



# Memorandum

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES  
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Angel Rios, Jr.

**SUBJECT:** PLACEMAKING UPDATE

**DATE:** May 29, 2018

Approved

Date

6/6/18

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (the Department) report on Placemaking achievements and opportunities in San José.

## OUTCOME

This report will provide the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee with an overview and understanding of the Department's 2017 Placemaking programs, partnerships, funding, and performance metrics. Additionally, this report will inform the Committee on upcoming Placemaking and Public Life programs, and activities planned for 2018.

## BACKGROUND

The mission of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services is to build healthy communities through people, parks, and programs. In pursuit of this mission, the Department has focused efforts on Placemaking and Public Life as a strategy to increasing access to and activation of public spaces. The goal is to better support the long-term maintenance of spaces that facilitate community building and to engage residents to come out and play by encouraging civic ownership of public spaces.

The concept of a community-based, people-focused approach to urban design began in the 1960's when influential urbanists like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte advocated for a city design that catered to a built environment that is people oriented. The term Placemaking was introduced by urban planners and architects in the 1970's to describe the process of working collaboratively with all stakeholders to create public spaces like plazas and parks that are pleasurable or interesting, and reflective of the communities that use them. Placemaking is

commonly described as the process of intentionally “creating quality places, wherein people want to live, work, play, and learn.”

The Department has historically utilized a Placemaking approach to the way it does business, which can be seen in many of its efforts. Our vision is to be a national leader in parks and recreation through the cultivation of healthy communities, quality programs, and dynamic public spaces, which are fundamental concepts in Placemaking. Public Life spaces help define the character of the city, build civic pride, and encourage social connection. By creating mutual stewardship of place within the community, Placemaking and Public Life strengthens local leadership and engages communities in the creation of public spaces that people value and want to use.

## **ANALYSIS**

The mission of the Department drives staff to enhance service delivery through Placemaking in public spaces. Key to this approach is engaging residents as stakeholders, and instilling a sense of pride and ownership in public places. PRNS is dedicated to facilitating social interaction, developing valued public spaces, and improving the quality of life for residents, which is an integral part of PRNS core service efforts to be Placemakers and curators of the city’s Public Life.

### **2017 Placemaking and Public Life Highlights**

2017 was a busy year for Placemaking and Public Life programs. The Department successfully delivered a significant number of Placemaking and Public Life program events that continue to create interest and momentum for neighborhood residents in reclaiming their parks as vibrant and dynamic community gathering spaces. Below are some of the 2017 Placemaking and Public Life program highlights:

- *Viva CalleSJ* – This year, PRNS led the third successful implementation of the *Viva CalleSJ* open-streets event. This event attracted 130,000 neighbors to come walk, bike, and enjoy each other’s company, and help bridge socio-economic and geographic divides. The 2017 *Viva CalleSJ* open-streets event temporarily transformed 7.2 miles of city streets into one of the largest urban parks for families to enjoy – car free. The event has continued to connect neighbors, highlighting their identities and building community through fun.

Published in April of 2018, a research study of *Viva CalleSJ* participants, conducted in partnership with the Mineta Transportation Institute and San José State University, yielded impactful results in the fields of socio-economic, health and recreation, and quality of life. With 860 surveys collected from the estimated 130,000 attendees at the 2017 *Viva CalleSJ*, the study found: 77% of attendees participated in 60 minutes or more of physical activity; 36% of attendees used a bike get to the event; 59% came because it

sounded like fun; 37% of attendees estimated they would spend over \$21; and 27% came from outside of San José.<sup>1</sup>

Strategic partnerships and grant funding were key to the Department's implementation of high-quality programs that are reflective of communities in San José. With *Viva CalleSJ*, the Department continued its efforts to be innovative in engaging the community, relying on the strength of community partners and stakeholders to highlight resources available along the seven-mile route. Over 60 organizations from all sectors were engaged in the one-day community-building effort, including: the Knight Foundation, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Exhibition District; neighborhood groups such as the Alum Rock Village Action Committee, local businesses, district associations, and multiple City and County partners. In the last year alone, contributions from the Health Trust, AARP, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, and Santa Clara County equaled approximately \$365,000 in direct cash and in-kind marketing support (multi-lingual support through billboards, buses, bus stops, light rail, etc.). Furthermore, the Department was successful in securing a \$441,000 State Cap and Trade grant that funded the event in 2017 and will fund the event implementation in 2018.

The highlight of 2017 *Viva CalleSJ* was the innovative partnership launched with Niantic, Inc. and its Pokémon GO augmented reality gaming application. This partnership created a new approach to recreational programming by utilizing Pokémon GO as a digital carrot to increase participation at Viva CalleSJ, resulting in increased social integration and exercise at the event. This free partnership resulted in over 35,000 unique application logins with people coming from as far as Canada to attend *Viva CalleSJ*.

- *Viva Parks: Neighborhoods* – This program provides ongoing community-building efforts through positive programming, physical wellness, and civic-engagement opportunities for families in high-need areas across San José. In the 2017 summer season, PRNS continued to activate underutilized parks identified in Council Districts 3, 5, and 8, with 23 program events implemented over the summer. The *Viva Parks* program also increased its operations, adding 10 additional program events, and expanded its reach into Council Districts 2, 8, and 10. Services were provided to over 10,000 community members, increasing access to recreational activities and resources to families in need. The Mayor and City Council recognized and commended the hard work and dedication of the *Viva Parks* staff and the impact of the program providing the outstanding support of youth, families, and underutilized public spaces throughout San José.

*It's Happening! (Viva Parks: Downtown)* – This program continued the activation of downtown parks, Plaza de Cesar Chavez and St. James Park, with a total of 25,600 participants enjoying over 300 downtown activations in 2017. Activation programming

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<sup>1</sup> Nixon, Hilary and Asha Weinstein Agrawal. *A Survey of Viva CalleSJ Participants: San Jose, California, 2017*. (Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose, April 2018.)

components designed around food allowed residents to grab a bite to eat in the park, participate in free programs, or step out of the office and hold a meeting in the shade on movable furniture. The atmosphere created in the parks provided a perfect location for residents to engage with the community or unplug and enjoy public life in downtown. Residents continued to eat, relax, sit, and play in the park, experiencing some of the ongoing programs established in 2014, including the Summer Concert Series and Doga (Dog Yoga). Additionally, for the 2017 season, staff expanded the recreational opportunities to include Sunset Yoga, Wine and Painting in the Park, Open Mic Nights, and E.A.T. (Everyone At the Table) dinner event.

- *St. James Park and Urban Activation Grant Program* – Continuing the effort to fully integrate community stakeholders and local public-space activation experts, the Department administered over \$90,000 in grants awarded to approximately 25 vendors that provided park activations such as movie nights, theatrical performances, and music. These grantees supplemented staff-led activations using St. James Park Management District Fund resources.

### *2018 Placemaking and Public Life Program Updates*

In preparation for the upcoming Placemaking and Public Life activation season, PRNS has been working in collaboration with stakeholders from private and public sectors. Placemaking and Public Life events are being refined and expanded, becoming more representative of the communities around the spaces being activated. Fully embracing the practice of creative Placemaking, PRNS is excited about the potential to enhance park programming through innovative private-public partnerships.

As the Department looks to build forward, staff is excited for the return of the *Viva CalleSJ* open-streets event scheduled for September 23, 2018. This year's event promises to bring the far-reaching benefits to new communities, neighborhoods, and business districts along a new route. San José's iconic and historic thoroughfare, Monterey Road, is the centerpiece of this year's event and will be transformed into a temporary one-day park filled with life and opportunities for physical activity. Working directly with community stakeholders, the *Viva CalleSJ* route will feature programming and activity hubs in the South of First Arts District (SoFA), the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, and Martial Cottle Park, where local experts are presently engaged in ensuring event experiences are reflective of those communities. The 2018 event will continue to integrate Pokémon GO into the experience, with a more intentional giving campaign that seeks to help some of San José's most vulnerable residents. In an effort to streamline programming efforts and align marketing and branding with the Department's overall branding direction, *Viva CalleSJ* has undergone a brand-refresh exercise, resulting in an easily replicable look, consistent with the Department vision. The new *Viva CalleSJ* brand identity will be rolled out during the lead up to the 2018 event.

In preparation for the 2018 *Viva Park's* summer activation season, staff is pleased to announce an increase to the total number of program events from 23 to 51, with expanded programs in Council Districts 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8. Staff has leveraged the City's partnership with the Santa Clara County Public Health Department to identify funding for the activation of two new parks – Children of the Rainbow and McLaughlin. In doing so, the City was also able to secure healthy food cooking demonstrations and healthy eating education activities that will be featured at all locations where *Viva Parks* operates.

*It's Happening* events are being rebranded and consolidated into *Viva Parks: Downtown* to reduce public confusion regarding park-focused Placemaking and Public Life programming efforts in San José. The look and feel of the downtown park activations will see minor changes for 2018, but residents can still expect favorite activities such as Starlight Cinema, Saturday Night Concert Series, Sunset Yoga, and Wine & Painting to return. In addition, a new partnership with the Public Space Authority will result in new programming specifically for Plaza de César Chávez, including ongoing arts and culture shows, a night market, and an all-city brunch. At St. James Park residents can expect new programming comparable to neighborhood *Viva Parks* activations, including more family-oriented programs and enhanced opportunities for physical and mental health activities.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

PRNS will continue to collaborate with other City departments, partners, and stakeholders to develop Placemaking and Public Life strategies for community, economic, and infrastructure development. Staff will also continue the partnership with the Mineta Transportation Institute, which is evaluating *Viva CalleSJ* outcomes funded by a generous contribution of \$25,000 from the Knight Foundation. This funding will continue participant surveys to measure the socio-economic impact of open-streets activations in San José.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting on June 14, 2018.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

Neighborhood Services and Education Committee

May 29, 2018

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### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT**

The Parks and Recreation Commission approved a Placemaking Update at their meeting on March 7, 2018.

### **CEQA**

Not a Project, Public Project Number PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Information Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/

ANGEL RIOS, JR.  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Neil Rufino, Deputy Director, at (408) 535-3576.