

Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN GOVERNMENT
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Arenas
Councilmember Carrasco
Councilmember Esparza
Councilmember Jimenez
Councilmember Peralez

SUBJECT: EQUITY PLEDGE

DATE: June 11, 2020

Approved

Arenas

Carrasco

Esparza

Jimenez

Peralez

Date June 11th 2020

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Agendize for Council discussion and consideration the Equity Pledge, attached to this memo.
2. Direct the City Manager, under the leadership of the forthcoming Office of Equity, to:
 - a. Return to Council with a proposal to update existing processes to make Equity a more explicit part of Council deliberations, including adding a section on Equity Considerations on each Council, Committee, and Commission memo -- as previously directed by Council on April 7th, 2020.¹
 - b. Begin the GARE process with a formal convening of our community for public testimony on their personal experiences with discrimination, and San José's history of system racism and targeted persecution. Bring this forward as a Hearing of the San José City Council on Race and Equity in San José.

BACKGROUND

On June 3rd, we put forward a challenge to elected leaders across our county, which today we bring forward to the Council, formally. We ask our council colleagues to adopt the **Equity Pledge**, printed in here in-part and attached in its entirety:

Silicon Valley is one of the wealthiest communities in the world for many who are prospering, thriving and designing new realities in a world of global technology.

¹ April 7th Council meeting, Item 3.3, Page 10 of Draft Minutes/Synopsis, #3 in adopted motion:
<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=M&ID=712184&GUID=ABCAE690-F32E-4E9C-8400-8B4420BEEC6A>

However, a closer look at the distribution of our region's assets and benefits easily reveals deeply entrenched racial, social, economic, environmental and gender inequities and injustices. As these inequities widen, they threaten all our prosperity. Research shows that the color of your skin, where you live, and your wage are major predictors of your health, life and work experience, and your chances of realizing your full potential.

These inequities are driven by an array of factors including unequal access to the determinants of equity, our tax system, subtle but pervasive individual bias, and institutional and structural racism and sexism. These factors, while still invisible to some, have profound and tangible impacts on the daily lives of children, families, individuals and communities.

As lawmakers, as leaders and as residents of Silicon Valley, we not only recognize these decades of inequities but we commit to action on equity in our respective government bodies.²

Just as we have supported our City Administration's GARE process, it is vital that we bring forward steps to align our Council work and priorities with the challenges that our community faces. On any given Tuesday, that can involve work that varies from approving contracts to changing ordinances, but we must also ensure that we are making clear statements of our shared values and our love for our diverse community.

To that end, we add to our request additional practical steps that will strengthen Council's ability to work from these principles.

We anticipate many more conversations will follow, as we discuss how to best move forward. We will regularly not agree on how to implement equity principles into our work – but we will be better councilmembers for our commitment to them. And for keeping the question before our eyes.

² See attached "Equity Pledge"