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UNCLASSIFIED

# Santa Ana council approves five-year strategic plan

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BY ALEJANDRA MOLINA / STAFF WRITER

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STEVEN GEORGES, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

SANTA ANA – Children danced folklorico, musicians strummed *jaranas*, and residents celebrated outside City Council chambers Tuesday night as the City Council approved a strategic plan.

The city's strategic plan, which defines community priorities for the next five years, was unanimously approved by council members – a move that residents celebrated as a partnership between the city and community groups.

But just two weeks ago, residents were in council chamber with signs protesting the city's plan.

“This plan is not perfect, but in it, is the voice of the community,” said Apolonio Cortes, with the Santa Ana Collaborative for Responsible Development (SACReD). “In general, it’s a process that we’ve been able to work with the community, the council members ... Everyone has in some form collaborated to make this possible.”

For Cortes, the plan is a source of pride because of the amount of community outreach that was involved.

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The five-year strategic plan, approved on a 7-0 vote, is mandated by the city’s Sunshine Ordinance, adopted in 2012 by the City Council as a way of increasing openness at City Hall. City leaders said the process has generated much support and input from the community; nine outreach events attracting more than 2,100 participants were held and more than 1,300 comments were recorded.

“I have never seen that type of openness toward the community at any time until now,” said Mayor Pro Tem Sal Tinajero. “Now people have a voice and you have a receptive council.”

In the plan, seven goals are listed, such as: community safety; youth and recreation; economic development; and city financial stability.

And as part of the plan, city staff detailed strategies to implement those goals. Some of those goals include: developing a community survey to measure perceptions of police services, using technology to promote downtown businesses, and conducting an assessment of the city’s debt.

The plan includes 145 strategies, of which 106 could be accomplished with existing budget funding, City Manager David Cavazos said.

The festive disposition Tuesday was a turnaround from the March 4 City Council meeting in which numerous members working with SACReD and Building Healthy Communities told council members during the public comment portion that their ideas were not being presented in the plan.

But, those concerns were addressed late last week when the city released its final plan which contained most of the groups’ initiatives, which were: developing restorative justice programs, internship programs for youth, and adding equity as a goal for economic development and growth.

During public comments, one speaker said it appeared the city granted last-minute concessions to SACReD outside of a public forum because the draft plan, available online, was updated. Cavazos responded, saying the groups’ ideas were proposed at a Feb. 22 community meeting. The final plan, which was posted online last Thursday, reflected those ideas.

One initiative that was not included and that has been a source of contention for immigrant rights groups in the city was language detailing that the city would terminate its contract with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to house immigrant detainees at the city jail.

About a handful of speakers during public comments reiterated their condemnation of the contract.

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