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Council Districts: All

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Honorable Members of the City Council  
City of Los Angeles  
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Attention: Eric Villanueva  
Legislative Assistant

**REVISED LOS ANGELES HOUSING AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT (HCIDLA) REPORT RELATIVE TO THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION AND OTHER LOCAL AGENCIES PLAN FOR THE CITY TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO RACE, ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, DIVERSITY, AND MULTICULTURALISM**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides a second update from the Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department (HCIDLA) and the Human Relations Commission in response to City Council motion (CF 15-0840; O'Farrell, Wesson, Harris-Dawson, Ryu) on the progress toward a plan to engage in conversations and activities throughout the city of Los Angeles, with regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, diversity, and multiculturalism. A full report is forthcoming.

**BACKGROUND**

The City Council introduced a motion (CF 15-0840) instructing the Human Relations Commission, with the assistance of the Cultural Affairs Department, the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, the Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department, and the Los Angeles Police Department to report on a plan to engage in conversations and activities throughout the city with regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, diversity, and multiculturalism.

## **CITY COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

The collaborative departments mentioned in the motion include: the Human Relations Commission (City HRC), which is part of the Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and the Los Angeles Police Departments (LAPD). Each of these City partners brings a specific programmatic focus, core competencies and strategic expertise to the table.

### HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

The City established the Human Relations Commission in response to the civil unrest of 1965 in the Watts community. The commission was tasked with helping bridge the chasm created by the social and racial inequity that was highlighted by community response in the aftermath of the riots. In an effort to close the cultural and social divide that led to violent confrontations and created community tension, the City HRC was created in 1966 with the objective of *“improving human relations, promoting equal rights and opportunities for all and fostering the elimination of all forms of discriminations...based on race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, [sexual identification].”*

It was a first step in creating a long and sustainable effort to engage city residents, who were virtually silent and disregarded prior to the Watts’ unrest, and challenging government on systemic process and engagement with marginalized communities. The Commission’s central mandate is to monitor and engage the city’s diverse communities through strategic community action plans and to include underserved communities in civic life. In addition, the City HRC is mandated to convene forums and dialogues focused on creating safe spaces to discuss racial inequality, frayed race relations, cultural awareness, and often strained community-police relations.

### DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike. DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking, public art, community arts, and strategic marketing and development. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service to all residents and visitors in neighborhoods throughout LA.

The depth and breadth of any society is measured by its cultural expression. Since its inception, the DCA has served as the City’s principal agency for engaging visitors, residents, communities, and stakeholders in a conversation about race, culture, and identity through the lens of cultural production and artistic expression.

This dialogue continues to this day through each of the agencies four divisions; Community Arts, Cultural Grants, Public Art, and Marketing.

### LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Los Angeles Police Department is committed to serving the community while protecting the rights of all persons. Consistent with this commitment, the Department’s Vision, Mission and Core Values, in concert with the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics and the Department’s Management Principles, reflect the guiding philosophy of the Los Angeles Police Department.

“The development of our collective vision for the LAPD has been marked with an unprecedented degree of inclusion and collaboration, bringing in internal and external stakeholders and researching concepts, ideas, and best practices.... The profession of American law enforcement finds itself at a defining moment in its history—in no uncertain terms; we are facing a crisis of confidence between the protectors and the protected. As Angelenos, we face this moment with the strength and confidence of knowing that we have the will and the skill required to overcome our challenges and achieve success. We will work collaboratively to redefine the bottom line of policing—one that reflects local priorities and is rooted in trust and confidence of those we serve.” Chief Charlie Beck, LAPD in 2020 Strategic Plan

### **THE ISSUES TODAY**

The City of Los Angeles is one of the most racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse cities in the nation. Based on the most recent data, of the 3.9 million people living in Los Angeles, 48.5% is Latino/Hispanic 49.8% is European descent, 9.6% is African American and 11.3 is Asian / Pacific Islander.<sup>1</sup>

While the richness of our diversity defines our city, poverty, inequity, and the disproportionate percentage of people of color represented in the criminal justice system reflect systemic inequities that must be addressed. Limited access to quality public education, affordable housing, and living wage employment have impacted low-income, communities of color for generations.

Deep feelings of disempowerment, social isolation, and despair are pervasive in low-income communities of color. If not addressed, these feelings lead to intergroup conflict (gang violence), fear of the other and increased isolation. For some communities, a real and/or perceived inequitable distribution of resources serves to justify disruptive behavior.

There are many factors that create this actual and perceived power and resource inequity. People of color and low-income individuals, particularly youth, are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, which, upon re-entry, has significant implications such as devastating families and communities.<sup>2</sup> The City HRC has found, based on its’ work, that some community members strongly believe that their communities are targeted by law enforcement because of inherent bias in the institution of law enforcement.

Exacerbating this issue is the fact that poverty lines are drawn by race in Los Angeles. While not unique in the United States, the income gap in Los Angeles is unmistakable.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, the Los Angeles Times reported that the upper 5% of Angelenos earned more than 12 times the income of the bottom 20%. These income gaps are patently manifest when we look at our neighborhoods’ boundary lines and ethnic and racial makeup. Many neighborhoods where communities of color reside often lack living wage jobs, affordable housing and access to quality education. In neighborhoods with the majority population are

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<sup>1</sup> “City Basics.” City of Los Angeles. April 12, 2005. Archived from the original on November 27, 2010. Retrieved April 13, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Gallagher, Charles A. (2009). *Rethinking the Color Line: Readings in Race and Ethnicity*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. pp. 192–203. ISBN 978-0-07-340427-1. "... and the Poor Get Prison"

<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles, California (CA) Poverty Rate Data

people of color, home values do not appreciate at the same rate as homes in overwhelmingly white and affluent neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup>

Without a safe and healthy outlet for a substantive dialogue on race relations and equity, a community endures and shoulders these frustrations in a vacuum until it erupts, as we have seen twice in recent history. To many, the promise of renewed targeted community interventions after both the Watts Civil Unrest of 1965 and the Riots in 1992 have not been realized, in fact many of the same social conditions still persist. Although local and national media outlets have covered recent high-profile events that highlight race relations, these reports are rarely conducted in a supported inter-community capacity and often just inflame the issues rather than generate thoughtful and constructive dialogue.

The Los Angeles Police Department is uniquely positioned to be pivotal in this community assessment process, in part because historically its internal culture resisted a focus on building and strengthening community relationships as a way to reducing crime and building mutual trust. But, in the last two decades, it has demonstrated both an internal and external institutional commitment to be a collaborative and active partner in this paradigm shift. LAPD leadership, has been a proactive participant in the collaborative process of creating dialogue around this issue locally, regionally, and nationally.

As we continue to find a meaningful path to discuss the negative impacts that racism and bias have on our communities, it is imperative that we find a common language that is solutions-driven and that addresses the growing inequitable distribution of resources, self-segregation, lack of community cohesion, and historic low civic engagement.

Therefore, the City HRC, DCA and LAPD propose a new way forward; to utilize the various forms of engagement to assess community beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of Angelenos in terms of racial equity, race relations, status of community-police relations, LGBTQ inclusion, ethnic, religious pluralism, cultural and gender bias. We understand that opening dialogue about these issues has been a challenge in the past, but we believe that through our collaborative approach with key partners, we can develop safe and innovative platforms to the kind of systemic change and community cohesion that will bring Los Angeles closer to its civic engagement and racial equity ideals.

### **OBJECTIVE/GOALS/STRATEGIES**

The intent of the motion is to foster and promote racial inclusion in the civic life of all Angelenos; promote mutual cultural understanding among residents; create awareness and reform strategies to comprehensively address institutional racial bias through the City's service delivery system; achieve racial equity for all residents; and activate cultural programming as a vehicle to spark a citywide dialogue on race, sexual orientation and gender in the City of Los Angeles.

In order for the City to begin to develop strategies to achieve the goals outlined in the motion, the City must evaluate the attitudes of community members as well as employees of the City and establish baseline data. As such the HRC, with the assistance of LAPD and DCA have developed the following plan to create a public conversation about race, cultural identity, sexual orientation and multiculturalism in the City of Los Angeles that align with each collaborating agency's mission and core competencies.

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<sup>4</sup> Douglass S. Massey (2004). "The New Geography of Inequality in Urban America." In Henry, C. Michael. Race, Poverty, and Domestic Policy. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 173–187. ISBN 978-0-300-12984-7.

- HRC will harness and leverage its deep relationships with the public safety, faith-based, and culturally diverse communities to facilitate community dialogues throughout the city.
- LAPD will make four Division headquarters to serve as community gathering spaces and encourage division leadership to participate in the community dialogues.
  1. Northeast LA (LAPD North east Division, Council District 1 and 13)
  2. Pacoima (LAPD Foothill Division, Council District 7)
  3. South Los Angeles (LAPD 77th St. Division, Council District 8)
  4. Venice (LAPD Pacific Division, Council District 11)
- DCA will provide cultural programming relevant to the issues addressed in the motion and collaborate with HRC to engage audience members in pre-and post-event discussions. These cultural programming events include:
  - **Heritage Month Celebrations** – These celebrations provide a unique opportunity to engage Heritage Month organizers to participate in this citywide dialogue and bring to the fore community specific issues, concerns, opportunities and challenges through the lens of cultural pride.
  - **Community Dialogues** – Artists and cultural practitioners with LAPD Division Officers at regional division headquarters. In addition, HRC will facilitate community dialogues in conjunction with cultural programming taking place throughout our city, such as the Watts Day of the Drum and Jazz Festival, CURRENT:LA Water, King Day Parade, Día De Los Muertos, the Northeast Jazz Festival, the Warner Center Festival, and the Latino Theatre Festival.
  - **Commemorative Mural** – Commission an artist to create a commemorative mural based on the core issues raised through this civic dialogue.

These community dialogues will take place from July 2016 through June 2017. Following this year of community dialogues, HRC, with the assistance of LAPD and DCA, will commission a report about the yearlong civic dialogue project with recommendations of how the City may consider adjusting its systems and service delivery mechanisms to better serve the people of Los Angeles.

## **OUTCOMES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

- i. Publish and disseminate community engagement outcomes and findings in a comprehensive report on status on race and racial equity in Los Angeles;
- ii. Assess the resource allocation process used by the City to fund grassroots community building efforts;
- iii. Develop a community tool kit for addressing racial and ethnic tension in pilot community and build community capacity to address racial disparities throughout the city;

- iv. Highlight best practices framework on how to engage the public in conversations about race and race equity;
- v. Lay the groundwork for a citywide Race and Social Justice Initiative that addresses systemic change for racial equity within Los Angeles' municipal programs, its community service delivery system and city policies that directly impact racial tension and feelings of exclusion;
- vi. Develop a set of recommendations and ongoing strategies to engage communities of color, immigrant and refugee communities in long-term, reciprocal and mutually-defined beneficial relationships;

### *POLICY OPPORTUNITIES*

- i. Explore reforms to the equitable distribution of City resources and budget by promoting and supporting non-punitive methods by which to resolve conflicts in our communities;
- ii. Ensure that LAPD conducts extensive and ongoing roll call trainings on racial bias in all divisions and stations and ensure that hiring and policing practices include methods by which to eliminate bias;
- iii. Thoroughly assess LAPD's service provision model to determine how to break the punitive model of community conflict resolution and establish models and policies to break the cycle of arrest and conviction;
- iv. Ensure that LAPD collaborates with other law enforcement agencies such as the District Attorney's Office to institutionalize less punitive measures, such as diversion and community courts, to ensure that families and communities are not torn apart by overly punitive incarceration cycles.
- v. Ensure that LAPD accounts for civil asset forfeitures and has an accessible and efficient non-judicial mechanism to ensure that individuals may re-acquire their property after it is determined that they have not engaged in illegal activity;
- vi. Make the mechanism for disputing or exiting a gang injunction more concise, accessible, streamlined and understandable.

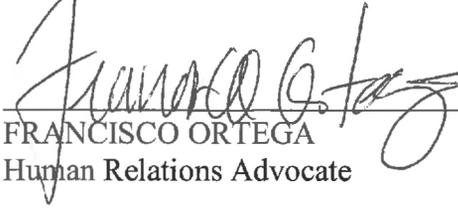
### **CONCLUSION**

The collaborative partners firmly believe that through these preliminary interventions, the City can begin to better understand how to serve the people of Los Angeles.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The fiscal impact is still being reviewed by the members of the working group and will be addressed in the implementation report.

Prepared by:



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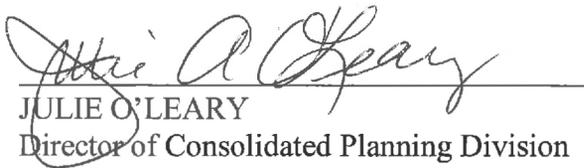
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