



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Zulma V. Maciel

SUBJECT: DEFINITION OF RACIAL EQUITY

DATE: January 13, 2022

Approved

Date

01/14/22

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution accepting the proposed definition of racial equity for the City of San José:

Both a process and an outcome, racial equity is designed to center anti-racism, eliminate systemic racial inequities, and acknowledge the historical and existing practices that have led to discrimination and injustices to Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/x, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

The racial equity process explicitly prioritizes communities that have been economically deprived and underserved, and establishes a practice for creating psychologically safe spaces for racial groups that have been most negatively impacted by the City's policies and practices. It is action that prioritizes liberation and measurable change, and focuses on lived experiences of all impacted racial groups.

As an outcome, racial equity is achieved when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and everyone can prosper and thrive.

BACKGROUND

On November 9, 2021, the City Administration brought forward a proposed racial equity definition for discussion with the Mayor and City Council. The proposed definition was defined by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity as:

When race no longer predicts life outcomes and when outcomes for all groups are improved.

At the Council Meeting, a memorandum, dated November 5, 2021, from Councilmembers Arenas, Jimenez, Peralez, Carrasco, and Esparza was approved that recommended, among other items, that Council discuss a more complete definition for racial equity, seek input from community stakeholders, and return to Council with a recommendation for adoption. By way of

the same Council memorandum, the five Councilmembers also recommended an alternative definition for racial equity as follows:

“Racial equity is realized when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.

Racial equity means we eliminate racial disproportionalities so that race can no longer be used to predict success, and we increase the success of all communities. We set goals and measures to track our progress, with the recognition that strategies must be targeted to close the gaps. Systems and structures that are failing communities of color are actually failing all of us, economically and psychologically. Advancing racial equity is to our collective benefit.”¹

As directed, staff met with several community members and community-based organizations to reflect on and finalize a proposed definition of racial equity.

ANALYSIS

The City Manager’s Office of Racial Equity staff organized two meetings in the month of December 2021 with several, diverse community member groups, including, but not limited to, the following: Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet, National Compadres Network, Racial Equity Action Leadership Coalition, Sacred Heart Community Services, San Jose State University, Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits, Veggielution, and Vietnamese American Roundtable. The purpose of the meetings was to inform community members of and gather feedback on both racial equity definitions. Stakeholders from these groups included representatives from Black/African Ancestry, Native American, Chicano/Latin/o/a/x, Asian/Pacific Islander, gender identity, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Aromantic/Agender (LGBTQIA), senior, youth, and faith-based communities. Many of the representatives also hold expertise and knowledge in several areas: disability/access, academia, grassroots and neighborhood organizing, age and intergenerational bridge building, nonprofit coalitions, and anti-racism. In addition, ORE received feedback via e-mail from several community residents.

There was a consensus from community members and organizations that the racial equity definition should be bold and explicit in acknowledging the historical and continued injustices and trauma to communities of color. Below are some highlights of other themes that surfaced from the meetings:

- The word “improved” in the original definition did not speak to the depth of the positive outcomes for all racial groups the City seeks to achieve. The word “thriving” was explicitly recommended by numerous residents.

¹ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9943967&GUID=411C57C4-AB1B-4869-BEF8-00B85ED5FF27>

- Anti-racism, systemic racism, cultural wealth, colonialism, White privilege, and reparations were all words referenced in the discussions that residents recommended the City frame within guiding principles.
- Consider the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and other marginalized communities that are impacted by compounding systems of oppression.

As mentioned in prior memorandums and presentations, the City of San José leads with race but does not end with race. Leading with race means acknowledging the pervasive and deep disparities faced by people of color. It is also important to recognize the marginalization and oppression of many other communities such as LGBTQIA, people with disabilities, the linguistically diverse, and many others who may experience systemic inequity. Many people and communities live at the intersection of these identities. By leading with race, the City of San José can be better equipped to transform systems and institutions impacting other marginalized groups.

Based on the feedback from the community stakeholders as well as further research from other cities and jurisdictions, City staff has re-crafted a definition of racial equity for Council consideration that is defined as both a process and outcome. The process is the approach to achieve the desired outcome; the outcome is the end result the City aspires to achieve.

CONCLUSION

The City Administration is committed to institutionalizing a racial equity practice across the organization and is eager to embrace a City Council approved racial equity definition that speaks to the commitment towards transformation for communities that have historically and continue to be marginalized.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

No additional follow up action with the City Council is expected at this time.

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 City Council on January 25, 2022.

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Community stakeholder meetings were held on December 1, 2021 and December 16, 2021. In addition, the City Manager's Office of Racial Equity received email input from representatives from the Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet, Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits, and Vietnamese American Roundtable.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-008, General Procedure & Policy Making resulting in no changes to the physical environment.

/s/

ZULMA MACIEL

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