

**Leveraging Lima City Schools to Create Culture Change**  
***A Long Term Strategy for Improving Workforce Diversity at the City of Lima***  
**December 2008**

The percentage of minority employees at the City of Lima does not reflect the community. Many efforts have been made over the last 30 years to improve the utilization of minorities within the City's workforce. Unfortunately, the City remains unable to attract qualified minorities in sufficient numbers to have any significant impact on the City's diversity ratio. Police officers and fire fighters represent 37% of all full-time positions and the largest opportunity for gaining entry-level employment with the City. Blacks represent less than 5% of these employees. To improve the City's diversity ratio, the City must attract qualified minority candidates for police officer and fire fighter.

There appears to be a general reluctance within the local black community to pursue careers as police officer and fire fighters, which may be attributable to a "lack of faith" in the selection process and/or in law enforcement generally. Assuming the perception is reasonably accurate, a change in culture within the local black community relative to how these careers are viewed, as well as a greater understanding of how the selection process works, may have a significant impact on the City's ability to attract qualified local minority candidates for these positions, and is viewed as one strategy for improving the City's diversity ratio in the long term.

The City's goal is that 15% to 25% of all qualified applicants for police officer and fire fighter will be black. One key strategy for achieving this goal is to change the perception of these career choices within the black community. We must create a culture locally that views careers in law enforcement and fire suppression as honorable and heroic. To do that, the City needs the support of the local school system. The objective is for each child within the Lima City School system to receive education about law enforcement and fire fighting careers as a part of required curriculum for graduation from elementary, junior high and high school. The education would focus on the link between democracy, the legislative process, law enforcement and the judicial process with special emphasis on how these systems have been created by the people of our community, specifically, and the people of the United States generally, as a means to provide safety and social harmony. Further, the educational programs would provide information on career requirements and experiences for the positions of police officer and fire fighter. Additionally, information would be gathered from students about their perceptions of these careers and what reasons they would cite for either having an interest, or not having an interest in pursuing such careers.

The City is currently engaged in a review of the employee selection process. Many proposed changes are being considered to improve the process with a goal of enhancing participation in the process by local qualified minority candidates. Any adopted changes will not have their full benefit in the local community unless the positions of police officer and fire fighter are valued by all members of our community. Our City school system can help us achieve that end.

