



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

25-0133

Agenda Date: 2/13/2025

2025 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

OCM 25-01

TITLE Explore Establishing a Japanese American Incarceration Memorial in Sunnyvale

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development Department

Support Departments: Office of the City Manager
Office of the City Attorney
Department of Public Works
Finance Department

Sponsor(s): Councilmembers: Mehlinger, Din, Sell, Klein

History: 1 year ago: N/A
2 years ago: N/A

Council Strategic Priority: No
(At time of sponsorship)

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What precipitated this study?

During World War II, Executive Order 9066 authorized the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast to internment camps. This led to the internment of over 125,000 persons of Japanese descent, including residents from Sunnyvale. The forced removal and incarceration were a direct violation of civil and human rights. The impact to Sunnyvale residents of Japanese descent was compounded by the actions of the Sunnyvale City Council in 1944, when they passed Resolution 606. This resolution called for Congress to permanently bar persons of Japanese ancestry from residing in California. The resolution was later rescinded in 1988 and again in 2001. In June 2012, Sunnyvale’s Public Library hosted a program featuring three local survivors of Japanese internment camps to share their experiences with the Sunnyvale community.

In 2023, a study issue titled *Update to the Historical Context Statement to Include Historical Contributions Made by Asian Americans and Other Minority Groups* ranked above the line for staff to embark on the study. Due to workload and other priorities that study is just commencing. A consultant will be retained to assist with the research. Typically, historic refers to anything over 50 years ago. As such, the research will cover the time period in the 1940s when residents of Japanese ancestry were relocated to internment camps.

At the July 23, 2024, Council meeting, Councilmember Mehlinger proposed a study issue to examine establishing a memorial in a public park or on other suitable public land to honor and recognize Sunnyvale residents of Japanese descent who were incarcerated during the Second World War.

What are the key elements of the study?

This study would explore the feasibility and design elements of a memorial in Sunnyvale to honor the Japanese American residents whose civil and human rights were violated during World War II. The key elements of the study would include:

- 1. Historical Context and Educational Content:** The study would include an examination of the history of the Japanese American community in Sunnyvale, the impact of Executive Order 9066, and the significance of Resolution 606 and its eventual rescindment. This would involve compiling educational materials about these events, ensuring that future generations are informed about this critical chapter in Sunnyvale's history.
- 2. Design Elements of the Memorial:** The study would explore the design elements of the memorial, including educational material and potentially photos and statements from survivors of the internment camps from Sunnyvale. The memorial could also include a formal apology from the City of Sunnyvale for Resolution 606, reaffirming the City's commitment to protecting the civil and human rights of all residents.
- 3. Community Engagement:** A significant aspect of the study would involve gathering input from the local Japanese American community, particularly from those whose families were incarcerated during the war. The study would seek insights from civil society organizations, the Sunnyvale Heritage Museum, and the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. Engaging with these partners would ensure that the memorial accurately reflects the experiences and contributions of Japanese Americans in Sunnyvale.
- 4. Comparative Analysis of Other Memorials:** The study would include a comparative analysis of similar memorials established by other local government agencies in California. This analysis would help inform how Sunnyvale approaches a memorial.
- 5. Location, amenities and landscaping:** The study would consider possible locations for a memorial. It would consider the inclusion of amenities such as benches, tables, shade structures to make the memorial a welcoming space for reflection and education. The landscaping around the memorial could pay homage to the contributions of Japanese American families to agriculture and horticulture in Sunnyvale and Santa Clara County.
- 6. Study Sessions and Public Deliberation:** The study would also involve engaging the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Human Relations Commission, and the City Council.

Estimated years to complete study: 1.5 years

FISCAL IMPACT

Cost to Conduct Study

| | |
|--|---|
| Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): | Moderate |
| Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs: | \$60,000 |
| Funding Source: | Will seek budget supplement from General Fund |

The cost to conduct the study is estimated at \$60,000, which includes expenses for hiring consultants with expertise in historical research, community engagement, and memorial design. Outreach efforts to involve the Japanese American community and other stakeholders will also require significant resources. The level of staff effort required is considered moderate, given the complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved, as well as the need for extensive public consultation and

comparative research.

Cost to Implement Study Results

Unknown. The study will include an assessment of potential costs associated with finalizing a design and installing a memorial. This would involve evaluating capital costs for construction, as well as ongoing operating costs for maintenance and potentially educational programming. The study could explore potential funding sources, such as grants or donations, to support the installation of the memorial.

EXPECTED CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OR COMMISSION PARTICIPATION

Council-Approved Work Plan: Yes

Council Study Session: Yes

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Heritage Preservation Commission, Human Relations Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Defer. This policy issue merits discussion at a Study Issues Workshop.

This study issue will require substantial effort for Community Development and Public Works staff, which are already impacted by heavy workload. Recommend deferral for future assessment.

Prepared by: Jaqui Guzmán, Deputy City Manager

Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Department of Public Works

Reviewed by: Trudi Ryan, Director, Community Development Department

Reviewed by: Dennis Jaw, Acting Director, Finance Department

Reviewed by: Sarah Johnson-Rios, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Tim Kirby, City Manager