

San Jose All District Leadership Group
Council Districts
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San Jose, California

The Honorable Matt Mahan
Mayor of the City of San José
200 E. Santa Clara St., San José CA 95113

via email, sent 2/12/2024

re: Suggestions for the Mayor's Budget Message

Dear Mayor Mahan,

San José All District Leadership Group (SJADLG), comprised of the leaders of the Neighborhood Leaders' Groups from San José's ten Council Districts, exists to facilitate communication between San José's many diverse communities and the City. We appreciate that you are now starting to craft your budget proposal for the upcoming year, which is the first step in a months-long process involving your Budget Message, the response from the various City departments and Council offices, then an adjustment and refinement process, and finally the adoption of the final budget.

In past years, the San José Neighborhoods Commission has carefully reviewed the Mayor's annual Budget Message in light of community input, and then formally submitted recommendations on behalf of the city's residents. As the Neighborhoods Commission is presently in a "suspended" state, SJADLG will work to informally fulfill the role. And rather than only critiquing the released Budget Message, we are also offering some suggestions that we have collected from the community as you now begin to craft the Message.

Public Safety and Housing/Homelessness. You have already identified these as your top priorities, and we hear the same from the community: they are among the primary requirements for having a viable city. But we have heard from the community of other issues as well – all of which interact with these top priorities:

Parks and Trails. Parks are an important part of any great city: they add to the vibrancy and cohesiveness of the community; they establish the character of the city; they are the place for the residents to mix and meet one another and to become **a community**. As the city adds housing and becomes denser, more people live in townhomes and apartments, and the parks become their "backyards" – the place for them to go for exercise, fresh air, and sunshine. Trails help tie the city together, and connect residents to their parks. The Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) Department has already severely suffered in past budgets, and it is time to stop cutting there and if possible to try to make up for past budget cuts. Budget is needed for operations – maintenance and repairs: a park is not as enjoyable if the playground equipment has had to be removed due to aged plastic and metal fatigue, or if the soccer field is a minefield of weeds and gopher holes.

Youth Services and after-school programs. It is important to help our youth and their parents. Some programs, part of the "Neighborhood Services" portion of PRNS, provide

opportunities for learning and growth, and an alternative to gang life; others help provide early learning and daycare, so that the parents can work and afford to pay their rent. Programs include OOST (Out of School Time); BEST (Bring Everyone's Strengths Together); and R.O.C.K. (Recreation of City Kids, to "offer a safe and nurturing environment, homework assistance, enrichments, recreation and STEAM activities, and provide homework assistance").

Quality of Life. Funding for PRNS is also needed for their other Neighborhood Services, including Beautify SJ, which deals with illegal dumping, graffiti clean-up, and encampment abatements, and also for violence prevention programs, senior lunches, summer camps for youth, and community building with Viva Calle and Park Activations.

Mobile Crisis Assessment Team (MCAT). Some of our unhoused population suffer from mental health challenges, as are some fraction of those causing public safety issues. The City's MCAT Unit complements the County's mental health services and is trained to de-escalate encounters and to help people without involving police action or prison records. Expanding the MCAT unit, perhaps with funding from the County, would enable it to better serve the public, and also enable it to help PRNS maintenance personnel to better handle the impacts of encampments in city parks and along the creeks and trails.

San Jose Animal Care Center (SJACC). The animal shelter used to provide free or low-cost spaying and neutering, which helped volunteers control feral cat populations that were impacting native wildlife. Also, a number of the homeless have been unwilling to move into shelters because they were unwilling to part with their pets, and the shelters would not house folks with unspayed/neutered pets.

Fire Safety / Fireworks. Fireworks are fun and beautiful, but can also be dangerous unless properly handled: they are a fire hazard in our dry summers, and their noise is a stress to a number of our residents. The City sponsoring professional shows in controlled environments helps reduce the incentive for illegal private displays, enhanced enforcement in hotspots can reduce their illegal use, and a modest increase in the Fire Department (SJFD) budget would enable them to better promote firework safety and prevention.

All of these items impact Public Safety and the Housing/Homelessness issues. We hope that you can find places in the budget to help support them.

We look forward to reading your Mayor's Budget Message – and the opportunity to offer you additional comments!

Thank you,
Greg Peck
Chair, San Jose All District Leadership Group

District 1 – Gary Cunningham
District 2 – Steven Spivak
District 3 – Joan Rivas-Cosby
District 4 – Linda Locke
District 5 – Juan Estrada

District 6 – Larry Ames
District 7 – Alie Victorine
District 8 – Pat Waite
District 9 – Bobbi Pena-Atak
District 10 – David Heindel

Cc: Councilmembers, City Clerk, City Manager