

RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Board Memorandum

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DATE: JUNE 28, 2021

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND CITYWIDE SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

ISSUE:

Receive an update on the citywide sustainability efforts, including activities of the Office of Sustainability and Riverside Public Utilities, and provide direction for next steps.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Public Utilities:

1. Receive an update on citywide sustainability efforts, including activities of the Office of Sustainability and Riverside Public Utilities; and
2. Share thoughts and ideas for RPU's involvement in citywide sustainability efforts.

BACKGROUND:

On March 10, 2020, the City Council provided direction to establish an Office of Sustainability (OOS) in the City Manager's Office. City Council also directed staff to develop details on staff position levels and an accompanying staff budget, present this information to the Budget Engagement Commission for consideration, and return to the City Council for a recommendation.

On October 20, 2020, the City Council approved the Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). This document sets forth the priorities and policy direction of the City Council for the next five years and envisions the work efforts by City staff to implement and achieve City Council priorities. A major theme in the Strategic Plan is Sustainability and Resiliency (one of five cross-cutting threads), which speaks to Riverside's commitment to manage resources and assets to meet present needs without compromising the needs of the future. This ensures the City's capacity to persevere, adapt, and grow during good and difficult times alike. Sustainability and Resiliency are embedded across the Strategic Plan's six strategic priorities, goals, and action items.

On April 27, 2021, the City Council reconfirmed their March 10, 2020 direction on the Office of Sustainability. Additionally, the City Council directed staff to bring back a job scope and duties and recommended salary range for a new full-time Chief Sustainability Officer position. The Chief

Sustainability Officer position will serve the purpose of fully implementing the Office of Sustainability and shepherd organization-wide sustainability efforts in support of the City Council's Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan.

About the Office of Sustainability

To assist City efforts in accomplishing the Strategic Plan's priorities, goals, and actions, the Office of Sustainability frames sustainability in a triple-bottom-line (TBL) construct, characterizing the three elements of sustainability as follows:

1. **Environmental Stewardship:** considers the stewardship of water and land resources; ecosystem preservation and protection; preservation of open space and local agricultural resources; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint; intelligent development and infrastructure investments; efficient transportation options; and waste reduction programs.
2. **Economic Prosperity:** a healthy and resilient economy that reflects community values and supports local businesses; offering diverse job opportunities, talent management, and workforce development; supporting an exceptional quality of place with affordable housing and recreational amenities, and adequate infrastructure and transportation amenities; the retention and attraction efforts that support a diverse and resilient economy; and the creation of an innovative entrepreneurial atmosphere fostering local investments and equitable wealth-building opportunities.
3. **Social Responsibility:** high quality, safe, and inclusive communities with equal access to services, amenities, and resources; fosters strong and connected neighborhoods; access to affordable and quality housing; high quality cultural, recreational, open space and transportation options; access to quality educational institutions and health care services; and engages arts and culture; all contributing to a high quality of life and place.

Approaching municipal decisions along a TBL framework not only increases awareness of each area of the TBL but can lead to the revelation of alternatives such that negative impacts can be mitigated and improve overall outcomes. This TBL process creates a "healthy tension" and balance to City decisions, ensuring that one aspect of the triple-bottom-line does not dominate the decision-making process and therefore reduces impacts when trade-offs are unavoidable.

The establishment of the Office of Sustainability is envisioned to serve as a catalyst to embed sustainability tenets across the city organization to better accomplish City Council strategic priorities, goals, and desired outcomes. Specifically, OOS will function to facilitate the following:

1. **Alignment of organizational structure and resources** to develop organization-wide core competencies around sustainability and resiliency.
2. **Integration of sustainability principles** into the organizational DNA across departments, boards, commissions, and committees with respect to policies, plans, programs, projects, and metrics.
3. **Support efforts resulting in outcomes** that accomplish short, medium, and long-term triple-bottom-line priorities and goals across a diversity of city functions.
4. **Internal silo-busting** by fostering cross-department collaboration among the city team and stakeholders.
5. **Stakeholders engagement and partnerships** among community and regional collaborative efforts to strengthen sustainability efforts and outcomes across the City.

Between December 2020 and March 2021, several focused and unique presentations were given to three of the City Council Policy Committees. The Social Responsibility Work Group provided a presentation to the Inclusiveness, Community Engagement, and Governmental Processes Committee on December 2, 2020; the Environmental Stewardship Work Group provided updates to the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee on December 14, 2020; and the Economic Prosperity Work Group provided a presentation to the Economic Development, Placemaking and Branding/Marketing Committee on March 18, 2021.

DISCUSSION:

The official launch of the OOS in August 2020 brought together a small team of existing staff to identify and prioritize sustainability efforts. This staff team, with limited capacity while maintaining existing full-time job duties in their respective departments, has made key strides in the OOS's development. One of its first tasks has been the formation of three cross-departmental working groups with each group focusing on one area of the triple-bottom-line. Each work group has cataloged city projects within each triple-bottom-line area, shared future endeavors, discussed potential synergies and key performance indicators, as well as made presentations to three City Council committees. The variety of TBL projects presented to each of the City Council sub-committees will be summarized in the staff presentation. One project, in particular, the Transformative Climate Communities and Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Grant Project, highlights and comprehensively models connections among all three areas of the TBL; this project will be discussed in more detail in the staff presentation.

While OOS has articulated a framework for how it will function as an organizational catalyst, staff identified several barriers that may hinder realization of triple-bottom-line outcomes. A discussion of these challenges and the opportunities they present follows.

Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges

1. **Funding:** The most significant challenge facing the success of the OOS is the same challenge facing the entire City – a limited budget. As a new division housed in the City Manager's Office, personnel and non-personnel budgetary resources will be required to shepherd organization-wide sustainability efforts. Budgetary considerations ought to consider adequate staff capacity and operational funds to carry out sustainability efforts. In the meantime, the OOS team and partner Departments have creatively leveraged existing funding and budget constraints to advance sustainability projects in keeping with the Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan.
2. **Dedicated staff resources:** An existing six-member staff team has incorporated work in OOS as a part-time special assignment alongside their existing full-time job duties. This distributed staff resource allocation manifests in limited capacity and time constraints and have hindered the full deployment of the OOS. However, the establishment of a division structural architecture and job scopes for dedicated OOS personnel are anticipated to contribute to building broader sustainability competencies across city functions.
3. **Change:** The Office of Sustainability alone cannot make the City "sustainable". Achieving City Council's strategic priorities around sustainability and resiliency requires a "it takes a village" mentality and approach. Organizationally, departmental functions, staff roles and responsibilities, and city policies and plans will require an evaluation of whether and how their functions contribute to achieving triple-bottom-line outcomes and metrics. Embedding a more sustainable framework around city processes will take consistent leadership, strategy, dedication, collaboration, resources, and flexibility to make this cultural shift.

4. **Stakeholder engagement:** Successful citywide sustainability outcomes will also require stakeholder engagement from an external, broader audience, including the business community, residents, community-based organizations, institutions, and many others. The inclusion of external stakeholders creates greater transparency of the City’s sustainability efforts and welcomes increased community-based actions around sustainability. This “village” effort builds community trust, ensures equitable opportunities around sustainability efforts, fosters innovation, and ultimately contributes to prudent stewardship of financial resources to serve the community.

Next Steps

At the April City Council meeting, staff identified critical next steps, including necessary personnel and budgetary resources needs to make significant strides in achieving City Council Strategic Priorities around Sustainability and Resiliency. A select list of high priority next steps are identified in two parts:

1. **Part 1: Develop staff plan, budget, and implement the framework for the OOS roles and responsibilities.** The OOS is anticipated to facilitate the development of a full budget and work plan to support organization-wide sustainability efforts articulated in the City Council’s Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan. Staff currently on special assignment part-time in the OOS will continue to:
 - a. Work across the City organization to foster a strong culture around inter-connected and cross-department teams for greater collective impact in sustainability work;
 - b. Lead triple-bottom-line work groups to increase coordination and standardization among service areas around sustainability goals and direction, ensuring a healthy balance among social, economic, and environmental elements across city services, programs, policies, and projects;
 - c. Participate regionally in efforts related to sustainability;
 - d. Join organizations specializing in sustainability best practices, and participate in peer to peer learnings, specialized training, and related educational programming;
 - e. Initiate conversations about alternative approaches to addressing sustainability including, but not limited to, city organizational structure change, the establishment of a sustainability commission, and the creation of new positions (e.g. Chief Sustainability Officer);
 - f. Coordinate legislative platform and regulatory compliance; and
 - g. Develop and initiate a stakeholder communications and education strategy.
2. **Part 2: Specific tasks to be undertaken over the next year and lead by the OOS in collaboration with TBL teams:**
 - a. All Working Groups – Develop a Municipal Sustainability Plan to implement Council’s Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan, including support of the General Plan Update to ensure long-range sustainability efforts are integrated throughout the following elements:
 - b. Phase 1 General Plan update of the Public Safety and Housing Elements, and Environmental Justice policies; and
 - c. Phase 2 General Plan Update.
 - d. Economic Prosperity Work Group – Develop the Economic Prosperity Action Plan and support the implementation of other key efforts like the Northside Specific Plan,

Innovation District, Arts Plan, the One-Stop Shop, public infrastructure investment, the forthcoming taskforce researching Santa Ana River economic opportunities, and many other related endeavors;

- e. Social Responsibility Work Group – Develop the full Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Plan, launch diversity training, support recruitment of new Equity Officer, assist with the creation of a new Community Engagement Policy and continue to implement programming already underway; and
- f. Environmental Stewardship Work Group – Develop the Citywide CEQA Certified Climate Action Plan, engage in regional collaborations (i.e. Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan) and support implementation of other key efforts throughout the City, including measures reducing greenhouse gas emissions (i.e. expanding green fleet, virtual City Hall services, tree planting and open space preservation, renewable energy production, Green Building Code). Please note, some efforts are expected to be multi-year undertakings like the Climate Action Plan, which will run concurrently with the Phase 2 of the General Plan Update (anticipated to be a three-year effort).

During the presentation, the City Manager's Office will provide the Board with an update on the next steps for the Office of Sustainability across the organization.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this report.

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Attachment: Presentation