



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 21-1090, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-1.

CC - Recommendation from the City Council Ad Hoc Equity Subcommittee to (1) Discuss and Consider the Adoption of a Resolution Acknowledging Culver City's Racial History; and (2) Provide Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: June 14, 2021

Contact Person/Dept: Serena Wright-Black/Administrative Services
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐

General Fund: Yes ☒ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐

Action Item: ☒

Attachments: Yes ☒ No ☐

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (06/09/2021);

Department Approval: John M. Nachbar, City Manager (06/09/2021)

RECOMMENDATION

The City Council Ad Hoc Equity Subcommittee (Vice Mayor Daniel Lee and Council Member Yasmine Imani McMorris) recommends City Council discuss and consider (1) adoption of a Resolution acknowledging Culver City's racial history; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The City of Culver City was incorporated as a charter city in 1917. Prior to its incorporation, part of the land which would become Culver City was occupied for centuries by the Gabrielino-Tongva Indians. Culver City, along with many other planned communities in the United States from 1890 - 1960 by a single developer, was designed to be "all-white suburbs" and "excluded blacks, Jews, and Catholics from its inception"¹

James Loewen, sociologist, professor, and author of *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of*

American Racism, defines sundown towns as “any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept African Americans or other groups from living in it and was thus ‘all-white’ on purpose,” through formal and informal methods. Loewen identified over 100 sundown towns in California in his research, including Culver City.²

Informal methods to exclude Black people and other people of color from residing or being present in Culver City included reported harassment, intimidation and violence.

Formal methods that kept Culver City all white are represented by racially restrictive covenants in housing and redlining. In the 1910s and 1920s, racially restricted housing was noted in advertisements for Culver City homes.³ In 1927, as president of the Los Angeles Realty Board, Culver City’s founder Harry Culver oversaw the issuance of the following opinion:

The Los Angeles Realty Board recommends that Realtors should not sell property to other than Caucasian in territories occupied by them. Deed and Covenant Restrictions probably are the only way that the matter can be controlled; and Realty Boards should be interested. This is the general opinion of all boards in the state.⁴

It should be noted that although deed and covenant restrictions are illegal and unenforceable there are still many homes within Culver City that continue to have language which excludes the transfer or sell of property to any person other than Caucasian.

Another method of racial exclusion existed in the form of redlining. The term comes from federal government maps from the New Deal period, enacted between 1933 and 1939, in which maps of every metropolitan area in the country were color-coded to indicate where it was considered safe to insure mortgages. Anywhere African Americans lived were colored red to indicate to appraisers that these neighborhoods were too risky to insure mortgages. These maps and racially restrictive covenants were legal to use until 1968, cementing over three decades of economic and housing inequality. During this period, certain neighborhoods and ethnicities were able to build and accumulate wealth through property ownership while minorities, particularly African Americans, were denied this opportunity. It has been noted that many middle-class families have gained their wealth through the accumulation or inheritance of equity from residential property⁵.

In October 2020, the City of Glendale became the first city in California to adopt a resolution apologizing for its history as a “sundown town.” The City of Burbank adopted a similar resolution in December 2020. Antioch, California recently adopted a resolution apologizing for its mistreatment of early Chinese immigrants.

The City Council Ad Hoc Equity Subcommittee are recommending the City Council discuss and consider adopting a resolution, and appropriate associated policies and programs, which acknowledge and make amends for the historical racial inequities that have occurred within Culver City. (See Attachment 1)

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no financial impact of adopting the proposed Resolution; future financial impact is dependent upon which, if any, programs and policies are approved by City Council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2021-06-14_ATT 1 - Proposed Resolution

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Discuss and Consider the Adoption of a Resolution Acknowledging Culver City's Racial History; and
2. Provide other direction to staff, as deemed appropriate.

NOTES

¹ Loewen, James W. Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. P 112.

² Loewen, James W. Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

³ Gibbons, Andrea, City of Segregation: 100 Years of Struggle for Housing in Los Angeles, Verso, 2018, p. 26.

⁴ Gibbons, Andrea, City of Segregation: 100 Years of Struggle for Housing in Los Angeles, Verso, 2018, p. 26.

⁵ Gross, Terry. "A 'Forgotten History' of How the U.S. Government Segregated America." Fresh Air. National Public Radio. May 3, 2017.