

SAN JOSE
PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES



Building Community Through Fun

WHERE YOU BELONG

ANNUAL COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

2024



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

We are proud to continue our mission of connecting people through parks, recreation, and neighborhood services to build a healthier, more vibrant San José. As we reflect on our work this past year, we are energized by the 2024 National Recreation and Park Association theme, "Where You Belong." This theme perfectly captures our vision for the future—one where our parks, community centers, and other public spaces are places that foster connection, belonging, and fun for all.

Our history, rooted in community-driven planning and service, has led us to the ambitious goals set forth in our ActivateSJ Plan. Through this strategic plan, we are working to create a parks, recreation, and neighborhood services system that ensures all San José residents have access to safe, welcoming spaces close to home. The guiding principles of ActivateSJ—**stewardship, nature, equity and access, identity, and public life**—are not just words; they are our daily commitment.

Over the past year, we've accomplished so much through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and community partners. From building seven new parks to expanding inclusive programming, we've seen how our efforts directly contribute to healthier and more connected communities.

We are excited about the future as we look toward critical funding and planning initiatives to create a more equitable parks system, cleaner neighborhoods, and inclusive programs. We are committed to building a system that not only serves today's needs but continues to make San José a place where everyone belongs.

THANK YOU,

Jon Cicirelli



JON CICIRELLI

DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES (PRNS)

OUR MISSION - CONNECTING PEOPLE THROUGH PARKS, RECREATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES FOR AN ACTIVE SAN JOSÉ

OUR VISION - HEALTHY COMMUNITIES THAT INSPIRE BELONGING

STEWARDSHIP EQUITY & ACCESS STEWARDSHIP EQUITY & ACCESS
NATURE PUBLIC LIFE IDENTITY NATURE PUBLIC LIFE IDENTITY



STEWARDSHIP

NATURE

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers help us in our commitment to stewardship—taking care of the resources we have and investing in them for the future.

BeautifulSJ is creating safe, clean, and vibrant neighborhoods. The community shows their pride by reporting illegal dumping and graffiti through 311 or rolling up their sleeves to help with cleanups. Last year, volunteers removed 862,000 pounds of litter and their dedication amplifies the work of our staff, who cleared 9.5 million pounds of illegally dumped debris and erased over 2.8 million ft² of graffiti.

Our Parks Volunteer Management Unit also connects residents and local businesses with opportunities to keep their neighborhood parks and trails beautiful. Last year, volunteers contributed almost 29,000 hours to remove invasive species and clean up litter in our parks and trails.

INVESTING IN OUR PARKS

Maintaining parks is no small feat, as many features like irrigation, restrooms, fields, and playgrounds are getting older. Beyond maintaining amenities, our crews also protect us from disasters like wildfire. Last year, they cleared 36 million ft² of dry grass—the same size as 626 football fields—to reduce fire risks across our city.

We prioritize our limited resources to support parks that need it most and are exploring ways to close our maintenance funding gap—including a potential ballot measure.

Our Resilience Corps also invests in future park maintenance by connecting young adults to careers that support the long-term care of parks. Since its launch in 2021, the program has hired 52 young people, including 17 into full-time roles. For many, they are the first in their family to secure a job with benefits and retirement.



Parks are more than just outdoor spaces. By investing in their care today and planning for their future, we'll keep outdoor spaces vibrant for San José's communities to connect and stay active.

REIMAGINING RANGER-GUIDED HIKES

Everyone deserves to enjoy nature, especially in an urban environment, which is why we're focused on making this a reality for all residents.

“Getting people of all abilities outside and in our parks is the number one goal for us.”

NIKA NOORISHAD, THERAPEUTIC SPECIALIST

PRNS has reimagined our ranger-guided hikes to be more inclusive, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully experience the outdoors. By collaborating with therapeutic staff, our park rangers designed routes featuring flat, paved paths that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers.

IMPROVING OUR NATURAL SPACES

Our commitment to improving natural spaces for community enjoyment and climate resiliency is highlighted by the addition of a dedicated arborist to our team, planting 1,053 new trees in parks, and installing five new pollinator gardens last year.

In addition, our Volunteer Management Unit empowers volunteers as they revitalize natural spaces in their neighborhoods. Together, we're finding ways to incorporate drought-tolerant, native California plants that attract pollinators and enhance biodiversity to protect our health and the planet's.

“I appreciate that PRNS supports the goals of a growing number of residents to create more native gardens and native habitats in San José—they bring people together and create beautiful spaces that support biodiversity and the environment.”

LINDEN SKJEIE, PRNS VOLUNTEER



EQUITY & ACCESS

IDENTITY

SAN JOSÉ FAMILIES EXPERIENCE THE SIERRAS

With a \$1 million grant from California's Outdoor Equity Program, 52 families from the Poco Way and Washington neighborhoods visited our Family Camp at Yosemite for an unforgettable two-night experience that included transportation, food, lodging, and the equipment needed to enjoy the outdoors. For many, this was their first time camping.

“Fue algo hermoso pasar tiempo en familia, gracias a las personas que colaboraron para que nosotros nos sintiéramos como en casa, a las personas que se encargaron del desayuno, el almuerzo y la cena, cada detalle que hicieron para que nos sintiéramos cómodos.”

MARCELA CORTES, CAMPER

It was a beautiful thing to spend time with the family, thanks to the people who helped us feel at home, to the people who took care of breakfast, lunch and dinner, every detail they did to make us feel comfortable.

CREATING SPACES FOR EVERYONE

Our all-inclusive playgrounds foster a sense of community and belonging for all. The Rotary Play Garden, Lincoln Glen Park, Almaden Lake Park, and Emma Prusch Farm Park playgrounds were designed to provide safe and accessible spaces, regardless of age, ability, or background because all residents should be able to enjoy outdoor recreation and social activities.

These new all-inclusive playgrounds promote physical and mental well-being and foster a more inclusive and accessible community. These projects were made possible thanks to community members, donations, and the County of Santa Clara's All-Inclusive Playground Grant Program.

SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS

Our afterschool programs provide a safe, enriching space for over 2,000 youth annually to thrive through arts, sports, and STEM activities. We hired a full-time Inclusion Specialist to ensure programs are accessible to all learners. She works with families and staff to make accommodations and create inclusive environments that support every student's success.

CREATING MEMORIES AT HAPPY HOLLOW

At San José's iconic Happy Hollow Park & Zoo, we celebrate the breadth of our parks, recreation, and neighborhood services system. An accredited zoo home to over 110 animals, Happy Hollow brings the community together through unique events like



Danny the Dragon's birthday in March, Senior Safaris for thousands of older adults, and a lively Noon Year's Eve countdown for nearly 4,000 kids and their families.

Beloved by residents and visitors alike, Happy Hollow is where lasting memories are made.

BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

The Annual Neighborhoods Conference serves as a key platform for connecting San José residents with City services, offering an opportunity to share ideas and discuss needs. So far, we've hosted two conferences and two quarterly neighborhood forums, with more events on the way.

Last year, we rolled out a new Neighborhood Engagement Model designed to foster more direct and meaningful connections with approximately 190 neighborhood associations.

WIPING THE SLATE CLEAN

For 30 years, our Clean Slate Tattoo Removal Program has been a resource dedicated to opening opportunities for young people through professional and educational development as well as tattoo removals.

Our nationally recognized gang intervention programs have become a model for cities nationwide—a success we're proud of because not only are we transforming lives in San José but also inspiring change for youth across the country.

“I was motivated to get my tattoos removed because I wanted to be an example for the youth who don't see a life past gang activity.”

PETER ORTIZ, COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 5



PUBLIC LIFE

HELPING OLDER ADULTS THRIVE

We are strengthening a sense of belonging and community for all residents and recognize the importance of creating premier places for older adults to socialize and enjoy life.

Our Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) and recreation classes offer a welcoming environment for older adults to build community and create lasting memories. Serving over 4,500 seniors annually with healthy meals at little-to-no cost, our community centers also host activities like yoga, ballroom dance, watercolor painting, and lotería.



A recent County of Santa Clara survey showed that 85% of SNP participants experienced improved health, social connections, and mental well-being, empowering them to live more independently.

SUPPORTING WORKING PARENTS

We're proud to support working families through affordable afterschool programs at 32 schools in San José.

Anna Hereida is a wife, a teacher, and a mother of three that was able to achieve her goals of obtaining a higher education with the help of our R.O.C.K. Afterschool Program. Her three children attended the program at various sites for over seven years, learning new skills, finding new hobbies, and making lifelong connections. Knowing her kids were safe, she was able to complete her master's and doctorate degrees while balancing her work and family life.

“I'm very thankful for the program. It takes a village to raise our kids, and the R.O.C.K. Afterschool Program was there when we really needed it.”

ANNA HEREDIA, PARENT

CONNECTING SAN JOSÉ RESIDENTS

Our Placemaking Team loves transforming public spaces into fun places to hang out and connect.

Last year, we hosted over 15,000 neighbors at over 100 Viva Parks events, including one series called Paint the CitySJ, which offered free painting classes in local parks. These classes help residents of all ages and abilities express their creativity while strengthening bonds with neighbors.

Additionally, our three signature Viva CalleSJ events attracted over 400,000 participants, bringing the community together to enjoy open streets for walking, biking, skating, and other activities. As a cornerstone of San José's community events, Viva CalleSJ is gearing up to celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2025.



2023-2024 FISCAL PERFORMANCE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

OPERATIONAL BUDGET

Strategic Support	\$27,427,274
Recreation	\$35,942,506
Community Services	\$54,234,411
Park Operations & Maintenance	\$65,397,899

OPERATIONAL & CAPITAL BUDGET

Operations	\$183,002,090
Capital	\$207,558,607

TOTAL AUTHORIZED POSITIONS

Full-time Employees	611.84
Part-time Employees - Benefited	19.26
Part-time Employees - Unbenefited	231.78
Total Budget FTE 862.88	

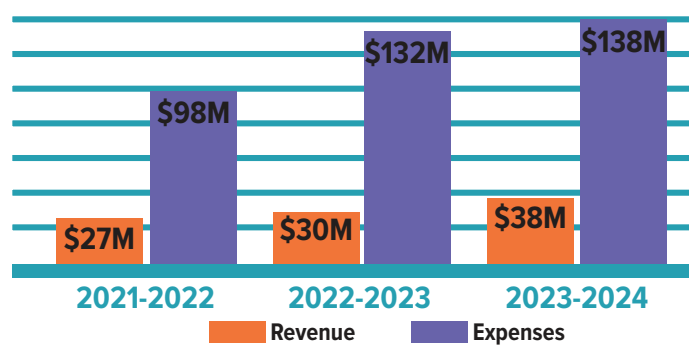
GRANT REVENUE

Recreation	\$47,488
Community Services	\$609,701
Parks	\$4,357,247
Capital	\$11,606,254

EXTREME WEATHER SHELTERS

Three Cooling Centers	27 openings
Inclement Weather Shelter	7 days

FISCAL PERFORMANCE



OUR IMPACT

Dumpster Days	152
Happy Hollow Park & Zoo Visitors	421,886
New Park Openings & Renovations	35
Older Adults and Youth Meals	235,858
Park Concerns Resolved	1,794
Park Permits	447
Picnic Reservations	2,076
Scholarship Amount	\$2.8M
Scholarships Granted	13,244
Trash Collected in Pounds	12.6M
Trees Planted	1,043
Volunteer Hours	69,753
Youth Enrolled in Out-of-School Programs	2,100



MOVING FORWARD

As we look ahead, the focus remains on moving our ActivateSJ Strategic Plan forward and ensuring our parks, community centers, and public spaces continue to meet the needs of our diverse community. A major step in this process will be securing sustainable funding that supports the long-term health of our parks system and cleaner neighborhoods. We recognize that we face a difficult budget year ahead, but our commitment to delivering essential services remains unwavering. We are actively exploring new funding options, including a potential ballot measure in 2026, and will continue to advocate for the resources we need to keep our parks and facilities in good condition.

We're also exploring ways to update our policies to better align with the needs of our residents, ensuring greater equity in the distribution of resources and access to services. This next year we'll focus on strengthening community partnerships, deepening engagement with residents, and addressing the evolving needs of our system through careful planning and thoughtful practices.

PRNS EXECUTIVE STAFF

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CITY COUNCIL

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District 1 Rosemary Kamei

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District 3 Pending

District 4 David Cohen

District 5 Peter Ortiz

District 6 Michael Mulcahy

District 7 Bien Doan

District 8 Domingo Candelas

District 9 Pam Foley

District 10 George Casey

COMMISSIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS COMMISSION

District 1 Vacant

District 2 Kohli Singh

District 3 Gina Gates-Lopez

District 4 Lilia Hancock

District 5 Obdulia Corona

Citywide Vacant

District 6 Vacant

District 7 Fane Williams

District 8 Ruthie Medina

District 9 Lori Rodrigues

District 10 Vacant

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WHERE YOU BELONG

SUPPORT YOUR PARKS, TRAILS & CENTERS

PRNS provides our residents with the opportunities to maintain healthy, active, and social lifestyles. We maintain 215 parks, over 3,600 acres of parkland, Happy Hollow Park & Zoo, and 42 community centers. You can help support and improve the quality of life for your neighbors. Consider a time or financial contribution, email supportparks@sanjoseca.gov.



OUR PARTNERS

PRNS partners provide time and resources to keep our programs invigorated. Their tireless commitment benefits all San José residents.

