

---

## Kunesh calls for City Racial Disparity Study

The selection of the local all-white Hefferlin & Kronenberg Architects firm by the City of Chattanooga to design and lead neighborhood input into a new \$6million Avondale Recreation Center for Avondale's 99% black population should make any race-conscious person wonder what the City's contractor selection process is, and how biased the City actually is against minorities and women, according to tom kunesh, City Council District 8 candidate.

As members of City Council have already asserted, "historically, the City expenditures with vendors have not reflected the diversity of the Chattanooga area." The City Council took up the issue of a Disparity Study last year when requested by Councilman Yusuf Hakeem, but then—"Chairwoman Carol Berz and council members Chris Anderson, Larry Grohn and Moses Freeman opposed the measure." Since then, nothing has happened.

tom kunesh, candidate for City Council District 8 in which the Avondale Recreation/YFD Center resides, says that he will make a Disparity Study — "to assess, quantify, and evaluate the prevalence, magnitude, and extent of marketplace discrimination, if any, against minority, women, and disadvantaged business enterprises" — the top priority as District 8 councilman.

Chattanooga should set a leading example. Everybody in Chattanooga needs to know how our City's public government is treating each citizen. And if we're not treating each other fairly, we need to know where and how to fix it.

If "the City is interested in removing obstacles and believes a disparity study is the best method of removing those obstacles for women and minority owned businesses" as it says it is, then it should have accomplished the study by now, kunesh claims. Why has it not already been done by this City Council?

As the donut of poverty between wealthy Downtown and wealthy Suburbs grows, it's time to make the Disparity Study happen so we can know just how good – or bad – it really is. Kunesh alleges that African American businesses receive less than 5% of City of Chattanooga contracts, making up less than 2% of contractor dollars going to African Americans, even though Chattanooga's black population is at least 36%. And that less than 5% of City of Chattanooga contracts, making up less than 5% of contractor dollars, go to caucasian females who make up 30% of Chattanooga's population.

Without real data from a real Disparity Study, the scope of inequality (or rather injustice/inequity) is concealed and will assuredly perpetuate/grow.

If the City does not complete a disparity study and correct the economic disadvantages that African Americans and women face in working with just the government of Chattanooga (as compared with the much larger scope of private businesses), legal problems will result. Kunesh claims that the City will face the possibility of a Title VII (Civil Rights Act of 1964) class action lawsuit to force the City into taking affirmative action to correct its government racism.

*tom kunesh is a long-time activist in local Native American issues and planner of the Unity Group's recent annual MLKing Interfaith Celebrations. He has been working to halt the Central Avenue North extension and save the Lincoln Park Historic District as well as the old Citico site on Riverside Drive. Kunesh is a candidate for City Council to represent District 8.*

---

**PRESS RELEASE**  
18 february 2017

---

**thomas p  
kunesh**  
City Council  
Candidate  
District 8

---

Chattanooga TN  
t • 7 march 2017

---

tom8@kunesh.net  
423 596 3793