



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Zulma Maciel

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED
EQUITY ROUNDTABLE**

DATE: December 21, 2021

Approved

Date

01/06/22

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss the proposed Equity Roundtable framework, selection process, and member composition and provide input for consideration and further refinement.

BACKGROUND

On January 26, 2021, Councilmember Sylvia Arenas provided direction¹ to staff to examine and align the scope and work of the Human Services Commission with the work of the newly formed Office of Racial Equity.

Based on this direction, the Office of Racial Equity (ORE) researched several advisory groups in other cities and jurisdictions that were connected to equity-type offices. The research goal was to learn how these advisory groups functioned, defined their scope, and operated. While there are some differences across these bodies, there were similar characteristics. Many of these cities and their advisory bodies had strong language on addressing racial equity and detailed a clear relationship between advisory bodies, City Council, Administration, and the community at large.

As such, in June 2021, staff met with Councilmember Arenas to propose an alternative advisory body that would be representative of the community and functioned in a way that would provide meaningful input to the City. Staff did not recommend a commission replacement because commissions often have a purpose and focus that is narrowly centered on providing advice on Council policy to the City Council. Given the limitations of a city commission and intent to address systemic inequities, staff recommended an alternative external body. This alternative body would need to be flexible in structure as commissions can limit innovation and transformation. Additionally, this alternative body would need to focus on equitable engagement and contribution on City policies and practices that would benefit historically marginalized communities. The City has a purpose and responsibility to foster a climate where all residents

¹ Council Agenda 1/26/21 Item No. 2.12

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9090560&GUID=0C531B2F-4FC2-4B7C-832A-F3CE9A208ABA>

recognize that they are welcomed, seen and valued for how they contribute to the success of the City. The work of this proposed advisory body aims to examine existing City efforts that have functioned through systemic racist policies and contribute with a lens of transformation and healing.

Therefore, staff suggested engaging organizations and community members with familiarity of racial equity concepts, to help design a new advisory body that would enhance the City's ability to understand and advance racial equity. Staff was given approval to proceed and initiated a community co-design process that would inform a framework and scope. This memorandum provides an initial framework, member composition, and selection process as a starting point for council discussions.

ANALYSIS

City staff organized three discussions from October to December 2021 with several, diverse community member groups. The purpose of the meetings was to inform and co-design a framework, scope, and selection process for a tentatively titled advisory body: Equity Roundtable. The co-designers included representatives from Black/African Ancestry, Native American, Chicano/Latin/o/a/x, Asian/Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA, senior, youth, and faith-based communities. Many of the representatives also had expertise and knowledge in several areas: disability/access, academia, grassroots and neighborhood organizing, age and intergenerational bridge building, nonprofit coalitions, and anti-racism.

The co-designers emphasized the following themes as central to the Equity Roundtable:

1. Acknowledge and name the harm and trauma from government's role in past and current systemic racism.
2. Emphasize values such as meaningful, long-lasting change, accountability, transparency, and visibility to both the City administration and City Council.
3. Support a process of City Departments to understand their role in eliminating the impact of systemic racism on residents within their scope and services
4. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities and accountability so that progress can be tracked; obstacles can be addressed; and identify success areas.
5. Focus on policy areas with defined desired outcomes that are shared across City Council, Administration, and Departments.
6. Leverage the City's spirit and dedication in addressing transformational change to overcome policies and practices rooted in systemic racism.

Proposed scope of the Equity Roundtable:

- Ensure there is connection and accountability of centering equity among all City commissions.
- Have a clearly defined process and expectation guidelines that supports the accountability of all City Departments to provide services and environments that aligns with the advancement of racial equity.

- Responsible for Council Appointment Advisory Commission duties and interview and nominate special eligibility seats for City commissions.
- Provide recommendations on citywide and, as requested, departmental policies, programs, services, and strategies that stimulates sustainable action to mend the harm that has come from years of systemic injustice and oppression and that ultimately improves outcomes for people from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.
- Ensure City leaders acknowledge past practices and policies that have burdened many marginalized residents and communities.
- Advise City leaders on the impact of policies, services, and to substantiate any quantitative metrics used to inform decisions by aligning with community voice and experiences.
- Offer recommendations that are inclusive of marginalized communities and sensitive to the many challenges faced by people from each of these communities.

Proposed selection process and member composition:

- Selection committee comprising of community members, City Administration, and City department leadership.
- Member representation from diverse and racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities.
- Member representation from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Members should have expertise but not limited from areas of housing, economic development, homelessness, criminal justice, transportation, immigration/undocumented status, youth, small business, arts and culture.
- Priority on members that are from historically, marginalized communities in San José
- Members of this roundtable have an understanding of systemic racism with deep commitment to racial equity.
- Ensure member inclusion of age diversity.
- Ensure member inclusion of voices across gender, gender identity, sexual preferences.
- Ensure member inclusion of ability.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Racial Equity and Equity Roundtable co-designers are eager to develop a meaningful community body that will engage community members and advance racial equity in the City organization. The proposed initial scope, selection process, and member composition will continue to evolve to ensure the City is centering community voices and equity so racial healing can lead to transformation.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The Office of Racial Equity will gather feedback and input from the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee discussion. Staff will continue discussions with the Equity Roundtable co-designers and provide recommendations to City Council in Spring 2022.

CLIMATE SMART SAN JOSE

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

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the agenda website for the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting for January 13, 2022.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-010, City Organizational & Administrative Activities resulting in no changes to the physical environment.

/s/
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For questions, please contact Andrea Truong, Racial Equity Manager, at Andrea.Truong@sanjoseca.gov.