



Staff Report

File #: 22-0944

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 11/07/2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: City Manager's Office

SUBJECT:
Blue Zones Community Assessment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to consider directing staff to facilitate a Community Assessment in preparation for a Blue Zones Project. Blue Zones Projects are designed to improve life and health outcomes of a community through changes to the built environment, policy, and lifestyle. City staff would work with Riverside University Health System - Public Health and the Blue Zones team on the Community Assessment and Blue Zones Project.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council direct staff to work with Riverside University Health System - Public Health and Blue Zones staff on a community assessment and related activities in preparation for a potential Blue Zones Project in the City of Corona.

BACKGROUND:

Researchers of human longevity have identified five areas in the world, named "Blue Zones", where individuals tended to live significantly longer and healthier lives. All Blue Zones share nine specific lifestyle habits, dubbed the Power 9®. These are: Move Naturally, Purpose, Downshift, 80% Rule, Plant Slant, Wine @ 5, Belong, Loved Ones First, and Right Tribe.

The Blue Zones organization works with communities to implement the findings of the research on Blue Zones to improve health and community outcomes. Using the Power 9®, Blue Zones Project Communities focus on 12 "pillars" to optimize the living environment. These are: the built environment, food policy, tobacco policy, employers, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, faith organizations, home, creating social networks, volunteering, and finding purpose. Cities can greatly influence some of these "pillars" through planning, policy, and programming.

For over 20 years, Blue Zones partnered with hundreds of American Cities, co-creating and implementing evidence-informed Community Well-Being programs. These programs are designed to create sustainable, system-level solutions that improve population health and economic vitality. Example projects include creating safe routes for walking and biking, education campaigns about healthy eating, urban agriculture initiatives, and establishing walking school buses. By partnering with public and private sector leaders, Blue Zones is able to increase the well-being of cities leading to greater stability, improved health equity, and increased resilience. Previous Blue Zones Projects have reduced smoking by 36%, reduced childhood obesity by 68% and adult obesity by 15%, and increased the percentage of people who exercise 30 minutes each day by 9%.

The Blue Zones team is working with Riverside University Health System - Public Health (RUHS-PH) to identify communities in Riverside County that are good candidates for a Blue Zones Project. The City of Corona was invited to participate in a community assessment, which is the first stage of a Blue Zones Project.

ANALYSIS:

The City has been invited to participate in a Community Assessment to evaluate our candidacy for a Blue Zones Project. The assessment consists of a series of meetings, focus groups, and interviews that help Blue Zones staff identify community strengths, priorities, capacity, weaknesses, opportunities, and strategic assets. These meetings are held with senior officials and staff, community leaders, and Blue Zones leadership. The Blue Zones team and RUHS-PH will advise City staff on the appropriate community leaders to include in these meetings. After the assessment, the Blue Zones team and RUHS will determine if the City is a good candidate for a Blue Zones Project. If selected, the City would partner with Blue Zones and RUHS-PH on a long-term community project in the City of Corona.

Participation in a Blue Zones Project is in alignment with the Vision and Purpose of the Strategic Plan, specifically the goals of (3) Sound Infrastructure and (5) Sense of Place. The City is currently working on a number of projects that are aligned with the Blue Zones Project objectives including, the Parks and Recreation Masterplan, the Trails Masterplan, the City Park Masterplan, Re-Branding, 6th Street Beautification, and Downtown Revitalization. Our community engagement efforts have yielded significant information about community preferences that are shaping these plans and would contribute favorably to a Blue Zones Project.

Schedule and Timing

Upon approval of this item, staff will immediately begin working with RUHS-PH and the Blue Zones team to schedule the interviews, community meetings, and focus groups. These meetings are anticipated to start in early December and continue through mid-February.

Staff will provide a status update to the City Council when the Blue Zones team makes a determination of the City's candidacy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The Blue Zones Project Assessment will require a de minimis amount of staff time to coordinate the activities of the Blue Zones team, RUHS-PH, and community partners.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the common sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the action is not subject to CEQA. This action considers pursuing a community assessment, and there is no possibility that approval of the report will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: JUSTIN TUCKER, ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER

REVIEWED BY: JACOB ELLIS, CITY MANAGER