

ITEM:



Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: VISION FOR COMMUNITY
HEALING AND ECONOMIC
RECOVERY**

FROM: Councilmember Cohen

DATE: 02/04/2021

Approved

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As we take the time to plan the recovery of our city from the perfect storm of crises that impacted our residents in 2020, it is incumbent upon us to take a broader view of what recovery might look like. What the pandemic has exposed is that the chronic issues of food insecurity, affordable housing, access to the internet, and making a living wage are impacting our historically marginalized communities the hardest.

Recovery is defined as regaining something lost or taken away. At this moment in time, our recovery must have more reach and impact. It will not be enough to simply regain lost ground. Our recovery plans should provide solutions to the root causes that created these hardships in the first place.

For example,

- Food insecurity is not just about economics. Interruptions in the production and distribution of food have an impact as well. Let's create opportunity in our affordable housing plans to integrate agriculture technology and partnerships that will allow residents to effectively grow their own fresh food.
- We must go beyond the rules of engagement from the pre-COVID era in order to reopen schools for the kind of impact we seek. One positive outcome from distance learning is the vast catalog of asynchronous lessons that have been developed. In addition to focusing on learning loss from a standards perspective, let us also focus on creating curriculum that allows more flexibility and engagement for students. To support schools in an effort like this, let's dedicate ourselves to closing the digital divide sooner rather than later. Additionally, let's partner with our schools to extend their limited mental health resources with social workers and counselors in order to increase their reach.
- To address living wage issues requires an investment in workforce development. Creating 21st century jobs that may not currently be defined in industries that are just starting to develop will require partnerships with new and innovative entities, as well as, new policy that will encourage investment balanced with regulation.

It is also important that our city's residents feel safe in patronizing our businesses and local arts. To do that, we will have to have robust safety protocols in place and a well-coordinated communication plan to help people feel comfortable once again being out and about in the community. This will take a strong partnership between our small businesses and local government. Quickly turning the corner on the vaccination rollout and smoother access to the vaccine with help restore faith in our government's ability to provide a safe community for our residents.