



September 30, 2022

Transportation and Environment Committee
San José City Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

Dear Chair Davis and Committee Members,

Climate change is drastically impacting the health, safety, and quality of life of San José residents. Heat, frequent wildfires, and compromised air quality are the new norm, with flooding from extreme storms, such as the 2017 Coyote Creek flood, an ever-present threat. As such, we are pleased to see the City of San José initiate the Resilient and Sustainable City Infrastructure and Emergency Preparedness Enterprise Priority planning effort and urge you to ensure that this process prioritizes integrated planning for nature-based solutions that prioritize San José's most vulnerable communities.

As you develop this Enterprise Priority, we recommend:

1. Developing a centralized infrastructure planning initiative that ensures departments are working together to address multiple hazards and provide multiple benefits through a single project,
2. Integrating multi-benefit nature-based solutions such as green stormwater infrastructure into all infrastructure planning efforts, and
3. Prioritizing frontline communities for resilience investments.

Every infrastructure upgrade is an opportunity to ensure that climate and environmental hazards are addressed with nature-based solutions, and that under-invested communities most at risk from the impacts of climate change are prioritized and centered in decision-making and planning. The development of the Enterprise Priority is an ideal time to create new systems for centralized cross-departmental infrastructure planning that ensures equity and resilience are incorporated into project design and execution from the earliest stages of project planning.

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is a nature-based solution that uses ecological processes to manage flood water and remove pollution from runoff into the Bay. When considered holistically as part of an integrated climate resilience strategy, GSI can be incorporated into street design to shade bus stops and bike paths, reducing temperatures to ensure this infrastructure is usable on hot days¹. A utility project that requires digging up a street is an opportunity to incorporate rain gardens² and bioswales that green neighborhoods, manage flooding and pollution, and serve as traffic calming infrastructure to make streets safer for all users. A complete streets project could improve bike and pedestrian access and safety, as well as include reflective, permeable pavement and GSI planter boxes to reduce temperatures and minimize flooding risks to homes. New projects could integrate all these benefits, as well as provide the mental health and biodiversity improvements of green space—if they are planned

¹ Using Trees and Vegetation to Reduce Heat Islands, *US EPA*. Accessed Sept 30, 2022. <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands>

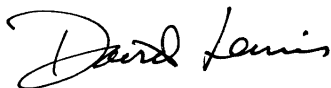
² Green Infrastructure: Rain Gardens, *The Watershed Institute*. Accessed Sept 30, 2022. <https://thewatershed.org/green-infrastructure-rain-gardens/>

appropriately. The state recently allocated over \$1 billion in new funding for climate resilience projects, including urban greening³. An integrated infrastructure planning initiative that ensures all environmental and climate hazards are accounted for would position San José to be competitive for this and other new funding.

Aligned with the Equity Pledge⁴ that the City Council approved in June 2020, city investments should consistently prioritize low-income neighborhoods and communities of color for planning and funding projects, ensuring that projects respond to community-identified needs and priorities, and are planned and executed in close partnership with community members. We know these communities currently – and will continue to – face the heaviest burden from the impacts of climate change and are the least financially resourced to respond to these impacts. Prioritizing addressing hazards based both on data and communities’ own assessment of needs and risks is essential to begin to address historical disinvestment and harm. We recommend including clear objectives and measures of progress toward improving resilience for low-income communities and communities of color and developing a robust public engagement strategy for project development that incorporates community voices from the beginning. For more recommendations on equitable resilience planning, see the Greenlining Institute’s guidebook *Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs*⁵.

A systems-thinking and regenerative approach to the unique and complex challenges posed by climate change is exactly what we need to ensure our communities are protected into the future. The focus on resilience and adaptation to climate change is an essential companion to the Climate Smart San José greenhouse gas reduction plan. We look forward to working with you as this process develops.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Lewis, Executive Director
Save The Bay

³ Nature-Based Solutions, Extreme Heat, Coastal Resilience, and Community Resilience. *Governor’s Budget Summary—2022-23*, Pg. 95-99. Approved June 2022. <https://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2022-23/pdf/BudgetSummary/ClimateChange.pdf>

⁴ Equity Pledge, City of San Jose. Approved June 17, 2022.

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4567825&GUID=99BD61C7-BC27-4E73-B6E0-E63589D72CC1>

⁵ Greenlining Institute, August 2019. <https://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Making-Equity-Real-in-Climate-Adaption-and-Community-Resilience-Policies-and-Programs-A-Guidebook-1.pdf>