

21. Discuss and consider directing the City Manager to complete the following: (1) Reconvene the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group within the next 30 days and provide a written update to the City Council within this same time frame; and (2) provide on-going written updates, at least once every 30 days, relating to activities undertaken by the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group and actions taken by the City Manager or their designee in response to recommendations by the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group – Councilmember Lopez



CITY OF SANTA ANA

Councilmember-Requested Item Report

DATE

February 4, 2025

TOPIC

Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group

COUNCILMEMBER-REQUESTED ITEM TITLE

Discuss and consider directing the City Manager to complete the following: (1) Reconvene the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group within the next 30 days and provide a written update to the City Council within this same time frame; and (2) provide on-going written updates, at least once every 30 days, relating to activities undertaken by the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group and actions taken by the City Manager or their designee in response to recommendations by the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group.

DISCUSSION

Background

In December 2016, the City of Santa Ana adopted a resolution declaring itself a sanctuary city, reaffirming its commitment to protecting and welcoming immigrants and supporting all residents—regardless of their immigration status. This resolution was further solidified in January 2017 with the adoption of a corresponding ordinance. A key component of these policies was the establishment of the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group ("Advisory Group"), tasked with advising the City on issues related to the sanctuary city designation and ensuring robust protections for immigrant residents.

The Advisory Group's primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Advising the City on immigrant protections and sanctuary city policies.
2. Providing recommendations on the use and oversight of the Santa Ana Deportation Defense Fund—a legal defense fund which provides removal defense under the universal representation model to immigrants facing deportation.

Current Status

It has come to my attention that the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group has not convened since 2020. Furthermore, no recent updates have been provided by the City Manager or designee to the City Council regarding the Advisory Group's activities or the overall status of Santa Ana's sanctuary city initiatives. This lack of engagement and accountability pose potential risks to the continuity and effectiveness of the City's immigrant protection measures.

CITY ATTORNEY
Sonia R. Carvalho

CITY MANAGER
Alvaro Nuñez

CITY CLERK
Jennifer L. Hall

Policy Recommendations

In light of these findings, the following policy actions are recommended to ensure the revitalization of the City's sanctuary city policies and the effective functioning of the Advisory Group:

1. Immediate Reconvening of the Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group

- **Action Required:** The City Manager or designee should immediately take steps to reconvene the Advisory Group. If there are vacancies within the group, these positions must be filled without delay to ensure full representation and functionality.
- **Milestone:** Reconvening of the Advisory Group should be completed within 30 days of this councilmember-requested item.

2. Written Update to the City Council

- **Action Required:** Upon reconvening the Advisory Group, and within 30 days, the City Manager or designee must provide a comprehensive written update to the City Council. This update should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Confirmation of the Advisory Group's reactivation.
 - A list of current members, highlighting any new appointments.
 - A summary of the Advisory Group's initial actions and priorities.

3. Ongoing Reporting to the City Council

- **Action Required:** The City Manager or designee must provide written updates to the City Council at least every 30 days. These updates should detail:
 - The activities of the Advisory Group.
 - Key recommendations made by the Advisory Group.
 - Specific actions taken by the City Manager or designee in response to these recommendations.
 - Updates on the deportation defense fund, including performance metrics and outcomes reported by the Immigrant Defenders Law Center.

4. Reinforcement of Sanctuary City Policies

- **Action Required:** The Advisory Group, once reconvened, should assess the effectiveness of existing sanctuary city policies and provide recommendations for strengthening immigrant protections. These recommendations should be prioritized in collaboration with community stakeholders and legal service providers.

Conclusion

The Sanctuary Policy Advisory Group plays a vital role in upholding Santa Ana's sanctuary city designation and ensuring that immigrant residents are protected and welcomed. The group's inactivity since 2020, coupled with the absence of updates to the City Council, necessitates immediate action to restore its operations and transparency.

By implementing the recommended actions outlined above, the City can reaffirm its commitment to immigrant protections and foster trust within the community. It is critical that the City Manager act swiftly to ensure the continuity of these essential efforts.

SUBMITTED BY

Councilmember Jessie Lopez