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Hayward City Council issues formal apology for City's role in racial discrimination—and mass displacement of Russell City residents

HAYWARD, Calif., Nov. 17, 2021—The Hayward City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to approve a resolution apologizing to Black, Indigenous, Californio, Mexicano, Latino, Latinx and other community members of color for racially disparate impacts and inequities resulting from past City policy and decision-making.

The intent of the resolution is not to absolve but rather to formally acknowledge the existence of institutionalized racial bias and racism and the historical role municipal government has played in its creation and legacy of inequities and racially disparate impacts.

The resolution also is intended to inform future City policy and decision making, spending and investments around and affecting issues of housing, employment, displacement, wealth creation, quality of life and access to municipal, educational and recreational services.

The resolution, prepared and recommended to the Council by the Hayward Community Services Commission, cites past City, real estate and banking industry participation in the discriminatory practice of redlining, which prevented black, indigenous and people of color from owning property within Hayward city limits.

As a consequence, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), including Californio, Mexicano, Latino and Latinx families and individuals, were steered into neighboring unincorporated areas of Alameda County lacking municipal service, the resolution notes. The lasting effect being the denial of intergenerational wealth building, disproportionately higher representation of BIPOC residents among renters in Hayward, and greater likelihoods of experiencing associated economic, medical and emotional strain and harm.

The resolution also cites Hayward's participation in federally sponsored urban renewal initiatives, which frequently resulted in the mass displacement and dislocation without fair compensation of largely Black households, neighborhoods and entire communities across the country during the 1960s and 1970s.

In particular, Russell City, established in 1853 off the Hayward shoreline, was an unincorporated area of Alameda County that during the post-World War II era became home to a growing, commercially independent and culturally vibrant Black, Californio, Mexicano, Latino and Latinx community, according to oral and academic histories. By the 1950s, however, Hayward leaders considered Russell City a "blight" to the surrounding area and sought to rebuild it as an industrial park for the benefit of incorporated Hayward. And, in 1963, Alameda County and Hayward began a forced relocation of Russell City residents, bulldozed the entire community and rezoned the land for industrial use.

In addition to the resolution of apology, the Hayward Community Services Commission has developed a list of 10 other steps Hayward could take to redress past City wrongdoings and complicity in historical institutional racism and racial bias, including a program of working with surviving Russell City residents and descendants to determine appropriate restitution.

A copy of the resolution, accompanying staff report to the City Council and a Community Services workplan listing its recommendations is available [here](#) on the City of Hayward's legislative website.