



The Honorable Matt Mahan, Mayor of San José,  
and Members of the San José Council,  
via email, sent 5/8/24

Subject: Park Funding

Dear Mayor Mahan and Councilmembers,

We in the District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG) are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in a sustainable and equitable San José. **Parks are important to us all:** they improve our physical and mental health, engage our youth, and build community and a sense of place – a reason to live, work, and play in San José.

- We **support** the City Manager’s proposal for **no cuts to the Maintenance and Operations of the city’s parks, trails and sports fields.**
  - Well-maintained parks are a sign of a thriving city, which helps attract investment.
  - The Parks maintenance budget suffered major cuts in prior economic downturns, and the standards were lowered. Park maintenance currently is inadequate, and is rationed to only the most needy areas. A well-staffed park maintenance operation would slow the growth of the infrastructure backlog, which now is over \$500 Million.
  - Also, the Parks Dept. works with our diverse young adult populations to provide career pathways to higher paying jobs – keeping our youth out of homelessness.
- We **oppose** the **extension of waivers or cuts** to the Development Park Trust Fund or Construction and Conveyance (C&C) tax: **the Parks’ Capital budget must be stabilized.**
  - The Parks’ capital budget is almost completely dependent on Park Trust Fund fees and C & C taxes, which depend on development. The City sought to spur residential development by granting Park fee waivers, but development is far more impacted by cyclic global matters such as interest rates than by our modest park fees. These waivers to the C&C and Park Trust Fund – basically public subsidies to private development – directly reduce the safety and usability of Parks, but, according to the City’s consultants, have no measurable impact on the feasibility of the projects. Residents expect their city to keep their parks safe and the playground equipment in good condition – without having to wait for 3 or 5 or 7 years for repair.
  - The freezing of Park Trust Fund fees at 2017 land-values has resulted in 30% to 50% less purchasing power.
  - Beginning with the Great Recession, the Park Trust Fund and C & C tax also covers over \$10 M of personnel costs – Parks, Public Works, volunteer management and senior executive management.
- **We urge the City to work towards a solution.**
  - The City has not had a Park Funding measure since 2000, followed by 3 major downturns and a pandemic.
  - We urge you to set aside budget to **create a strategic plan** to stabilize park funding and address the \$500M infrastructure backlog, while considering and evaluating the likelihood of success from multiple pathways.
  - Quantify outcomes of different revenue pathways: is it realistic to expect a conservancy to raise significant money? Would privatizing parks bring in significant revenue, or does it only raise questions of equity of access and limits health benefits to only those with moderate or high income?
  - Communicate clearly to all stakeholders the funding problem and how it’s linked to dependence on the development cycle.
  - Conduct robust polling to explore multiple pathways for revenue.
  - Build support for a park focused ballot measure to maintain safety, integrity and health benefits of parks.

In support of parks,

~Lawrence Ames, Chair, D6NLG.

cc: SJ City Manager Jennifer Maguire; City Clerk; PRNS Director Jon Cicirelli