



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Life Enrichment
Committee

FROM: Barbara J. Parker
City Attorney
Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator
Darlene Flynn
Director Race and Equity

SUBJECT: Declaring Racism a Public Health
Crisis

DATE: May 23, 2022

City Administrator Approval

Date: May 12, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

City Attorney Parker and City Administrator Reiskin Recommend That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Declaring Racism A Public Health Crisis And Reaffirm The City's Commitment To Advancing Racial Equity By:

- (1) Taking Into Account How The City Can Achieve Equity In City Of Oakland, In All Aspects Of City Planning, Policymaking, Laws, Contracting, And Hiring;**
- (2) Approving A Non-Comprehensive Roadmap Of Next Steps That The City Will Take To Advance Racial Equity And Reduce Alarming Health Disparities In Oakland; And**
- (3) Providing Funding In The Mid-Cycle Budget For A Data Analyst And Consulting Services In An Amount Not To Exceed \$350,000 To Support The City And The Department Of Race And Equity To Advance Necessary Improvements In Systems For Collecting And Processing Data To Track Performance And Equity Progress**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Resolution officially recognizes and declares (1) that racism is a public health crisis in the City of Oakland and throughout the United States and the world; and (2) the City's commitment to address and ameliorate the ongoing impacts of racism by considering in all aspects of City planning, policymaking, and legislation how meaningful equity within the City can be achieved. The proposed Resolution is both a re-affirmation of existing City policy on racial equity and a non-comprehensive roadmap of next steps that the City will take to advance racial equity and reduce alarming health disparities in Oakland.

The Resolution expresses the Council's and Mayor's intent and commitment to allocate funding not to exceed \$350,000 for a journey level Data Analyst in the Department of Race and Equity ("DRE") and for consultant services to support the City and the Department of Race and Equity to advance necessary improvements in systems for collecting and processing data to track performance and equity progress. The Resolution acknowledges that ongoing City-wide data collection is necessary to achieve more equitable outcomes for Oakland residents.

Specifically, the Resolution calls for the hiring of a Data Analyst with an equity background located in DRE and consultants to support ongoing City-wide data collection aimed at reducing racial disparities, increasing City-wide utilization of the OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox (as described in this Report), further development of a public-facing website to promote accountability and provide transparency, and a renewed commitment to taking equity data and considerations into account in determining budget priorities, designing programs, and delivering services, as well as when the City seeks additional local, state, and federal resources to address the public health crisis that racism has created and continues to exacerbate.

The Resolution also declares that the City will prioritize Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander and other communities of color in its budgeting and planning processes, including during the development of the budget and strategic plan for economic recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On December 9, 2014, the Oakland City Council unanimously passed Resolution No. 85292 C.M.S., recognizing the City's collective responsibility to advance racial equity. On June 30, 2015, Oakland City Council unanimously adopted Ordinance No. 13319 C.M.S., amended by Ordinance No. 13326 C.M.S., modifying Oakland Municipal Code Chapter 2.29 by adding a Department of Race and Equity. The purpose of establishing the Department of Race and Equity was, among other things, to acknowledge the pervasiveness of racial disparities and the City's role in addressing and prioritizing racial equity on an institutional level. By adopting Resolution No. 13319, the City recognized that "data indicates that racial and ethnic disparities are vast across all indicators, supporting the need for the City to implement system measures that lead with race and equity."¹

On May 19, 2020, the City Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 88118 C.M.S., amended by Resolution No. 88146 C.M.S., declaring a local health emergency for Oakland's Black and Latinx residents due to the spread of COVID-19. The Resolution cited reports, data, and other information documenting the devastating unequal impacts of COVID-19 on Black and Latinx communities. The Resolution acknowledged that "one of the deadliest underlying conditions in America is systemic racism," and that "for generations, racial and economic segregation has limited Oaklanders' mobility, resulting in the concentration of low-income Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and other people of color in socio-economically disadvantaged communities—communities exposed to toxic chemicals and other unhealthy land uses, failing infrastructure, and lack of access to services."²

The link between racism and disparate health outcomes is well-established and indisputable, and the City of Oakland wishes to join the growing number of jurisdictions across the country that have formally declared racism a public health crisis.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Racial and ethnic health disparities are due primarily to the racialized differences in exposure to behavioral, psychosocial, material, and environmental risk factors and resources, rather than biological differences between racial groups.

¹ Resolution No. 13319 C.M.S.

² Resolution No. 88146 C.M.S.

A growing body of research shows that there are many ways in which structural racism affects health. Structural racism shapes the distribution and quality of the social determinants of health, such as housing, neighborhood conditions, income, employment, public safety, and education, which significantly impact individual and community health and opportunities to improve one's health. Structural racism also affects health by shaping behavior in reaction to discrimination and stereotype threat and can be experienced through psychosocial stress.

Structural racism has led to a public health crisis in the City of Oakland. Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and other communities of color in Oakland face poorer health outcomes compared to white residents. For example, residents in a historically white neighborhood in the North Oakland hills can expect to live, on average, an additional 14 to 15 years longer than residents in historically Black and Latinx neighborhoods in West Oakland and the East Oakland flatlands.³ Similar disparities between Black Oaklanders and their white peers can be observed in preventable hospitalizations, rates of diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and heart disease, death rates due to opioid overdose, babies born with very low birth weight, infant mortality, and beyond.

COVID-19 also continues to have a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color, which underscores the importance of prioritizing these communities as the City contemplates legislation, programming, and resource allocation in the wake of the pandemic.

Data Collection

Comprehensive and ongoing data collection is necessary for the City to understand both the historical and ongoing effects of racism on service delivery and the health and safety of Oakland residents. Data collection enables the City to track progress towards remedying past discrimination and reduce ongoing racial and other disparities. As expressed by the Department of Race and Equity and other City departments, there is a strong need for coordinated, systemic, ongoing data collection and reporting of performance data for the City to make significant progress towards its racial equity goals.

Oakland Equity Indicators Report

In collaboration with the Department of Race and Equity, the City published an Equity Indicators Report⁴ in 2018 that contained baseline disparity data to help the community and City staff better understand the impacts of race and to measure racial disparities. This report provided compelling evidence about racial disparities in many of the areas identified as social determinants of health in this resolution, including the economy, education, public health, housing, public safety, and neighborhood and civil life.

The Equity Indicators Report should be updated at least every five years to enable the City to track its goal of advancing racial equities and improving scores across these areas of life for Oakland residents.

³ www.healthyalamedacounty.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=8195&localeTypeId=4&localeFilterId=132167

⁴ <https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/beta.oaklandca.gov/pdfs/2018-Equity-Indicators-Full-Report.pdf>

OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox

Since 2020, the Oakland Department of Transportation (“OakDOT”) has created, implemented, and improved the Oakland Equity Map of the Oakland Geographic Equity Toolbox⁵ using Geographic Information System (“GIS”) mapping. The Toolbox provides geographic data for each census tract in Oakland regarding urban displacement, pollution burden, high injury intersections and corridors, race, area median income, disability, age, single parent families, severely rent-burdened households, low educational attainment, and Limited English Proficiency.

The Geographic Equity Toolbox provides useful data for City policies, programs, projects, and funding grounded in equity and which can prioritize neighborhoods based on concentrations of people with demographic factors determined to have experienced historic and current disparities. For example, OakDOT has used the Equity Map to integrate racial equity in its multi-year paving plans.

The Oakland Environmental Services Division has used the OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox in the Racial Equity Impact Assessment and Implementation Guide (“REIA”) which provides a comprehensive set of recommendations and best practices to help City staff maximize equity throughout the 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan (“2030 ECAP”), Oakland’s roadmap to climate mitigation and adaptation that will channel resources in ways that increase frontline community resilience in the Oakland flatlands and reduce disparities and increase equity in public health, open space, and the built environment for all residents.

Other City departments have similarly begun using or are considering using the OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox to equitably prioritize resources to neighborhoods that have historically and continue to face disparities.

Hiring a Data Analyst in the Department of Race and Equity

Since it was launched in 2016, the Department of Race and Equity (“DRE”) has provided hundreds of trainings to City staff members through its Racial Equity Academy, Lunch and Learn Sessions, and other development opportunities. The Department also works on an institutional level to provide project support and technical assistance to individual departments within the City.

DRE’s proposed mid-cycle budget amendments include funding for a Race and Equity Data Analyst in DRE. This specialist would support City departments in developing and utilizing data collection systems to measure and track racial and other disparities and progress towards reducing disparities in all areas of the City. Additionally, DRE and the City will need consultant assistance to advance necessary improvements in data tracking and reporting. These infrastructure investments will enable staff to do the important work of identifying the inequities and developing steps to advance equity.

Maintaining and Updating a Public-Facing Website

The City previously developed an “Equity Indicators” website⁶ for the public to explore the data collected through the 2018 Equity Indicators Report. Having a public-facing, accessible

⁵ <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/oakdot-geographic-equity-toolbox>

⁶ <https://data.oaklandca.gov/stories/s/Oakland-Equity-Indicators/brb2-j4ad/>

dashboard is important to promote transparency and accountability regarding the City's efforts to reduce racial disparities. This website, or a similar public-facing website, should be further developed and updated to contain more current data and ongoing progress reports. In addition to promoting accountability and information-sharing, maintenance of such a website would also facilitate partnership between the City and community groups working to reduce racial disparities and help build public trust.

Prioritizing Racial Equity in Budgeting and Planning

Data collection is the first step but is not sufficient on its own to reduce racial disparities. The City should commit to using data it collects when the City allocates budgetary resources, designs programs, and delivers services. The City should revisit how to best prioritize racial equity in budgetary and planning decisions on an ongoing basis, particularly as more data is collected, to determine if more concrete action is necessary to achieve this goal.

FISCAL IMPACT

Passage of the proposed Resolution would result in the Council budgeting, during the mid-cycle budget process, the allocation of up to \$350,000 to assist with the improvements to data collection infrastructure and assist DRE in analyzing the data and determining inequities and steps to advance equity, including funding of consultant services and a full-time Race and Equity Data Analyst in DRE. Director Flynn's mid-cycle budget proposal includes the foregoing funding and the Mayor has advised that her budget proposal will include the additional staff person and the consultant funding.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No direct public outreach was conducted in the drafting of this legislation. Across the country, adoption of similar legislation was spurred in response to public protests in Oakland, the Letter to Public Officials to Act on Black New Deal Demands, and increased attention to police and vigilante violence towards Black communities during the COVID-19 pandemic which also disproportionately impacted Black and other communities of color.

COORDINATION

This legislation was developed by the City Attorney's Office in coordination with the Department of Race and Equity, and with input and consultation with other City departments.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: This resolution will spur efforts to decrease disparities in and increase economic opportunities for Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other people of color in areas such as contracting, hiring and promotion, and City policies, laws and practices.

Environmental: By acknowledging environmental racism and disparate health outcomes along demographic lines, the City can prioritize areas and communities that have historically borne the brunt of environmental hazards in developing policies, legislation, and resource allocation.

Race & Equity: Adoption of the proposed Resolution would expand the capacity of the Department of Race and Equity and provide the data and analyses to reduce current racial disparities across health and wellness indicators in Oakland.

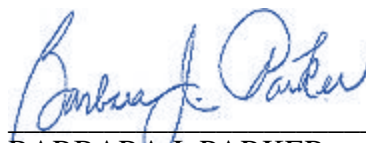
ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

City Attorney Parker, City Administrator Reiskin and Director Flynn recommend That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Declaring Racism A Public Health Crisis And Reaffirming The City's Commitment To Advancing Racial Equity By:

- (1) **Taking Into Account How The City Can Achieve Equity In City Of Oakland, In All Aspects Of City Planning, Policymaking, Laws, Contracting, And Hiring;**
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For questions regarding this report, please contact Zoe Savitsky with the Office of the City Attorney, at (510) 238-6623.

Respectfully submitted,



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