



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Maya Esparza

SUBJECT: AUDIT OF PARK MAINTENANCE

DATE: August 28, 2020

Approved

Date

Sylvia Arenas

Raul Peralez

8.28.2020

Maya Esparza

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept staff report and administration response.
2. Direct the administration to continue working towards identifying a dedicated funding stream to reinvest in San José Parks, including:
 - A. Continuing widespread community engagement on the problems related to \$382 million in deferred maintenance needs and the lack of adequate funding for desperately needed Parks Recreation & Neighborhood Services programs that support families in need.
 - B. Work towards a 2022 ballot measure, if economic conditions have improved: strongly consider, gauge community support, and poll test a measure modeled on Oakland's successful Measure Q, which combined the need for investing in parks and recreation, community beautification, and additional funding to support community members experiencing homelessness and living in our public spaces. Additionally, evaluate and consider a measure model based on Los Angeles County's Measure A.

BACKGROUND

Ten years ago, the Great Recession left many San José city departments with budget shortfalls, one of the hardest hit was Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). Without a sustainable funding source dedicated to our city parks, today PRNS faces \$382 million in deferred park maintenance. The struggle to keep up with aging infrastructure, day-to-day maintenance, and wear and tear from increased use of our unhoused neighbors, together with limited staff has affected the health, safety, and general appeal of many neighborhoods throughout San José. Additionally, the reliance on park funding from new development fees has meant limited revenue for parks in low-income areas and communities of color where new development is scarce.

As we continue to adjust our daily lives during COVID-19, our open spaces where recreation can take place with social distancing has served as relief for many residents throughout our city -- especially families who live in overcrowded spaces. The health of our parks not only improves our personal health but also the economic vitality of our neighborhoods. The Trust for Public Land states:

“Parks, trails, and community centers enhance property values, provide recreational opportunities, improve human health, attract visitors, and provide natural goods and services such as filtering air pollutants and managing stormwater. The developing trail network also facilitates active transportation with daily bike commuters traveling to and from some of Silicon Valley’s largest employers. These recreational assets support local jobs, boost spending at local businesses, and create local tax revenue.” (<https://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-park-recreation-system-san-jos%C3%A9-california>)

The preservation of our parks is critical to the well-being of our communities. A sustainable funding source through a parcel tax, like Measure Q passed in Oakland earlier this year, can provide the long-term resources needed for our local parks, neighborhood services, and additional support for unhoused community members that find refuge across city parks. Other communities are using a similar approach to secure the resources needed for their parks, like Measure A in Los Angeles County. Approved in 2016, Measure A is a 1.5 cent per square foot parcel tax to support park maintenance, after school programs, preservation of open space and water sources, and upgrades to recreation and senior centers.

The Great Recession was a big hit to many services across the city, the COVID-19 pandemic has once again brought difficult budget cuts to many essential city services. However, we can ensure the long-term protection of our local parks and support for our unhoused neighbors regardless of any economic instability through a parcel tax. Many residents want to see improvements to their parks and neighborhoods, we should explore a possible ballot measure for the 2022 ballot and give residents the opportunity to protect and preserve our local parks.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member’s staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer’s staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member’s staff.