previewing a set of nine concrete ideas generated by a combination of my colleagues at Brookings Metro, and a group of leading practitioners within our network that really populate this framework. In the framework begins with incentivizing quality business growth to create quality jobs. And the pressure is greatest among our smallest small businesses. Those that anchor neighborhoods, often communities of color, often micro-businesses, or small businesses owned by people of color.

And for this, we put forward an idea led by the New Economy Initiative's Pam Lewis, which is profiling the Detroit Means Business coalitions, which is a network of city and philanthropic, and

corporate leaders which is trying to provide capital and equipment and technical assistance to Detroit's micro-businesses who provide critical amenities to neighborhoods, and provide accessible jobs to residents. At another level, Dell Gines and Rodney Sampson, who Rodney is a nonresident senior fellow with us, recommend accumulating and scaling efforts like Atlanta based OHUB, which is working in that city, as well as Kansas City, to create racially equitable tech ecosystems, entrepreneurial ecosystems that center Black and Brown entrepreneurs. And the thesis is that by doing so you can build multi-generational wealth in these communities, and in the process create good jobs in high growth sectors that will likely power the recovery.

Our second driver recognizes that recovery strategies should be sourcing, developing, and connecting a racially diverse talent base. And my colleague, Martha Ross, and three Birmingham based leaders recommend launching what they call local service cores; these are modeled on a novel effort in the City of Birmingham that deploys recently unemployed residents to short-term community needs, and eventually bolster longer-term community health infrastructure. So the idea is that we have a lot of workers on the sidelines, and no shortage of specifically important work to do. And this effort has tried to meet that demand by connecting displaced workers. We think this can be a model for broader efforts, both federally and locally.

At a broader level we know, and as my colleague Annelies Goger, recommends that we need just a fundamentally more systemic rethink of career navigation and placement services, and particularly focusing those efforts on pathways that lead to better jobs, which is exemplified in a new effort out of Virginia, called Virginia Ready, which seeks just to do this in terms of working with displaced workers.

Finally, recovery strategies support vibrant and connected and inclusive communities. And along those lines Tracy Lowe, and Jennifer Vey, and Elwood Hopkins argue that local leaders could work with their state partners to launch what they call state funded, but hyper locally controlled community real estate investment trusts. That investments in neighborhoods can increase wealth and economic mobility for residents by allowing them to buy into and guide these trusts such that when their

neighborhoods appreciate they can build wealth alongside that appreciation. And that this would be targeted at those neighborhoods and those residents that COVID-19 has hit particularly hard.

And in an era where broadband, we know, is critical infrastructure both to work and learn, Adeta Maher and Lara Fishbane suggest that cities can emulate what Seattle has done in creating a digital equity office that promotes universal broadband access and digital skills literacy for disconnected communities. Now, what binds each of these ideas together is that they all link near term resilience to longer-term economic transformation, racial equity, and economic inclusion. And in doing so they are the type of solutions that require the investment and implementation abilities of broad, diverse, multi sector coalitions. And this has been a preview, but you can find fleshed-out proposals for all these ideas, and much more, at our Metro Recovery Watch website.

And now, I'm thrilled to turn to the main event for our program which is a moderated conversation between Helene Gayle and the 56th mayor of the great city of Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot. And before I turn to Helene, I just want to remind folks listening online that if they want to participate they can submit questions by email to events@brookings.edu, or via Twitter using the hashtag [metrorecovery](https://twitter.com/metrorecovery), one word.

And with that, I have the distinct pleasure of turning it over to Helene Gayle.

MS. GAYLE: Hi. Thanks so much, Joe, and thanks Amy for such a lovely introduction. And I'm glad to see that our mayor is here. Hi, wish I could be there in person with you but anyway, were so thrilled to have you with us. And I guess you had a chance to hear a little bit of the last presentation, but as I always say to people when I introduce our mayor, this is one of the hardest working people in all of America, and maybe also the planet. You know, she knew she was coming into a tough job when she took it on. I don't think anyone could have predicted the number of challenges, but she has faced them with grace and intelligence, and commitment. So thanks so much for being here and being part of this.

We don't have a whole lot of time, so I'll just get started, and maybe just to start off, you know when you came in you really came in with this incredible vision of equity for our city and making this a city that works for all. And then COVID happened, which highlighted some of the long-standing

inequities. Just to give people a sense of, you know, what you came in with, what your thoughts were in terms of what you wanted to accomplish, and how has that shifted as a result of this, or how has it gotten amplified some of the things that you came in with?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, thanks first of all to Brookings; it's been a great thought partner for me and my team, and Helene, I can't say enough to thank you and the Trust for your incredible leadership during this difficult time.

You know, I came into office, and anybody that knows the City of Chicago, the last 10 years or so our focus has really been on building our downtown, strengthening those surrounding neighborhoods in the South Loop, the West Loop, and River North. So that's kind of the core of our downtown area, and we've done quite well. So what that tells us is when we are intentional about how we focus, where we prioritize, and how we invest we can do remarkable things, in partnership, of course, with local businesses, stakeholders and so forth.

But I came to office feeling like our vision of the city was essentially just that. And not the other 70 plus neighborhoods that made up the entirety of the City of Chicago. And when you talk about that Chicago, what that means because of our high rate of segregation, it means that majority Black, majority LatinX, majority immigrant neighborhoods were just left behind, that there was very little in the way of investment. Now, there were some things happening. Certainly there's a lot of incredible people in these neighborhoods, and I will list them because I will forget someone, and then I'll hear about it later.

Now, what they lacked, in my view, was a partner in a mayor who saw the City for the beautiful mosaic that it was, and was willing to invest resources and commitment, and really bring other partners from philanthropy but also from the business sector into those neighborhoods to help them have the same level of vibrancy that we're seeing in our downtown area. So if you asked me how my vision of equity inclusion has changed as a result of the pandemic, and you really alluded to it, I think the areas where we were strong showing through, and really carried the day. But the areas where we will weakest, where we were vulnerable, where we hadn't made the kind of investments, those really flash, like neon signs.

So not just in neighborhoods where we hadn't made the investments, but in people. When we think about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown Chicagoans dying at an exponentially higher rate, higher instances of sickness, but also be those quote/unquote essential workers that didn't have the luxury of teleworking, had to take a -- get in, get up, get out, get dressed every day and go to their jobs in the face of this pandemic that is so unpredictable, and continually scary, what we know is that we've got to do a better job of investing in our people, particularly when it comes to healthcare and the things that really make up a life expectancy gap, and focus on those like a laser beam. And we're doing that, but we have to speed up the timeline for how we invest, and where we invest, and with whom we partner to make sure that we're rising to the occasion, and really challenge this in our response to COVID-19.

MS. GAYLE: So you raise a lot of issues that I kind of wanted to delve into. And you know because this is really focused on what can happen at the local level, the innovation, and particularly recovery, I wanted to ask about the recovery plan. And you know, maybe frame it in three ways, the why, the how, and then the what. Because I think, obviously, we all know we are in a public health and economic crisis and there has to be some thought on recovery. But everybody didn't do the kind of comprehensive plan you did, so why? You also did it in a specific way, bringing together different groups of people, and so the how of it was very important to and you can maybe talk about that. And then, what were the main contours of what that task force came out with as ideas of some of the areas that we're going to focus on as a city?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, why is obvious. We knew that the impacts were going to be great. We knew that we needed to assess what those impacts were, and then be ready when our economy started to open. But really, to kind of think and be thoughtful about how we could spur that recovery.

So we started thinking about this really back in April. I pull together our team on a Saturday, and I think they thought I was a little crazy talking about recovery that early on, when we were still seeing a fairly significant uptake in cases. But I believe you also have to look forward, actually in the

moment, and not just focus on battling the fire today, but looking down the road. So that's really what started the discussion because our economy, we knew, was going to be severely impacted. We didn't know in April how bad it would be, but we knew that it was going to be (inaudible) and we got a sense of what the sectors were.

But I also wanted to think broadly, not just about the economic impact but about how COVID-19 had really impacted the social fabric of our city, and what we needed to do to heal and recover because that's, to me, an intrinsic part of economic recovery. If your people are hurting, if they are traumatized, if they don't feel whole, and have a belief in tomorrow, then the economic recovery is never going to be as wholesome as you would like it to be. So we brought together a broad array of folks looking at 10 industry sectors on everything from the typical businesses, manufacturing, hospitality, but also looking at our mental health healthcare and thinking about, as I said, you know, holistically about the impacts of COVID-19. And we -- the recommendations that came out, we were the first big city in the country to come out with a list of recommendations for recovery, and we've now broken down the various recommendations into 17 different work streams that are now under way. The teams are staffing each of those work streams, very specific scopes and milestones, really through next year. So we know that this is going to be, not just a six month, or nine month process, but it's going to take us through probably, realistically, the end of 2021.

Some of the milestones that we've hit already are we've secured \$11 million for a 211 line. We know that we need to think more broadly about how we can get people connected up to services in a city, and 311 has kind of been -- become the catchall, but it's not as effectively working as it could be. We're in the process of negotiating for more (inaudible) warehouses with Amazon and we'll be completing one of those next week.

One of the big things that -- in terms of thinking about economic development that came out of the task force, and I have to credit Melody Hopson of Ariel who obviously knows a lot about Hollywood through her husband, and said look, right now all production is shut down. But it's going to start again, and the City of Chicago should be well positioned. So with her help and the help of a number

of other stakeholders here we put together a series of pitch packages and went to every major studio in New York, and in LA and pitched them on why Chicago was a great place for them to come when they started filming. We've got great facilities here and Cinespace and other facilities.

And I can tell you that Paper Girls, which is a new movie that's coming on line, is going to be starting filming in January 2021 through December 2021. And that alone will create 200 plus local jobs. And then other TV shows are coming back to Chicago to begin filming.

And coming out of that we knew we also needed to develop a citywide plan for planning. The City of Chicago has not had a land-use plan since 1966. That's a 1966. I was four years old at the time. And so how development happens really was left to the vagaries of developers, of aldermen. We knew we needed a more robust and (inaudible) plan. Again, to make sure that we had an eye towards equity and really building up the infrastructure in lots of neighborhoods, and directing, and spreading development much more evenly across our district. So that citywide planning process has been presented to the city's planning commission with a very positive reception. And we look forward to its passage.

And obviously, we partnered with the Chicago Community Trust on a number of different funds; the Together Now fund, and Together We Rise fund is one that we are scheduled to launch in early October. And again, what we want is specific amendments from businesses on a multi-year basis of what they will do either with direct financial support, or in-kind benefits to help, in particular, are small businesses, help them recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

That's a -- I could go on, but you get a sense of what we have focused on regarding recovery. But all of it is going to be driven by our continued fight against the virus and making sure that we are very data driven in what we do.

MS. GAYLE: Yeah, and I think you raised, several times, the role of the business and philanthropy and other partners, and I would say, you know, it's one of the things that you have also really committed to is this working together with a broad range of stakeholders so that there is greater

ownership. And I think that came through with the recovery task force. So hopefully, that bodes well in terms of having a plan that people actually feel in vested in. One of the other things that comes across as you talk about it is that this is a pretty bold, and ambitious plan, at a time when Chicago, not unlike other cities, are facing, you know, real economic shortfalls. And you, unfortunately, inherited one, and that has continued to grow.

So what do you think the role of outside dollars, particularly federal dollars will be in terms of thinking about the recovery. And then, also, given the fact that this is a big plan, you know dollars are a part of it how would you make trade-offs as you face some of these really tough financial challenges but still kind of keep us moving forward?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: That's a great question and it also typically gets reined in. Mayor, sounds really great, but how are you going to pay for it?

MS. GAYLE: Right.

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: So that's kind of the -- and you ask it in a much more polite way, but we get to the same place. You know, and I view it this way. We cannot abandon our values because we are facing difficult times. You know, I've been through several economic cycles as an adult, and I think where we have fallen short, both as a country, but also as individual businesses, is recognizing the importance of not abandoning our values. Making sure that the things we said were important are still a priority for us. They may be at a reduced scale, but not abandoning them.

So let me give you a couple of examples. We know that there is an affordable housing crisis in Chicago. That's not going to go away. If anything, it's going to get worse. So if we retreat from our commitment on affordable housing, we're going to put ourselves in an even deeper hole as we recover, and we may not recover. You know this, Helene, one of my big priorities as mayor is to actually grow our population.

We've seen, year after year for the last 5 to 6 years that Chicago's population has shrunk, and I fear that after the next census is complete, whenever that's complete, that we are not going to be the third largest city in the country, that we will be four, or five. And we've got to turn that around.

Chicago's not only the economic engine for the State of Illinois, it's the economic engine for the upper Midwest, and we've got to make sure that we are building a future where people believe that their destiny is here in the City of Chicago.

If we retreat from housing, mental health, workforce development, all the things that we know are critically important for people to believe that they've got a stake -- that we've got a stake in their future, that they can build a life here in our city, all we're doing is opening the exit door even wider. Again, some of those investments may not be as robust as we would have liked given our economic situation. But my view is we can't afford not to invest, and I think that government really does have an important role to play as a stimulus.

You asked about money from the federal government and I wish I could look into a crystal ball and tell you what that's going to look like. We keep pushing, we keep cajoling, but really it's going to come down to whether this president, before the election wants to do right by cities and towns all across the country, not just blue cities, not just Democratic-controlled cities, but every city across the country has been dramatically impacted regardless of who the leadership is.

And we are struggling, and we all need help from the federal government. I don't think there's any doubt about it. I don't think we need to make the case more. It's just a question at this point, of political will. And my hope is that before the Congress recesses for the election that they're going to announce that we actually have made some progress. It may be not be as ambitious as the package that was passed by the House earlier this summer, but cities and towns are dying for resources. And they have cut their personnel to the bone, they've cut services to the bone, and without some additional help, and it really can only come from the federal government, we have another set of extraordinarily painful choices that were going to have to make.

So I'm hoping that the cries of all of us are actually going to resonate with the president and Republican leadership. But if they don't, then we're not going to get it done before the election.

MS. GAYLE: You know, another situation, crisis, that has kind of unfolded in the midst of this has been, unfortunately, you know, linked to but not necessarily totally aligned with the death of

George Floyd, the protests, and then leading to civil unrest. Chicago has had to deal with that like other major cities, and, you know, at a time when we need the trust of everybody moving forward in the same direction, you know it's been one of the challenges you had to face recently, and you know, in some ways still facing it, how has that influenced how you are thinking about the recovery work, and what other work there is to be done, if you will, for the City?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: You know, it's a great, but complicated question. We certainly support peaceful protests. I mean everybody was horrified and shocked by the brutal murder of George Floyd. And it unearthed a sentiment that was really always there, but maybe just below the surface.

What's been unfortunate is that kind of the righteous protest has been hijacked at times by what I would call vigilantes who have let themselves into these protests and used the moment, of kind of collective outrage and grief to hijacked the agenda for something, in my view, much more sinister. And then, the third layer of this, so there's a peaceful protest, there are the people that are hijacking this process, but a third layer, which is even more cynical, are the people who are the criminal gangs, and crews that have taken advantage of this moment to loot, and really cause harm to businesses of all size across Chicago, but really across the country.

And so we're dealing with all three of those elements at the same time, and really never knowing when element 2, or element 3 is going to hit, which requires an extraordinary amount of diligence, and readiness to be able to pivot from peaceful protests to vigilantism in these protests, to criminal crews and gangs coming to loot and damage our businesses. And the peaceful protests are one thing, but the other two elements have dramatically impacted our businesses. Now, it's a huge drain on city resources and it's called our overtime budget of our police department to really balloon in ways that are contributing to our deficit, but we have to make these sacrifices in order to keep people in neighborhoods and businesses save.

But what is also done, I think, has really undermined confidence among businesses. It's really hurt small businesses who can't just go to the insurance company and restock and start all over again. They don't have the same kind of margin for error, if you will, that larger companies do. But even

the larger companies can make choices about where they're going to continue to invest in a challenged economic environment.

And if we don't make a very clear statement of protecting those businesses and going after the wrongdoers, we're going to lose a lot of confidence and it's going to dramatically even worsen our economic crisis. So what we have tried to do is strike a very difficult balance in supporting peaceful protests but having no tolerance whatsoever for any criminal activity of any sort, no matter what the source is, and constantly calibrating that balance is something that we work on, literally, every day to be supportive of our residents so they feel like we're hearing them whatever it is that they're saying. And they're all speaking in very different voices at different times.

But that is one of the biggest challenges, I think, I have as a mayor. And I know from talking to my colleagues across the country it's a big challenge from them as well. And we've seen, unfortunately, in some cities the pendulum swing, in one direction or another. And we have tried to stay steady in the middle to be hearing voices from either side, but really be in the heartland because I think that's where most residents are.

MS. GAYLE: Yeah, and you make a good point. I think this is one of those listening moments that is one of the most important things, somebody in one of your office can do is to just show that your open and listening, and that people feel like they are heard. You know, another component of what you kind of touched on is that I think you've also made quite a good balance between -- to focus on the small businesses that don't necessarily have access while keeping in mind the businesses that drive a lot of economy, and you mentioned the Together Now fund which really helped to provide funds to small businesses that had been damaged primarily in Black and Brown communities.

So you know, I think it is a difficult tightrope, but we appreciate that you continue to try to figure out how to calibrate that. You know, it reminds me of another aspect of this, you know you talk about kind of our gleaming downtown, and we always talk, you know, there has been much made about the fact that we have one of the largest life expects to see gaps, and to live in our gleaming downtown, you live to 90. If you live a few miles away on the southwest side, you live to 60. We are faced with a

public health challenge that has caused an economic crisis. But public health has been really at the center of a lot of your activities throughout this. And your public health department is well known for its focus on health equity. Could you say a bit more about how public health has really been so core to this, and how the public health response has been one that has put equity so front and center, which has actually radiated throughout your administration?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Yeah. And it really has been the public health department and guidance has been court, and literally everything that they have done, particularly in responding to the pandemic, they've been front and center. And I say this all the time, it is a blessing to have a public health department, not only led a very talented leader, a great team, but really forward thinking around things like preparation. If you recall back in the early parts of the pandemic when it really hit Chicago and the Midwest in early March, a lot of places were scrambling for PPE, for ventilators, the basic supplies that you needed to be able to and keep people safe. We didn't have that scramble, in part because our public health department places a huge premium on keeping a stockpile all year round.

And so what we were able to do is actually provide resources to private hospitals, local health providers, private ambulances, businesses, places that we normally don't provide material support to, in terms of PPE, we were able to really get them through the crisis until more resources came online. Our ventilator supply, we were shipping those out to hospital ICU rooms that were in a crisis. And so they really, incredibly rose to the occasion.

But they also were following the data. And that data revealed these healthcare disparities. One of the things that we saw early on was that providers who were doing testing, and then sending that information off up into the public health system were not tracking race and ethnicity. We were missing 50 percent of that information on any given series of tests results that were coming in. So we really bore down on that issue, and focus, you know, we always try to educate people on compliance first, but we had to call certain providers and labs and say you cannot skip the demographic information. We must understand how this is impacting all Chicagoans.

We got much better with that as time went on. But as we started to see these numbers

rolling in, that's when we started to see the disparities. Now again, I'm not going to say that it was a terrible surprise, although I will tell you when I saw the numbers on Black Chicagoans dying at a rate seven times in any other demographic, that was like getting a punch in the gut. I mean it really took my breath away. But it all made sense because of the healthcare disparities. The lack of access to high-quality, affordable healthcare has been well documented in Chicago and other cities across the country.

I just recently reread David Ansell's incredible book, *The Death Gap*. David Ansell was a doctor at Rush Hospital here, and spent most of his career treating residence on the west side of Chicago, which is a predominately black neighborhood. And to see really the tale of two different healthcare systems that lead to radically different outcomes for patients, even in the youngest of age, and certainly as a life were on -- it's hard to say it's a great read because it's a difficult read. But I think it really tells the story of where we need to -- what we need to do, how we need to invest, and a sense of urgency that we need in order to start to shrink these healthcare disparities. And COVID-19, again, just exacerbated those underlying disparities.

So we still have much work to do, but I think our sense of urgency in seeing these disparities made us become even more committed to grassroot partnerships with trusted people in the communities, very hyper local focus. We placed a huge premium on federally qualified healthcare centers that we are continuing to kind of uplift as essential partners in helping us fight these disparities. We launched a contact tracing initiative. We are going to hire 600 people over time, and these are people drawn from neighborhoods where there's low opportunities for jobs. And the idea in the long term is to create a community-based healthcare core in Chicago that will help us, again, shrink these healthcare disparities because it will be people from the neighborhood, going to their neighbors, and talking to them about what they can do to help themselves lead healthier, more vibrant lives.

MS. GAYLE: Well, you just kind of jump to what my next question was which was about unemployment. And I was going to give the example that using this health force was one of the innovative ways -- this contract tracing force as one of the innovative ways of looking at the unemployment, particularly the unemployment that was called as a result of COVID.

So maybe say a little bit more about some of the ways that you're thinking about that. You know, you've really put this focus on small businesses, but you've also put a lot of focus on the unemployment that was caused as a result of COVID.

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, looking fundamentally we have to think about how we build wealth in new communities, meaning communities that haven't traditionally been invested. And building off this, shoring up the small business core for sure because they hire from the communities. But also giving individuals opportunities to advance themselves. So of the 600 people that we hope to employ through this at \$20 an hour with benefits, that are connected to not only our public health department, but they'll be connected up to other earn and learn opportunities so that they can build out a skill set that goes beyond contact tracing.

So when we get to a point where we won't need this scale of contract tracing, they'll have a skill set that will readily be marketable both as part of city employees, but also to private sector employment, hospitals, doctors, and other community based healthcare centers so that we have -- you know, healthcare is one of the growing industries. It's part of our economic development plan for the larger City. And we get people the skill sets that they need to be part of this growing part of our economy that's only going to inure to their benefit and to the City's benefit. So we are very, very excited about the opportunity that this community based healthcare core really creates. And we are focused on people who have literally no job history, are returning citizens and other people who have not been able to get the kind of employment that they need to really build a life on. And we wanted to go beyond the mere minimum wage. That's why we set the amount at \$20 per hour, plus benefits, so that we can then give them the ability to start creating wealth for themselves and their families.

MS. GAYLE: You know, another thing you touched on is this population loss, and this is a big focus. You know, a lot of people that said that in this whole era of Covid and working anywhere you want that cities are going to die. But you're really bullish on cities and the importance of it, and one of the ways that's been manifested is how you've embraced this whole transit oriented development as part of

your agenda, and including the equity component of that. Say a little bit about how that has figured into your thinking as you're looking at planning and thinking about how we build cities that work for everybody.

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, that's a great point. I think transit oriented development has an idea that's been around for a while. But it hasn't had really and equity lands. So a lot of the development we've seen our studio apartments, may be one or two bedrooms at the least. Well, those aren't large enough to accommodate families. And they're not affordable enough to keep working class families and individuals in the city. So we actually have just announced a new initiative here in Chicago where we are focused on equitable transit oriented development. So the same concept, but doing it in a way that really broadens the lens of people who were going to be able to take advantage of this opportunity, and so that we are not displacing indigenous residents in neighborhoods, but we're creating new opportunities for them to be able to live in developments that are funded by the city and private developers.

So I can -- this is really going to have, if we do it right, and we're diligent we're really going to have tremendous impact and create a circumstance where we're creating diverse communities through transit oriented development and not reinforcing the segregation that's plagued our city for far too long. Or allowing for indigenous residents to be displaced as new development comes online. So it's all about intentionality, in my view. You've got to be conscious of what new policies are and not just let the market run its course because we see that market forces aren't always working well when it comes to equity. So I like to think of it as a free market with some regulation.

MS. GAYLE: And intentionality. I love that. I'm going to go to a couple of questions because I see that we only have about 10 more minutes. So the questions from audience. One good question which we always want to know is what metrics and goals are you going to use? This says to reduce ethnic wealth disparities. But I would add that also, what metrics and goals for knowing that your successful in recovery?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, I think a lot of things. We've had over 900,000 people apply for unemployment in the city of Chicago. So we want to see that number dropped dramatically. We are

also looking at what is forecast is a wave of evictions. How do we minimize the impact of that? Foreclosure obviously is a close second when you talk about evictions. But also, what are we doing to grow and support new businesses coming online? We are seeing, and we feel very fortunate that the depth of our drop, and our economy is not as deep as other cities across the country, and our recovery is coming back online a little faster than what we're seeing. We're nowhere out of the woods and by any stretch of the imagination, but just things like we are looking at hotel occupancy. In the height of COVID-19 shut down occupancy was really in the single digits in our hotels and at 04 a lot of hotels. Two weekends ago we had -- we were close to 50 percent occupancy and hotels in downtown Chicago. Again, not where we need to be, but showing signs of life.

Bank of America, as you might imagine, does extensive economic analysis of its customers, economic analysis of the economy in general, and one data point is credit card spending in Chicago is almost back at pre-Covid rates. Now that's spending on different things. People are staying home more, but the fact that people are not hoarding cash, but are feeling confident enough to be able to spend is obviously a very good sign.

So those are some of the metrics that we'll be measuring. And really, again, we know where our economy has been hit the hardest, and watching how those interceptors, hospitality, particularly watching how they recover. But also, were not just watching, we are working with our industry partners to come up with lands short-term and long-term to help them get over this hump, and then be ready to take advantage of opportunities when the economy really reopens in 2021.

MS. GAYLE: There's another question that asks about the widening racial skills gap and how are we thinking about that. And you know obviously were all concerned about the fact that children are staying out of school, but not going back into the classroom, what implications that may have, and particularly, what does that do long-term when we think about skills gap, and Black and Brown children? You're thinking about this widening skill that that could get even wider?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, I share those concerns. I'm very much concerned about the impact on our children, particularly the youngest starting their school life remotely. You know, I have such

fond memories of kindergarten. There was no such thing as preschool when I was growing up. But I have such fond memories of kindergarten, first, second, and third grade. And that's really where, if you get to children and help teach them a love of learning it will stay with them for their whole lives. Starting out remotely where they literally can't touch in their teacher, give them a hug, really get socialized with their classmates; I worry a lot about that. And data that we've seen nationwide is preschool, kindergarten, first grade numbers are down significantly in school districts that have gone to all remote learning. That's a significant challenge that we're going to have to address in very, very helpful ways. And Chicago public schools understands that data and is working on very specific plans for outreach to bring those children back into the public school system. But it's a challenge that we've seen school systems face really nationwide.

But I also want to talk about the second part of your question which is the skills gap. And it's a real issue. We have placed a tremendous amount of emphasis in public schools, on college. And college is great, right. We're all beneficiaries of going on to higher education. But college isn't for every student. So the college or busted mentality, and I'm exaggerating, obviously, but we've got to give our young people options.

And I also think one of the other things that we have to do a better job of is really exposing, particularly kids of color to people who look like them in unusual (inaudible) jobs. Meaning, we've got to show that they are doctors, they are lawyers, there are architects, they're engineers, but also in the trades; that there are carpenters, that there are plumbers. That all the jobs that are different than what -- that are something different than being a rap star, or being an athlete. We've got to teach our kids that these different professions where you can really have a meaningful career, that there are Black and Brown people, there are women that are in these jobs.

And, you know, as the saying goes, you can't be what you can't see, we've got to really present these options to our young people at a much younger age to really start them thinking about hey, that might be something that I would love to do. You know, for example, our Art Institute is expanding and creating a whole section on art preservation. And I had the opportunity in one of our programs to talk

to some of the art preservationists. And this is like very skilled work, very meticulous but very rewarding. And if you are an art lover, which a lot of our kids are, and you've got the attention to detail, I daresay that most of our kids, and probably a lot of adults, have no idea that these kinds of jobs even exist. And I just cite that as one example.

But I think we've got to do a better job of exposing our young people to the kinds of jobs that people actually are doing right here in Chicago, so we expand their horizon. Now, not everybody's going to go and be somebody who preserves fine art in a museum, like the Art Institute. But knowing that that exists expands one's horizons. And so we've got to do a better job of making sure that we're preparing our young people, not just for the jobs of today, but the jobs of tomorrow.

And the last thing I'll say about this, and hopefully you can tell I've given a lot of thought to this issue. Because we've got to get employers to open up their minds about our students, and the talent that they present. So there are a number of programs through our city colleges, but also some private workforce development programs. Year Off is one I talk about all the time where these are kids that maybe have a little bit of college, but for a variety of reasons weren't able to finish, but they're skilled, they're well-trained, they're great workers.

And so we are -- we are challenging employers to say well, think about your job description. Are you reflexively saying college degree necessary when maybe it's not? Maybe the equivalent of life experience, and work experience and somebody who has been well-trained to do that job, actually is somebody who'd be a great employee for you. So there's a lot of things that I think we could do, and we must do, as we think about recovery. But also, as we think about the next steps in widening economic opportunity for lots of different people who have been left behind.

MS. GAYLE: Well, not only have you thought a lot about that, you have thought a lot about everything that I've asked you, which I hope is clear to the audience, and even in this difficult time, you know, you still have a real passion for your job. So maybe in the last minute we have remaining, in the midst of all this just tell us why you continue to have such passion, but even more than that, such optimism and such hope about the city?

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Well, I do have a passion for the job. I mean I'm not going to -- I would be lying if I didn't say this has been a very tough year. When I think about him 17 months into this job, it feels like more like dog years given the back, to back, to back crises that we face. But I love to learn, I love to challenge myself. But I also think about those people that I've met journey to are really working hard in difficult circumstances, and they still have hope.

Let me give you a very concrete example. Monday, June 1st, I'll remember this day for the rest of my life. It was the Monday after a horrible weekend, protest, violence, and looting. I've never experienced anything like it. It's probably one of the times when I've felt the most despair in my time as mayor. And so that Monday morning I got up very early and I started on the far south side of our city to go out and assess for myself the damage that I had only been seeing through video and camera footage.

And I met so many people that day who literally, their lives were, small business people, was just destroyed. I had many people crying on my shoulder, and just really had to muster the strength to lift themselves up from this wreckage that was all around them. But to a person, these are the people who had no reason to hope at all, they all did. They all urged me on. We were two days away from the start of reopening our economy after a shutdown from COVID-19. And every single person I ask, are we ready as a City, should we reopen? What I got back was absolutely, Mayor. We need to reopen. Our customers need to see us. Our employees need to come back to work.

I mean I was in stores, literally, there was nothing left on the walls, it had been stripped to bear, and yet even those small business people had hoped. So I think about those people that represent, I think, really the heart of Chicago. When I feel down, when I feel despair, I remind myself of what those people went through, and how much they need me to be at the top of my game to really muster the resources of the City government, and to urge the private sector, philanthropy, business, community organizations, for us to keep moving forward together. Because that's the only way that we will truly recover. And that excites me, and gives me energy. It makes me humble for sure, but really keeps me motivated to be the best mayor that I can possibly be for those people.

MS. GAYLE: Well, thank you. Thank you. And you know, I could go on asking

questions forever. It is fascinating and, not only for Chicago, but for being an inspiration to the nation. These are tough times, and we need people who have the kind of courage and conviction that you do, because that's what it's going to take for all of us to get past this and get onto that vision that you so brilliantly portrayed. So thank you so much for taking the time to be with us today. And thank you, Amy, thank you Joe, and thank you Brookings for the start of this wonderful series.

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT: Thank you very much, everyone.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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