



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Zulma Maciel

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: September 13, 2021

Approved

Date

9/15/2021

**SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION APOLOGIZING TO CHINESE
IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS**

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution apologizing to Chinese immigrants and their descendants for the role of the City of San José in systemic and institutional racism, acknowledging acts of fundamental injustice, recognizing the contributions and resilience of the Chinese community and resolving to rectify the lingering consequences of past discriminatory policies.

OUTCOME

Adoption of the resolution will help reaffirm the City of San José's commitment to the rectification of past policies and misdeeds and publicly acknowledge the City's role in acts of historic injustice towards the community.

BACKGROUND

In response to Council direction to staff, pursuant to Council Policy Manual 0-11, to return with a resolution apologizing for the past destruction of Chinatown, this resolution would offer a comprehensive acknowledgement and formal apology for the City's past role not only in the destruction of the second Market Street Chinatown, but also the systemic racism and xenophobia that characterized official City policies and actions towards the Chinese community.

Acknowledging and apologizing for the City's actions and the inhumane treatment of Chinese immigrants and their descendants commits the City to rectifying the lingering consequences of discriminatory policies and institutional racism towards this community and beyond at a time of rising hate crimes targeting Asian and Pacific Islander communities. The resolution would also serve as a recognition of the immense contributions of the Chinese community in San José to fostering reconciliation and friendship which has been reflected in the ongoing work of

organizations such as the Chinese Historical & Cultural Project and the Chinese American Historical Museum in History Park.

ANALYSIS

Between 1849 and 1853, 24,000 Chinese immigrants arrived in California and by 1870 there were an estimated 63,000 Chinese in the United States. The first Chinatown in San José was established in 1866 by the burgeoning Chinese community in the city. Over the next 65 years, San José would be home to a total of five Chinatowns, including the first Market Street Chinatown (1866-1870), the Vine Street Chinatown (1870-1872), the Second Market Street Chinatown (1872-1887), the Woolen Mills Chinatown (1887-1902), and Heinlerville (1887-1931).

These early Chinese immigrants were met with virulent, systematic racism, xenophobia and the violence of anti-Chinese forces from early on and were regularly denied equal protection before the law. In addition to federal legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, City policies, resolutions, and other actions of the City of San José and the City Council directly contributed to the xenophobic discrimination and racial violence faced by Chinese immigrants.

The most well-known of San José's Chinatowns, the second Market Street Chinatown, succumbed to arson in 1887 after the City Council unanimously declared the site a public nuisance and ordered it removed to make way for the construction of the new City Hall. The burning of the second Market Street Chinatown led to the destruction of homes and businesses and the displacement of 1,400 members of San José's Chinese community. In 1987, a plaque was unveiled and dedicated at the Fairmont Hotel which sits on the site of the second Market Street Chinatown. Though the plaque acknowledges the former location of a large Chinatown in that spot, destroyed a century earlier, there has been no formal accountability for the City of San José's anti-Chinese policies of the era that created the incendiary climate which led to the arson nor for the numerous actions over many decades which actively discriminated against Chinese immigrants and their descendants.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Council adopt a resolution apologizing to Chinese immigrants and their descendants for the role of the City of San José in systemic and institutional racism, acknowledging acts of fundamental injustice, recognizing the contributions and resilience of the Chinese community and resolving to rectify the lingering consequences of past discriminatory policies. This action is intended to help reaffirm the City of San José's commitment to the rectification of past policies and misdeeds and publicly acknowledge the City's role in acts of historic injustice towards the community.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

September 13, 2021

Subject: Adoption of Resolution Apologizing to Chinese Immigrants and Their Descendants.

Page 3

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

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The resolution was drafted with the significant support and contributions of community stakeholders, local leaders, and historians, including Connie Young Yu of the Chinese Historical Society of America, and a local historian and author of *Chinatown, San Jose, USA*, and Gerrye Wong, co-founder of the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project and the Chinese American Historical Museum at History Park and co-author of *Chinese in San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley*.

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the September 28, 2021, City Council Agenda.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the Office of Councilmember Raul Peralez.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

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

/s/

ZULMA MACIEL

Director, Office of Racial Equity

For questions, please contact Christopher Cambises, Immigrant Affairs Manager, at Christopher.Cambises@sanjoseca.gov.