

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR ROGERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: BEATRIZ GUERRERO AUNA, EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH
PLANNER, PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: EQUITY PRIORITY COMMUNITIES' OUTREACH AND
EMPOWERMENT WORK PLAN

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the City Council receive and provide input on the Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the *Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan* is to inform, consult, provide opportunities to participate, and empower every resident of Santa Rosa to be part of the decision-making processes related to the General Plan Update, known as Santa Rosa Forward. The Work Plan will focus on vulnerable, underrepresented, and historically marginalized populations and areas with significant concentrations of low income households and people of color – defined as “Santa Rosa Equity Priority Communities,” based on Plan Bay Area 2050 (Metropolitan Transportation Commission).

The City of Santa Rosa will partner and collaborate with diverse local organizations and residents, adjust the Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) to make it more inclusive, and use place based outreach methods to meet Santa Rosa's residents where they are. Funds from the Healthy City Grant granted by Kaiser Permanente will be used to provide resources to residents, groups of residents, or organizations who are part of or who are working with any of the Equity Priority Populations or Areas to empower and engage these individuals in the General Plan Update. This Work Plan will contribute to develop trust, long term skills, and knowledge for decision making in planning, community design, and development.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On August 13, 2019, the City Council authorized Planning and Economic Development (PED) to prepare a comprehensive update of the General Plan 2035.

On December 17, 2019, the City Council approved the acceptance of a \$600,000 Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit Grant to support the Santa Rosa General Plan Update by funding a Senior Planner to promote healthy city outcomes and support engagement amongst vulnerable, underrepresented, and historically marginalized communities.

On March 3, 2020, the Council authorized the mayor to sign a Professional Services Agreement with the consultant team to complete the General Plan update, environmental review, and public engagement which allowed PED to start the Santa Rosa Forward project, a three-year project.

On May 18, 2020, City staff reviewed and accepted the Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) with revisions to adapt public engagement to COVID-19 restrictions on public assembly and social distancing.

On August 25, 2020, the City Council held a public hearing on the draft CIS. After hearing public comments, the Council accepted the CIS and authorized the formation of the Community Advisory Committee.

In December 2020, the City hired an Equity and Public Health City Planner position funded by the Kaiser Permanente Grant. She started working in PED in January, 2021.

On July 20, 2021, PED received input from the City Council and Planning Commission on the 2050 General Plan Vision Statement Report. The Council requested to focus on disadvantaged communities to continue with the General Plan Update Outreach.

ANALYSIS

EQUITY PRIORITY COMMUNITIES' EMPOWERMENT AND OUTREACH WORK PLAN

The *Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan* strives to identify vulnerable, underrepresented, and historically marginalized local communities through data and geographical information to prioritize their involvement and develop the “civic muscle” of people who have had limited or no access to decision-making processes, as well as those who face greater disparities than the general population, specifically in terms of social, economic, and health outcomes.

The *Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan* (Work Plan) will be complementary to the CIS. The CIS outlines key outreach strategies and methods, target audiences, communication tools and timelines under the General Plan Update project. This Work Plan will focus on defining vulnerable, underrepresented, and historically marginalized communities in the City of Santa Rosa; detecting, and addressing the main barriers to their participation; and creating strategies and activities for promoting their involvement. The Work Plan has five elements:

1. Equity Priority Populations. Based on Vulnerable Populations and Equity Checklist documents from the State of California Executive Order B-30-15 *Resiliency Guidebook*, this section describes Santa Rosa’s communities who face existing and historical inequities and are known to suffer worse social, economic, and health outcomes:
 - Low-income individuals and families,
 - Racial or ethnic groups experiencing disparate health outcomes,
 - Seniors, children, youth and young adults,
 - Individuals with disabilities,
 - Immigrants and refugees,
 - Outdoor workers and farmworkers,
 - Individuals who are limited-English proficient (LEP),
 - Unhoused people,
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other (LGBTQ+) communities,
 - Individuals who are incarcerated and those who have been incarcerated.

2. Santa Rosa’s Equity Priority Areas. Adapted from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s (MTC) definition of *Equity Priority Communities* in *Plan Bay Area 2050*, the census groups in the City of Santa Rosa with the highest concentration (top quarter of Sonoma County) of both low income and people of color were identified as Santa Rosa’s Equity Priority Areas (Attachment 1).

3. Barriers. The main barriers identified for communities to participate in planning meetings, events, or surveys in the City of Santa Rosa are:
 - Technical language used for planning and government affairs.
 - Time limitations and physical location of meetings.
 - Financial resources required to attend (transit fares, gas, daycare services, tip-based or salary depending on working hours, among others).
 - Lack of cultural appropriateness of events and documents provided.
 - English is not their native language.
 - Lack of trust in local government due to immigration status, discrimination, or government’s lack of response to their concerns.
 - Digital destitution and lack of technology savviness.

4. Strategies and Engagement Activities. Using an Equity Framework, the Work Plan identifies four strategies that can drive more equitable outcomes to implement equitable engagement practices for the General Plan Update:
 1. **Event collaboration**. Identify and attend in-person events that other organizations (County, other City departments, non-profits, neighborhoods, businesses, and others) are hosting during the General Plan Update process where one or more vulnerable communities will be present.

2. **Targeted approach.** Reach out to specific equity priority groups, including smaller groups that may require the City to be intentional and accommodating to reduce or eliminate barriers for them to participate in the General Plan Update meetings, focus groups, and/or interviews.
3. **Equity Priority Grant Program.** Create and execute a grant program that can provide up to \$500 per project to organizations or residents working with any of the equity priority communities identified in the City to promote the General Plan Update and involve them in the decision making.
4. **Adjustments to CIS events.** Create adjustments to the Community Involvement Strategy events to make them more accessible to equity priority communities, including: translation to Spanish, specific Spanish speaking meetings, paper surveys, additional meetings, and additional residents and organizations to support with event invitations.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation. The Work Plan will include surveys to help track participation and involvement of the Equity Priority Communities in the General Plan Update, as well as helping to identify the groups that require further engagement.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact related to this item as the funding has already been allocated to the Santa Rosa Forward project. The Equity Priority Communities Outreach and Empowerment Work Plan will be funded through the Kaiser’s Healthy City Grant.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This discussion and acceptance of Equity Priority Communities Empowerment and Outreach Plan and Equity Priority Communities Grant are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project with potential for resulting in either a direct, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. The full scope of the General Plan Update process includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report to commence in 2022 once a project (policy document) is developed.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

NOTIFICATION

Email Notification of this Study Session was distributed to the following:

- Neighborhood and Community Organizations focused on working with Equity Priority Communities.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Equity Priority Areas Map

CONTACT

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