



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember District 1

EMERGENCY ITEM AGENDA MATERIAL

Meeting date: June 9, 2020
Item Description: Budget Referral to Establish Structure and Framework for an Office of Racial Equity
Submitted by: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author) and Councilmembers Susan Wengraf, Lori Droste, and Ben Bartlett (Co-Sponsors)

Rationale:

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 54954.2(b) (2), Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani submits the attached item to the City Council for placement on the June 9, 2020 meeting agenda. Gov. Code Section 54954.2(b) (2) states that “Upon a determination by a two-thirds vote of the members of a legislative body presents at the meeting, or, if less than two-thirds of the members are present, a unanimous vote of those members present, that there is a need to take immediate action and that the need for action came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda being posted as specified in subdivision (a).”

This item requires immediate action, and the need to take action arose after the publishing of the agenda for this meeting, which would have required submission of the item on May 11, 2019.

The global protest movement for police accountability and racial justice that has exploded in the aftermath to the murder of George Floyd by a police officer on May 25, 2019 necessitates taking urgent action on the issue of racial justice. This item requests a one-time allocation of \$150,000 to establish a structure and framework for an Office of Racial Equity in the City of Berkeley in order to provide a systematic Citywide approach to closing any racial inequities in the allocation and delivery of all City programs and services.

While activists have been calling on leaders to tackle systemic racism for years, the sustained and broad public outcry to take urgent action began within the last week and a half in the aftermath to the killing of George Floyd. This item seeks to respond to the urgent calls for action by enabling Council consideration of a budget referral to establish a structure and framework for the City to advance the cause of racial equity.



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 9, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author) and Councilmembers Susan Wengraf, Lori Droste, and Ben Bartlett (Co-Sponsors)

Subject: Budget Referral to Establish Structure and Framework for an Office of Racial Equity

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the FY 2020-21 Budget Process the one-time allocation of \$150,000 to establish a structure and framework for an Office of Racial Equity consisting of a Racial Equity Officer and a supporting Specialist. The purpose of the Office of Racial Equity is to: (1) establish a common vision for racial equity across all City departments, (2) create mechanisms for measuring racial inequities in the delivery of all City programs and services; and (3) initiate efforts by all City departments to implement best practices related to metrics, policies, and procedures to close racial inequities in the allocation and delivery of all City programs and services.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Many other jurisdictions have established offices or departments devoted to advancing racial equity. However, the City of Berkeley does not have a dedicated office focused exclusively on closing racial inequities as they relate to resource allocation and customer satisfaction with major City departments including, for example, emergency response by Police and Fire as well as programs and services delivered by the Health, Housing & Community Services Department; Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department; Public Works Department; and Planning Department.

Without the support of an Office of Racial Equity, City departments are likely to have varying levels of success in measuring racial inequities in the delivery of programs and services. Without support, they are also likely to have uneven success in implementing policies and procedures in order to ensure that a racial equity lens is applied to decisions related to resource allocation, delivery and access to programs and services, and customer satisfaction with programs and services. An Office of Racial Equity will act as a citywide champion and disseminator of best practices for a systematic approach to advancing racial equity across all City departments.

Cities across the country are dedicating offices and staff positions to address racial and social inequities within government and their communities.

Seattle Office for Civil Rights: Established in 1969 to address illegal discrimination in areas such as housing, employment, and contracting within city limits. This 25-person department also provides policy recommendations and educates the public on civil rights issues.¹

Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights: Established in 2012 with nine people to provide technical support and education to elected officials and city staff with a goal of better recognizing and removing systemic barriers to a fair distribution of resources and access to opportunities, focusing on issues of race and disabilities.²

Oakland Department of Race and Equity: Established in 2015 with a staff of three people to work within and among city departments to address racial inequities existing throughout all sectors of the city.³

Asheville Office of Equity and Inclusion: Established in 2017, currently staffed with four people, to help maximize access and opportunities for all residents, equitably.⁴

San Francisco Office of Racial Equity: Established in 2019 to help repair harms done by previously created policies that exacerbate racial disparities.⁵

These examples from cities across the country can provide useful guidance for establishing an Office of Racial Equity within the City of Berkeley. Suggested responsibilities for an Office of Racial Equity include:

- Serving as a liaison between City Departments, the community, and other institutional partners to establish a common vision of racial equity that can be realized by the City of Berkeley
- Conducting outreach and coordination with City departments to establish a multi-year plan for addressing racial inequities
- Establishing recommendations for City departments to collect data by race whenever possible
- Promoting the regular analysis of City data by race to look for patterns of racial inequity
- Serving as a champion of best practices and disseminator of information related to implementation of metrics, policies, and procedures to close any identified racial inequities

An Office of Racial Equity will support the City's efforts to operationalize a racial equity lens for all City programs and services. As one example, at the City Council Meeting on October 29, 2019, during deliberations related to allocating 50% of the street paving budget for bikeways and Vision Zero pedestrian high-injury streets, a robust Council discussion ensued about the equitable allocation of the street paving budget. It would benefit our Public Works

¹ Seattle Office of Civil Rights, <https://www.seattle.gov/civilrights/about>

² City of Portland, Oregon, Office of Equity and Human Rights, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/>

³ City of Oakland, Department of Race and Equity, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/departments/race-and-equity#page-leadership>

⁴ The City of Asheville, North Carolina, Office of Equity and Inclusion, <https://www.ashevillenc.gov/department/equity-inclusion/>

⁵ San Francisco's amendment to the administrative code to establish an Office of Racial Equity, <https://sfgov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3950582&GUID=9F233DC0-845B-483B-9570-ED75D67A8594>

Department to have a systematic approach to applying a racial equity lens to the allocation of our street paving budget.⁶ Given the disparities known to exist in our community for income, education, and health, it is incumbent upon the City of Berkeley to use its resources in a way that advances racial equity.

BACKGROUND

For people of color in our community, racial disparities persist for income, education, and health. The median household income for black/African American families in Berkeley was less than half of white families in 2018: \$42,473 for black families compared to \$107,578 for white households, according to Census Bureau data.⁷ This stark income gap corresponds to racial disparities in education and health. In Berkeley, educational achievement varies greatly by race, with the disparity in English language arts/literacy and mathematics proficiency between white and African American students in Berkeley exceeding the disparity in Alameda County and in California as a whole.⁸ Berkeley’s 2020 Vision, established in 2008, is a Citywide initiative that seeks to bring focused attention and resources to eliminating racial disparities in educational achievement. In an Update for Berkeley’s 2020 Vision presented to the City Council on October 22, 2019, significant racial disparities were reported, but with sizable gains made by black and brown youth, as shown in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1: Reading and Math Proficiency for Berkeley Unified School District students

Indicator Data	African American	Latinx	White
3rd Grade Reading Proficiency			
Growth 2015 to 2018 [^]	+8	+19	+4
% at or above proficient in 2018	22%	56%	82%
8th Grade Math Proficiency			
Growth 2015 to 2018 [^]	+6	+4	+2
% at or above proficient in 2018	27%	43%	80%

[^]Change in the % of students at or above proficiency between 2015 and 2018. Growth is calculated by subtracting the percentage of students at or above proficient in 2015 from the percentage at or above proficient in 2018.

Source: California Department of Education, Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA), Math and English Language Arts (ELA), 2015 & 2018

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the manner in which underlying health, social, and economic disparities—rooted in systemic racism—are killing people of color at disproportionately higher rates than their white peers. In California, black people comprise

⁶ Item #31:

Referral: *Develop a Bicycle Lane and Pedestrian Street Improvements Policy*, City Council Meeting, Oct. 29, 2019,

⁷ *Median Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2018 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)*, Table S1903, American Community Survey, <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/subject-tables/>

⁸ City of Berkeley Health Status Report 2018, https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Health_Human_Services/Level_3_-_Public_Health/2018-health-status-report-berkeley.pdf

5% of the population, but 10% of Covid-19 deaths.⁹ On numerous metrics described in our 2018 City of Berkeley Health Status Report, African Americans have worse health outcomes than other racial groups, with specific examples listed below.¹⁰

- Although the rate of asthma hospitalization among African Americans decreased substantially from 2000 to 2014, the disparity between African Americans and whites increased. In 2000–2002, the rate of African Americans was 5.5 times higher than the rate of whites, while in 2012–2014, the rate was almost 10 times higher.¹¹
- African American babies are twice as likely to be born prematurely as white, Latinx, or Asian babies.
- Over the course of the past decade, African Americans have had the highest rates of hospitalization due to uncontrolled diabetes in Berkeley. There has been a slight decrease in the gap between African Americans and other racial groups, but the disparity continues to exist. Similarly, the rates of stroke hospitalization have remained relatively stable over the past decade, with a slight increase among African Americans in the last years of data. As a result, the disparity between African Americans and other racial/ethnic groups persists.
- The cardiovascular disease mortality rate among African Americans is almost double that of the population as a whole.
- The mortality rate for African Americans is twice as high as the mortality rate of whites and is higher than the population overall. This disparity has remained consistent over time.

This budget referral is put forward against the backdrop of the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black resident of Minneapolis and father of three, who was killed on May 25, 2019 by a police officer who pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds as Floyd lies handcuffed, face down in the street. The inexplicable, inexcusable killing of Floyd has ignited a global protest movement for police accountability and racial justice. Racial inequities extend to every facet of American life. In Minneapolis, the median black family income was \$26,043 in 2018, compared to \$76,037 for a typical white family, according to Census Bureau data.¹² While we must urgently re-examine our police department's use of force and other policies, it is also incumbent on all local governments to advance the cause of racial equity in all policies.

FISCAL IMPACTS

In light of the significant budget deficit the City is facing in FY 2020-21, an initial one-time allocation of \$150,000 is requested to establish a structure and framework, which will enable the development of a specific hiring and work plan for the Office of Racial Equity.

⁹ *Growing Data Underscore that Communities of Color are Being Harder Hit by Covid-19*, Kaiser Family Foundation, April 21, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/growing-data-underscore-communities-color-harder-hit-covid-19/>

¹⁰ City of Berkeley Health Status Report 2018, https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Health_Human_Services/Level_3_-_Public_Health/2018-health-status-report-berkeley.pdf

¹¹ City of Berkeley Health Status Report 2018, https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Health_Human_Services/Level_3_-_Public_Health/2018-health-status-report-berkeley.pdf

¹² *Median Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2018 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)*, Table S1903, American Community Survey, <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/subject-tables/>

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Addressing racial inequities in a systematic way across major City departments should lead to changes that enhance the built environment to promote public health in communities of color, including for example investments in streets and sidewalks to promote safe mobility for bicyclists and pedestrians, investments in street trees, parks, and open spaces to improve air quality and opportunities for healthy recreation, and other environmental health measures.

CONTACT

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