



STAFF REPORT

City Council Meeting Date: 4/27/2021
Staff Report Number: 21-094-CC

Consent Calendar: Authorize the formation of the Community Engagement and Outreach Committee for the housing element update project

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the formation of the Community Engagement and Outreach Committee for the housing element update project.

Policy Issues

The components of the housing element update will consider a number of land use, environmental and housing policies.

Background

The City is beginning the housing element update project, which the City Council identified as a project priority in 2020 and most recently confirmed at its meeting April 20, 2021. Commonly referred to as the “housing element update” for simplicity, the project is defined more broadly than updating the housing element itself. The project consists of the following components over the next 18-20 months:

- Update the housing element, including addressing affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH), rezoning property to meet the City’s Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA), and amending the land use element of the general plan and the zoning ordinance, as needed;
- Prepare an Environmental Justice Element (SB 1000) to advance equity and address potential environmental health risks in the City;
- Update the Safety Element (SB 379 pertaining to climate adaptation) for compliance with State law; and
- Prepare a Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to inform the public and decision-makers of potential financial and environmental impacts of the project.

An integral part of the project is to create a community engagement and outreach process that is inclusive and intentional in order to adopt a project that reflects the community’s input and values while meeting mandated State requirements. As one of the project’s objectives, the City will be approaching the project with a racial equity lens. The City Council has expressed support and the importance of elevating the conversation about racial equity, in partnership with the National League of Cities’ Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) initiative. The housing element alone cannot resolve racial disparities; however, it can be used as a steppingstone for broader dialogue, understanding and action. Attachment A includes a memorandum to the city manager with an update about the REAL program implementation and the housing element update.

With the emphasis on creating an inclusive process, staff recommends City Council authorize the formation of an advisory group focused on community engagement and outreach for the housing element update project. The concept and details were provided to the City Council in an informational staff report April 13, 2021, which is included as Attachment B, and summarized below.

Analysis

Formation of Community Engagement and Outreach Committee

Like many past projects with citywide significance, the housing element update's scope of work also identifies the creation of an advisory group to provide feedback on particular topics and to serve as ambassadors of the project. Given the strong emphasis on creating an inclusive process, the formation of the Housing Element Community Engagement and Outreach Committee (CEOC) will be an integral partner in providing feedback on the engagement and outreach plan. The CEOC would be comprised of 10 members, with five members appointed by the City Council (one from each district) and the remaining five anticipated to be selected at random by the City Council. The final selection methodology will be presented along with the candidates to the City Council for appointments, tentatively scheduled for May 25.

The CEOC's overall purpose is to assist the City in ensuring a broad and inclusive community outreach and engagement process. Members will have an opportunity to help guide and provide feedback on the types and frequency of activities/events/meetings and the strategies and methods for communicating with the various stakeholders in the community. The committee would not provide policy guidance, though members are welcome to participate in planned events and meetings as individuals.

The primary responsibilities of the group would be to:

- Serve as an ambassador of the project and encourage people to participate in the process;
- Help guide and provide feedback on the community engagement plan; and
- Serve as a community resource to provide information to and receive input from the community on matters related to community engagement and public outreach.

The primary responsibilities of each member would be to:

- Identify effective ways to inform and engage the various stakeholders about the project;
- Commit to constructive dialogue, mutual respect and collaboration; and
- Share local knowledge.

The CEOC would be a Brown Act body and is anticipated to have monthly meetings between May 2021 and November 2021, and check-in meetings as needed through the 20-month process. Meetings would likely occur Thursday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to avoid potential conflicts with other City Council and Commission meetings. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 27. It is anticipated that the meetings would occur remotely at first, but could transition to in-person or hybrid sessions as it becomes safe to do so. Depending on input from the CEOC, the community engagement schedule and activities could be modified.

Given the necessary time for recruitment and the time-intensive nature of the housing element update process, staff commenced the recruitment process April 16 following the City Council's review of the information item on this topic April 13. Applications (in English and Spanish) are currently available on the Advisory commissions and committees' and housing element's webpages, included as Attachment C and D respectively. Ideally, the composition of the CEOC would reflect the City's different City Council districts and also represent a diversity of interests, and characteristics, including gender, age, race, ethnicity and residential tenancy (renter or homeowner.) Therefore, the City is producing a citywide mailer to promote the

housing element update and inform all Menlo Park residents about the CEOC recruitment. This is a once in a decade opportunity to serve on the advisory committee. Applications are due by May 12, 2021, with City Council appointments anticipated to occur May 25.

City Council subcommittee

At its April 13, 2021, meeting, the City Council also discussed the formation of an ad hoc Housing Element subcommittee. Mayor Combs and City Councilmember Wolosin expressed interest in serving on this subcommittee, although no formal action for the creation or appointments was taken at that time. Staff is targeting the City Council meeting of May 11, 2021, to establish the formation of the Housing Element Update subcommittee, appoint its two members and confirm the subcommittee's charge. The intended purpose of the subcommittee would be to advise on key topics areas: 1) project objectives, 2) site selection, and 3) goals, policies and programs for the three different general plan elements, 4) liaising with other agencies/districts, and other topics as necessary where City Council feedback would be beneficial for maintaining the project schedule. Staff is proposing to schedule a meeting with the subcommittee following its confirmation to help prepare for a discussion on the project objectives and framework at the City Council meeting May 25, 2021. The ad hoc subcommittee would disband following action on the project.

Next Steps

The following are the targeted next steps in the housing element update process:

- May 11 - Establish City Council subcommittee;
- Week of May 10 - Conduct first subcommittee meeting to review project objectives and framework;
- May 25 - Appoint members to serve on the CEOC;
- May 25 - Confirm project objectives and framework; and
- May 27 - Conduct first CEOC meeting.

Impact on City Resources

On November 10, 2020, the City Council authorized up to \$1.69 million for the preparation of the housing element, including consultant services and partial funding for two full-time equivalents for the fiscal year 2020-21. On March 23, 2021, the City Council authorized the city manager to negotiate a scope of work and fee and execute an agreement with the M-Group for a fee, not to exceed \$982,000.

Environmental Review

This action is not a project within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §§ 15378 and 15061(b)(3) as it will not result in any direct or indirect physical change in the environment. As part of the Housing Element Update process, an environmental impact report (EIR) will be prepared.

Public Notice

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

- A. Memorandum on Race, Equity, And Leadership (REAL) program implementation and the 2022 housing element update
- B. Hyperlink – City Council Staff Report #21-079-CC: [menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/27892/L4-](https://www.menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/27892/L4-)

Staff Report #: 21-094-CC

[20210413-CC-Housing-element-committee\)4](#)

C. Hyperlink – Advisory commissions and committee webpage: menlopark.org/commissions

D. Hyperlink – Housing element webpage: menlopark.org/housingelement

Report prepared by:

Deanna Chow, Assistant Community Development Director

Report reviewed by:

Justin Murphy, Deputy City Manager



MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/22/2021
To: Starla Jerome-Robinson, City Manager
From: Nick Pegueros, Assistant City Manager
Re: Race, Equity, And Leadership (REAL) program implementation and the 2022 Housing Element Update

At their March 23 meeting, City Council provided direction to City staff to begin work on a racial equity initiative in conjunction with the National League of Cities (NLC). NLC assists governmental entities in their racial equity work through their Race, Equity, and Leadership (REAL) program and defines 'racial equity' as "Closing the gaps" so that race does not predict one's success, while also improving the outcomes for all."

An internal team along with the M-Group has consulted with NLC's REAL team to inform the 2022 housing element update engagement plan. NLC staff prompted a discussion of the relationship between the housing element update and the city's overall racial equity initiative. As a policy document that will establish housing objectives, policies, and programs in response to the City's housing needs, the housing element can help address past policies and practices that have contributed to racial inequities in Menlo Park. While there exists a strong link between housing policies and racial equity, the City's racial equity work must extend beyond the housing element if the City desires real and lasting change that improves the lives of all residents.

The internal team, with advice from NLC staff, is preparing a broader racial equity program implementation recommendation that incorporates racial equity in the City Council's recently adopted 2021 priorities: redistricting, reimagining public safety, climate action plan implementation, ConnectMenlo community amenities list update, Menlo Park Community Campus project, reimagining downtown, and Caltrain rail corridor quiet zone analysis. The recommendation is tentatively scheduled for May 11 City Council consideration.

As part of the May 11 recommendation, the report explores the creation of a "City Manager's advisory group on racial equity" comprised of community leaders who will advise and amplify racial equity considerations in policy development. Through their extensive community-based network, advisory group members can help identify those in the community most impacted by a project or policy and ensure that those voices are represented in project delivery or policy development. The advisory group members can also advise staff on messaging and programming customized to reach targeted audiences to improve connectivity between those impacted and the project or policy.

The advisory group structure is still under development and presents several operational questions best addressed before the group's formation. As an advisory body to the City Manager, the group will interface primarily with the Assistant City

Manager and Public Engagement Manager, both members of the City Manager's Office. The working group will not be subject to the open meetings act, which will allow significant flexibility in meeting times, frequency, and discussion. Additional areas to be addressed in the May 11 recommendation include:

- Recruitment and selection of advisory group members;
- Role, responsibilities, and the use of subgroups to focus on specific areas such as the housing element, climate action plan, Caltrain rail corridor quiet zone analysis, etc.;
- Coordination with outreach efforts by City Council advisory bodies include the newly formed housing element community engagement and outreach committee;
- Partnership with NLC and community-based organization(s) to serve as an executive or steering committee for the advisory group;
- Impact, if any, on City Council priority projects;
- Budgetary requirements, if any, including augmented staff capacity and contracts with community-based organizations to support their engagement and outreach efforts; and
- Coordination with NLC on internal leadership development on racial equity through the REAL program.

I want to recognize the contributions of the team assembled to kickoff this effort including:

NLC staff: Leon Andrews, Seantae Byers, Jordan Carter

M-Group staff: Geoff Bradley, Sung Kwon

City staff: Justin Murphy, Clay Curtin, Deanna Chow