



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Zulma Maciel

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIES TO COMBAT  
HATE CRIMES AND VIOLENCE  
AGAINST ASIAN-AMERICAN/  
PACIFIC ISLANDERS**

**DATE:** May 18, 2021

Approved

Date

5/18/2021

## **REASON FOR ADDENDUM**

This addendum is requested in order to ensure that urgent attention is given to the critical need to be responsive to community-identified strategies to support the safety and well-being of Asian American Pacific Islander communities in San José facing harassment, racism, and violence.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the report on strategies proposed by community members on methods to combat hate crimes and violence against Asian American Pacific Islander communities in San José.

## **OUTCOME**

Accepting this report and recommended strategies will help reaffirm San José's commitment to the safety and well-being of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and in combating hate crimes and misinformation targeting community members.

## **BACKGROUND**

The AAPI community has been the target of hate crimes and violence long before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the pandemic has further fueled an increase in harassment, racism, and violence. As such, Councilmember Raul Peralez submitted a memorandum dated April 8, 2020 to the Rules and Open Government Committee seeking the council to adopt a resolution condemning xenophobia against the Asian Pacific Islander community stemming from the COVID-19 crisis and related actions. Subsequent to City Council approval on April 21, 2020 City staff from various departments convened to consider strategies to combat xenophobia and address these

hate crimes against the AAPI community. However, City staff were immersed in COVID-19 response related activity and did not complete council direction.

Subsequently, in a memorandum dated February 11, 2021, approved by the Rules and Open Government, staff was directed to report on the things the City was working on to combat xenophobia and protect the AAPI communities of San José. Councilmember Peralez offered ideas to consider such as:

- (a) Partner with the Santa Clara County District Attorney's office to explore what public safety measures can be taken in light of recent Bay Area incidents;
- (b) Conduct public listening sessions with API community leaders to hear their feedback on the events; and
- (c) Hold a public safety workshop for the elderly and their families as well as a small pilot intended to increase visibility and safety such as a neighborhood walking event in areas like Little Saigon and Japantown.

This memorandum responds to the direction given to the City Administration and includes a set of recommended strategies that emerged from listening sessions with the AAPI community.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Office of Racial Equity and staff from Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) formed a small team focused on collaborating with local groups to organize listening sessions with community members. The team engaged with various community partners, such as, but not limited to, International Children's Assistance Network (ICAN), Vietnamese American Roundtable (VAR), LEAD Filipino, Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Asian American Community Services Agency, Korean American Community Services, Chinese Cultural Center, Avenidas, Japantown Neighborhood Association, and EM Collective.

On February 24, the City convened partner organizations to discuss how best to engage community members in listening sessions that would ultimately surface strategies to combat xenophobia and prevent violence against the AAPI community. Several organizations committed to hosting sessions that would create a safe and supportive environment to provide recommendations on what the City could be doing to support and protect the community.

Four listening sessions were held between March 14-27, 2021. ICAN hosted two sessions, one in Vietnamese and one in English. VAR and LEAD Filipino hosted sessions in English. These organizations effectively mobilized and offered virtual spaces uniquely tailored for community members to be heard. They also led the communication and outreach to their respective communities. For example, ICAN conducted outreach through their radio station. In addition, the City team developed a document entitled "AAPI Listening Sessions: Protocols for Facilitators,

Guidelines for Participants, and Proposed Agenda” that was used to facilitate the implementation of the sessions as well as the collection of data.

Additional sessions hosted by Korean American Community Services and Vietnamese American Professional Women Silicon Valley as well as further sessions by ICAN and VAR are being planned for May. Staff will consider the results of these sessions and incorporate into future planning where practical.

Furthermore, City staff convened a second meeting with community partners in April to review the themes and strategies and discuss additional input and document revisions.

### Themes

The following themes emerged from the listening sessions:

1. Fear for safety was the top concern. Community members worried especially for the elderly, those who are monolingual, and children vulnerable to school bullying. Safe neighborhoods, well-lit streets, and access to mental health resources and multilingual hotlines were some of the recommendations made to address safety concerns.
2. There were differing views on what constituted “safety”. Some expressed the viewpoint that law enforcement was an answer to safety concerns while some indicated the opposite.
3. Cultural norms that encouraged people to stay under the radar and “to put up and shut up” were referenced in all sessions. Similarly, community members expressed frustration about perpetuating the “model minority” myth. Education in schools, cultural competency measures and the determination of AAPI members to claim their place in civic discourse were some ideas offered in this context.
4. A strong desire to find common ground with other communities in San José and build unity in the context of addressing racist targeting of AAPI identities while also pointing out anti-blackness in AAPI communities.
5. There was overwhelming support for more listening sessions and to maintain dialogue between City and AAPI-serving organizations on a recurrent basis to strengthen trust between City and the community. Community members also sought support for smaller community organizations serving the needs of AAPI community members.

### Recommended Strategies

The following strategies surfaced from the listening sessions:

1. Publish the County hotline number to report hate-crimes more prominently at multiple sites for easy access. In addition to English, provide multi-lingual assistance on hotlines to assist monolingual victims who call for help.

2. Allocate funding to distribute safety kits to Senior Nutrition Program participants and CBOs serving AAPI seniors (e.g. whistles, bungee coil key, small flashlight, pepper gel spray, self-defense personal sirens).
3. Develop a disaggregated demographic database for races identified as AAPI to be able to meet service needs effectively.
4. Create opportunities for the AAPI community to engage more frequently with the City to build trust and to collaborate beyond transactional value. For example, place-based conversations around community and economic recovery.
5. Bring communities together to improve race relations in San José. For example, through the work of the Immigrant Affairs team, “foster bridge-building between communities” (Welcoming San José Plan 2.0).
6. Include safety concerns expressed in these sessions to inform the scope of the Reimagining Community Safety work group.
7. Collaborate more closely with the County of Santa Clara, such as amplifying the hotline number, and coordination on items that result from the work of the Hate Crime Task Force.
8. Provide free bystander training and strategies for intervention to stop a hate crime or incident.
9. Promote the website [www.hatecrimebook.com](http://www.hatecrimebook.com) provides visual booklets in 7 languages (Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Spanish and English) on how to train community members to recognize and report AAPI hate crimes.
10. Provide education and awareness to avoid stereotyping Asian cultures and cultural practices and highlight the rich cultural diversity contained within the acronym AAPI, through coordination with the County of Santa Clara Office of Education and Hate Crimes Task Force.
11. Convene inter-generational dialogue between elderly in the AAPI communities and the youth.

In addition, to the listening sessions conducted in March, there were other notable efforts that took place in support of the AAPI community. For example, in Japantown, community volunteers organized efforts to patrol the streets as a deterrent for aggressors. PRNS posted an AAPI Senior and Community Safety blog on February 12 and updated again on March 25. The blog was disseminated widely via social and through Senior Nutrition programs.

Most recently, the San José Police Department’s Crime Prevention Unit provided 15 “Hate Crime Awareness and Personal Safety” presentations to 182 English as a Second Language (ESL) students through East Side Union High School District in Vietnamese, English and Spanish. The Crime Prevention Unit will continue to offer free public safety presentations to create awareness and educate the community on this important and timely topic. The presentations include information on the definition of hate crimes and hate incidents, how to report crimes to the police department, personal safety tips, bystander safety tips, and available resources. Furthermore, SJPD’s walking beats continue to conduct high visibility patrol,

connecting with business owners, employees, and others to discuss recent crime trends, crime prevention strategies, and other issues. Chief Mata and Command Staff also visited more than five business areas where AAPI community members frequent and connected with residents to talk and answer questions. Additionally, the Chief participated in a virtual meeting hosted by Tzu Chi Foundation which drew nearly 250 attendees to have a conversation about safety, resources, and how to report crimes.

It is important to note that the County of Santa Clara leads a Hate Crime Task Force Co-Chaired by Councilmember Maya Esparza. Deputy Chief Elle Washburn also represents the City of San José. The Task Force is a multisector group charged to “investigate, educate, prevent, and combat hate incidents and hate crimes in the County of Santa Clara. The Task Force will advise on strategies and areas for improvements and investments, and strategies relative to appropriate services and programs to address, reduce, and prevent hate incidents and hate crimes.” It is within this context that the Task Force, which includes the County District Attorney’s Office, will explore what public safety measures can be taken in light of recent Bay Area incidents. The Office of Racial Equity will continue to track, support and collaborate where possible to help addresses the increase in hate crimes across all marginalized communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Meaningful community engagement was the central principle in carrying out this council directive. The City convened local, trusted organizations that demonstrated both cultural responsiveness and linguistic capabilities to reach community members. Staff appreciates the efforts by the organizations named in this memorandum and acknowledges that it required time and energy to plan, organize, advertise, facilitate, interpret, translate, document, and report the results of the meetings in a way that City staff could then share the findings.

## **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

The Office of Racial Equity will continue to collaborate with community partners to discuss how the City and community organizations can implement strategies collaboratively.

## **CLIMATE SMART SAN JOSE**

The recommendation in this memo has no effect on Climate Smart San José energy, water, or mobility goals.

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### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the agenda website for the May 25, 2021 City Council Meeting.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the San José Police Department.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT**

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

### **COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

Most recommendations mentioned above require coordination with partner organizations, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, and the County of Santa Clara.

The Office of Racial Equity will seek match funding from foundations to purchase items for safety kits. The cost could range from \$25 to \$35 a kit.

### **CEQA**

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/

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