

The Honorable Matt Mahan, Mayor of San José
and Members of the City Council
via email, June 13, 2024

re: Council 6/18/24, Agenda Item 3.5: "Potential November 2024 Ballot Measure Polling"

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

We, the undersigned, are writing about the potential November 2024 Parks Ballot Measure. While many of us have served or are serving on various city or county commissions, task forces, boards, and associations, we speak as individuals, and we sign our organization names only for the purpose of identification.

Parks are important to us in the community! Parks are the heart of our communities, the places we go to get outdoors for our physical and mental health, to play with our kids, to meet our neighbors: to enjoy life!

In March, Staff proposed conducting a poll regarding park funding, and a number of us wrote to say we agreed with you that our parks need to be maintained, and we suggested asking the public for ideas and support. Fees on new developments help fund new parks for new residents, and also help with some major improvements in existing parks; taxes on the sale or remodeling of existing homes also help some with major repairs – but there is a significant backlog of needed maintenance. We all need to be willing to do our share.

Council commissioned a poll to ask the community for recommendations on how to deal with the backlog. The initial poll results echo our expectations, showing that the public doesn't want to try getting money by giving long-term leases of our parks for commercial purposes, but people do appear to be willing to consider a parcel tax to keep our parks, playgrounds, trails, and other facilities clean and well-maintained, and to provide gang prevention, senior health and nutrition, and children and youth programs.

We urge you to continue ballot language refinement for the measure to combine park maintenance with neighborhood services, and to abandon the investigation of a measure that would dilute core services from Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). We are concerned that combining a park measure with homeless services is likely to attract resistance from strong park supporters. We also think it may be a hard sell to ask residents to pay a tax for parks if the city discounts park fees for high-rise residential developers. We hope that your consultant has some suggestions on how to mediate those oppositional forces.

We thank you for surveying the public! We look forward to seeing how your further community surveys will shape the ballot language. We also look forward to providing our insights at your August Council meeting.

We all want our San José to continue to be a wonderful place to live, work, and play for all of our residents!

Sincerely,

Lawrence Ames, chair, District 6 N'hd Leaders Group; vice chair, SJ Parks & Rec Cmsn.

Jean Dresden, founder, San Jose Park Advocates

Rod Diridon, Sr., former Santa Clara Co. Supervisor; past chair, California High-Speed Rail Authority

Gloria C. Duffy, President and CEO, Commonwealth Club of California

Vicki Alexander, Boardmember, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Kathy Sutherland, Delmas Park

Barbara Marshman, former Opinion Page Editor, San José Mercury News

Bob Levy, Santa Clara Co. Planning Cmsnr; former San José and Santa Clara County Parks Commissioner

Dan Chapman, 40+ year resident of the Shasta Hanchett Neighborhood

Eric Carruthers, retired principal planner, Santa Clara County and resident of San José (Willow Glen)

Virginia Holtz, former SJ Parks & Rec Cmsnr; former Boardmember, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Susan Price, past Chair of RoseGlen NA

David Noel, President, Erikson Neighborhood Association