



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: May 27, 2025

Approved

Date:

6/6/25

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 5

SUBJECT: Agreement with San José State University for Track and Field Improvements at the Police Activities League Stadium Complex

RECOMMENDATION

Approve guiding principles for an agreement between the City of San José and San José State University for the funding, design, construction, and joint use of track and field improvements at the J.R. Blackmore Police Activities League Stadium Complex.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

A successful agreement with San José State University (SJSU) will result in significant improvements to the San José Police Activities League (PAL) Stadium Complex, including a renovated football and soccer field with new track and field sport facilities, seating, lighting, press box, and Americans with Disabilities Act upgrades. It will also establish a partnership with SJSU for shared track and field use and community programming that benefits the local youth and complements activities offered by the PAL nonprofit.

BACKGROUND

The J.R. Blackmore PAL Stadium Complex is a 14-acre sport facility located in Council District 5 in San José. The facility was constructed in the early 1970s and includes two baseball fields, a football field, running track, parking lots, and supporting structures. The facility has been the site for high school football competitions and has a long history of being the premier sports facility for east San José residents. Since opening, programs at the PAL Stadium Complex have been operated by PAL, a California nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1968 whose mission is to forge an

everlasting bond between police, youth, and community through athletics, academics, and acts of goodwill. PAL offers an assortment of programs, including Taekwondo, boxing, soccer, football, cheerleading, and baseball, as well as after-school life-skill classes for youth and adults. Voters approved Measure M in November 1990, allowing long-term agreements at PAL of up to 55 years and restricting the revenues from such leases, licenses, or permits to public park and recreation purposes.

The PAL Stadium Complex has over 50 years of use and needs substantial reinvestment to be restored to a premier destination sports facility. Since 2019, the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (Department) appropriated a total amount of \$7.2 million for various improvements at PAL Stadium Complex funded from the Council District 5 Construction and Conveyance Tax Fund, City-Wide Construction and Conveyance Tax Fund and the General Fund. Of the total amount, \$4.4 million is to renovate the deteriorated field and associated infrastructure, and \$2.8 million is for electrical improvements, such as the replacement of the existing switch gear. A reserve of \$200,000 for future improvements has been allocated in the Council District 5 Construction and Conveyance Tax Fund. The turf replacement and electrical projects are currently in the design phase.

San José State University Track and Field

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, SJSU's track team was known as "Speed City," producing many outstanding athletes, including 102 All-American award winners. Several of these athletes competed in the 1968 Olympics during which Tommie Smith and John Carlos famously raised their fists on the medal platform - an iconic and historic moment protesting racism now immortalized in a statue on SJSU's campus. That moment resulted from the organization and work of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, a larger movement to resist racism that has become a global symbol of resistance to racism.

Over the past four years, under the leadership and vision of Athletics Director Jeff Konya and Head Coach Charles Ryan, SJSU Track and Field has ignited a resurgence of elite talent development, building a program once again worthy of the moniker "Speed City." The men's program has produced seven National College Athletic Association All-Americans and 12 Mountain West Champions and surpassed much of the Speed City era records. In that same time frame, the women's program has set the bar for SJSU Athletics, producing multiple All-Americans and National College Athletic Association team rankings as high as the top 20 in the nation.

In 2022, Assemblymember Ash Kalra submitted a district budget request for a Speed City Legacy Project and successfully secured \$9 million for the project. The Speed City Legacy Project will create a space and destination to honor the work of the Olympic Project for Human Rights. The project would continue SJSU's social justice work and create a suitable home for the SJSU track and field teams. The project was originally

envisioned for the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, but the increasing cost of construction made that site no longer viable for SJSU.

Because of strong existing relationships between the City and SJSU, shared interest in honoring these Olympic heroes, and PAL's important role in the community, in early 2025, SJSU approached the City to explore a partnership at PAL Stadium Complex for joint use of a track and field facility that would become the home for the SJSU track and field team, hosting practices, competitive events, and community track and field programming for youth in partnership with the City and PAL nonprofit. SJSU proposed working together to improve the site for future generations and saw it as a great location to honor Tommie Smith, John Carlos, Dr. Harry Edwards, Coach Bud Winter, and many others.

Staff has held preliminary discussions with SJSU to define the opportunity for a partnership.

ANALYSIS

A partnership with SJSU at PAL Stadium Complex has the potential to bring many benefits to the facility, its users, the neighboring community, and SJSU. If located at the PAL Stadium Complex, the Speed City Legacy Project would revitalize a public space in which the surrounding community can take pride, create a home track facility for the SJSU track and field team, and keep alive the legacy and values of Speed City. With PAL as the official home of the San José State Division I Track and Field Team, SJSU will be able to host meets and create opportunities for the current staff and student-athletes to forge relationships with the community, offering engagement and educational programs to youth.

A partnership will provide funding for design, construction, and maintenance of track and field sports facilities. Combined funding and potentially shared project delivery between the City and SJSU would achieve economies of scale and allow for extensive renovations and improvements at PAL Stadium Complex with a much larger scope of work than the City could achieve on its own. The larger budget accommodates an improved track and field, bleacher replacement, lighting upgrades, code updates, restroom repairs, beautification treatments, and facility enhancements.

A partnership will also include shared use for track and field training and competitions, while providing athletic programs for the community, contributing toward facility maintenance, and spurring further fundraising opportunities. With SJSU locating its track and field program at PAL Stadium Complex, it would expand track and field opportunities for San José residents particularly in the historically underserved neighborhood around PAL, increase opportunities for collegiate events, and positively activate the public space. The improved facility would have the potential to provide new channels for youth in the area to foster healthy relationships, participate in local sports,

and engage with collegiate activities. The City recognizes the benefits of the partnership would extend beyond athletics, as SJSU would bring not only its student-athletes and coaches but also academic programs and admissions staff into the neighborhood, helping strengthen the cradle to college pipeline.

Guiding Principles

Based on preliminary discussions with SJSU, staff has prepared the guiding principles in Table 1 as the foundation for the planning, renovation, and ongoing management of the PAL Stadium Complex. Rooted in the values and priorities of the Department's Strategic Plan, ActivateSJ, aims to ensure the facility meets current needs while remaining sustainable, inclusive, and culturally meaningful. With City Council approval of these guiding principles, staff will continue to collaborate with SJSU to define roles and responsibilities based on these principles, which will guide the terms of a partnership agreement. Centered on ActivateSJ's core values—stewardship, nature, equity and access, identity, and public life—these principles support a long-term vision for a vibrant community asset that serves diverse users and honors its historic legacy.

Table 1 – Guiding Principles for an Agreement with SJSU

	Guiding Principles
Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue capital investment and efficient project delivery to renovate PAL Stadium Complex, including the track and field, bleachers, electrical systems, and lighting. • Seek long-term maintenance commitments and shared financial responsibility from joint-use partners to ensure the facility can be enjoyed by future generations. • Create opportunities for more sponsorship and giving to further improve PAL facilities and programs.
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community wellness through enhanced outdoor spaces that support recreation, social connection, and responsible environmental design. • Seek long-term maintenance commitments and shared financial responsibility to ensure these facilities remain safe, functional, and sustainably managed over time.
Equity and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance public spaces that foster inclusion, social connection, and long-term community engagement. • Establish a collaborative operational model, led by a steering committee, to coordinate scheduling, programming and maintenance that ensures equitable access.

	Guiding Principles
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve open community use through PAL nonprofit operations and broaden participation by incorporating SJSU athletic and academic programs.
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalize a landmark facility that embodies the community's identity and honors its history, creating a strong sense of place. • Strengthen the presence of community institutions like SJSU and PAL through regular engagement and visible integration. • Reinforce PAL's legacy by incorporating Speed City elements and enhancing wayfinding to celebrate its cultural significance and improve the visitor experience.
Public Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vibrant hub for training, collegiate-level competition, and everyday community use, promoting health, connection, and engagement. • Enhance PAL's draw as a local and regional destination by incorporating collegiate athletics, SJSU's Speed City Legacy, and public art, including beautification along South King Road to be more inviting and improving signage and wayfinding throughout the facility.

Potential Partnership Roles and Responsibilities

Table 2 below outlines the potential roles and responsibilities of SJSU, the City, and the PAL nonprofit in support of a shared vision for the renovation and long-term use of the PAL Stadium Complex. These responsibilities are organized around the guiding principles and reflect a collaborative approach to the joint use of the PAL Stadium Complex. Staff will discuss and negotiate detailed expectations for each party and include them in future terms that are brought back to the City Council for approval.

Table 2 – Potential Roles and Responsibilities of SJSU, City and PAL Nonprofit

Responsibility	SJSU	City of San José	PAL Nonprofit
Stadium Renovation	Contribute to the design and construction of the track and field facility honoring the Speed City Legacy using a state grant and additional fundraising.	Use existing appropriations and SJSU's grant to design, construct, and maintain a renovated PAL Stadium Complex.	As PAL nonprofit develops in the future, expand programmatic fundraising to incorporate capital campaigns.

Responsibility	SJSU	City of San José	PAL Nonprofit
Maintenance	Provide maintenance support based on use levels and inspections. After initial term, share in costs for replacement and renovations via the steering committee.	Continue ongoing maintenance and capital investment, subject to appropriation of funds by the City Council. Ensure all parties meet their responsibilities.	Continue daily maintenance and coordinate ongoing needs via the steering committee.
Track and Field Use	Use PAL Stadium Complex as the home track for training and competition. Join the steering committee to coordinate scheduling.	Facilitate a steering committee with SJSU and PAL nonprofit to manage scheduling and coordination.	Continue daily programming and participate in the steering committee to coordinate usage.
Community Access and Engagement	Open the track for community use. Host youth athletic and academic programs in partnership with PAL. Bring admissions or other staff into the community to strengthen the cradle-to-college pipeline.	Support and ensure delivery of quality community programming in coordination with SJSU and PAL nonprofit.	Provide youth and family sports programming, life-skill workshops, and community events, and lead strategic fundraising initiatives.

Together, the guiding principles and roles and responsibilities form a framework to revitalize PAL Stadium Complex as a landmark community asset. Through sustainable investment, responsible environmental design, inclusive programming, and strong partnerships among SJSU, PAL, and the City, the facility will honor its historic legacy and serve as a vibrant, accessible hub that fosters health, connection, and lasting engagement for generations to come.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

With City Council approval of guiding principles, staff will continue to collaborate with SJSU to define roles and responsibilities that will inform the structure of a formal partnership agreement and ensure that each partner contributes to the success and sustainability of the facility. Staff plans to host a community meeting about the project and seek community input on project and program priorities in the next few months.

Staff expects to return to the City Council with a proposed agreement and project delivery plan by the second half of the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

This recommended action has no cost implications. As projects for improvements at the City's PAL Stadium Complex advance, additional funding may be needed and will be brought forward in future budget processes.

COORDINATION

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

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the June 17, 2025 City Council meeting.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-007, Preliminary Direction to staff and eventual action requires approval from decision-making body.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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/s/

Jon Cicirelli

Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Shannon Heimer, Division Manager for Parks Destinations, Events and Sports Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department , at Shannon.Heimer@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 608-9670.