

**Mission Statement**

*“We Care for Our Residents by Working Together to Build a Better Community for Today and Tomorrow.”*

**CITY OF ROHNERT PARK  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

Meeting Date: November 9, 2021  
Department: Development Services  
Submitted By: Mary Grace Pawson, Director of Development Services  
Prepared By: Jeffrey Beiswenger, Planning Manager  
Agenda Title: **Discussion and Direction on General Plan Update – Racial, Social and Environmental Justice Element**

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Receive a presentation and provide direction on the Racial Social and Environmental Justice Element goals and policies in the draft General Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** As part of the General Plan update process, staff is receiving input on the draft elements from the City Council. To date, the City Council has reviewed and commented on:

- Introduction
- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Circulation
- Climate Change

Staff is in the process of compiling a complete public review draft over the next few months. The draft will include an environmental justice component to comply with Senate Bill 1000 (SB 1000). Approved in 2016, in response to increasing concerns about vulnerable communities in California experiencing environmental injustice, SB 1000 requires general plans adopted after January 1, 2018 to incorporate environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives to address health risks in disadvantaged communities. SB 1000 requires that local agencies adopt policies to address environmental justice by reducing unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities. SB 1000 directs local agencies to consider policies that reduce exposure to pollutants or other hazards, promote healthy habits, prioritize infrastructure improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities, and promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process.

While the City initially elected not to include a stand-alone Environmental Justice Element, but rather to satisfy the legal requirements of SB 1000 within the Community Development Element, at the April 27, 2021 meeting, the City Council directed the preparation of a stand-alone element that addresses racial, social and environmental justice issues. The Racial, Social and Environmental Justice (RSEJ) Element, included as Attachment 1, will meet and exceed the requirements of SB 1000.

The RSEJ Element consolidates goals and policies directly related to environmental justice that were previously located in other elements such as Community Development and Public Facilities. In the final draft of the General Plan, additional goals and policies that support Racial, Social and

Environmental Justice Element, but not located in this element, will be identified with a symbol or graphic.

**ANALYSIS:** The Racial, Social and Environmental Justice Element is divided into three subsections: Racial and Social Justice with three goals and sixteen policies, Environmental Justice with two goals and ten policies, and Civic Engagement in the Public Decision-Making Process with one goal and six policies. The implementation programs (Section 4.4) will guide City actions. Each implementation program listed relates to one or more policies.

The following is a summary of each subsection and the related implementation programs:

#### Section 4.1 Racial and Social Justice

This section identifies goals and policies which seek to advance City efforts toward diversity and inclusivity. Implementation programs allow the City to monitor its progress in achieving racial, social, and environmental justice, including an annual survey. This section outlines City efforts to establish a more racially and socially just community. This section includes the following goals:

1. *To support equity, inclusion, and access to opportunities for all community members, employees, businesses, visitors, and local organizations.* Policies grouped under this goal focus on creating a more welcoming city to all. This includes working with the Sonoma County of Office and Equity, expanding access to affordable housing, and exploring ways to celebrate city diversity.
2. *To respect, protect, and promote the civil and human rights of all members of the community.* Policies under this goal focus on services for socially disadvantaged communities and ensuring that City boards, committees, and commission have a diverse representation. The City also commits to anti-bias hiring procedures, public safety collaboration with underrepresented groups and City staff diversity training. Also included under this goal is the implementation of an alternative response model to assist those experiencing homelessness.
3. *To broaden income and employment opportunities for all Rohnert Park residents.* The policies under this goal focus on employment training, workforce development and helping to improve wage levels. Many of the implementation programs to implement this goal are found in the Economic Development Element (related to employment growth). This element includes an implementation program to expand recruitment of diverse candidates for City positions.

#### Section 4.2 Environmental Justice

The section implements Senate Bill 1000 (SB 1000). Effective environmental justice policies are those that reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by reducing disproportionate exposure to pollutants or other hazards, promote healthy habits, prioritize necessary infrastructure improvements and programs, and promoting civic engagement in the public decision-making process. This section includes the following goals:

4. *To ensure that all land use decisions benefit Rohnert Park residents, and do not create a disproportionate burden to any resident based on location, income, race, color, educational status, or national origin.* Policies grouped under this goal include the equitable distribution of public services such as parks, community gardens and public safety facilities and a focus on avoiding environmental justice impacts of incompatible land uses (e.g. industrial adjacent to residential land uses). This goal also has a relationship to the Housing Element with a policy that calls for safe and sanitary housing.

5. *To ensure all residents have access to healthy foods, education, green spaces, and medical services.* Healthy food options can be provide through farmers’ markets, which the City has hosted in the library parking lot for several years. Policies related to the equitable access to community assets (e.g. natural areas, park, health care facilities) and the equitable distribution of capital improvements (e.g. roadways, bikeways) are included under this goal.

#### Section 4.3 Civic Engagement in the Public Decision-Making Process

This section recognizes that racial, social, and environmental justice efforts must include strong civic engagement efforts. This section provide a framework for the City to build social capital through engagement and empowerment of the public, while emphasizing public participation, transparency, and inclusion. The following goals and policies relate to civic engagement in the public decision-making process. Many of the implementation programs (Section 4.4) feature various forms for civic engagement approaches. This section includes one goal:

6. *To fully engage the public in City decision-making and facilitate public involvement in civic life.*

This section includes policies and implementation programs to facilitate transparency and communication between the City government and the citizenry. To facilitate participation, policies directs the City to schedule events a different days, times and formats to maximize public participation and to use innovative communication techniques.

**PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW:** The Commission will hold a study session on November 2, 2021 to discuss the draft Racial, Social and Environmental Justice Element. The results of the Commission discussion will be presented to the City Council during their meeting.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:** The General Plan update supports Strategic Plan Goal D – Continue to Develop a Vibrant Community.

**FISCAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE:** There is no direct fiscal impact associated with reviewing this General Plan Element. The fiscal impacts of these goals and policies have not been fully quantified, but they are likely to be under two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) per year if done with existing staff.

**Department Head Approval Date: 10/25/21**

**Finance Director Approval Date: N/A**

**City Attorney Approval Date: N/A**

**City Manager Approval Date: 10/28/21**

**Attachment: Draft Racial, Social, and Environmental Justice Element**