



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Councilmember Omar Torres

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 20, 2023

Approved

Date:3/20/23

**SUBJECT: Approval of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Mayor's March Budget Message**

**RECOMMENDATION**

1) Accept the Mayor's Message and give direction to the Administration to prepare a budget, with the following modifications and additions;

a) Advance racial equity work in the City of San José by:

1. Converting racial equity positions in Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services; Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement; and Transportation to permanent Program Manager positions.

b) Advance equity in the recovery from the pandemic by evaluating and moving forward key priorities of the Recovery Task Force, in order identify and to identify and address the continuing needs of the communities hit hardest by the pandemic, in partnership with the County and other partners;

1. Budget an additional \$2 million to further high priority and high impact recommendations, and ensure that the Task Force is consulted about which recommendations should be prioritized.

c) Continue to improve the City's civic engagement capacity, as demonstrated in the Recovery Task Force and and Youth Empowerment Alliance strategic planning process, and the Reimagining Public Safety Community Advisory Committee (RiPS) process, including expanding promotora and Lived Experience Advisory pilots, and by establishing city-wide civic engagement guidelines;

1. Earmark at least \$500,000 for developing an enterprise-wide civic engagement strategy, including a civic engagement policy and framework, training for staff, high level coordination, and work with a diverse group of community members to develop this strategy.

2. Continue the promotores pilot that began year with an additional investment of \$500,000; and to direct city staff to work with philanthropic and nonprofit partners to seek philanthropic and other partner investments in the model.
3. Develop a work plan for creating a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) in partnership with existing and future Project Hope funding on what the program could look like, and what existing resources may be available across City departments and programs, with the goal of launching the program in 2024.

d) Further public safety reform by moving forward key and achievable priorities identified in the Reimaging Public Safety (RiPS) report and investing in violence prevention and intervention.

1. As described in the Mayor's message, we should fund and move forward with a planning process to implement a community-based interpersonal violence prevention and response pilot, and work with Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence and the Racial Equity Action Leadership (REAL) Coalition to help design a plan for implementation, with a budget of \$400,000 to ensure a robust community-centric approach.
2. Double down on the City's investment in the prevention and intervention of violence by adding \$5 million to the San José Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together City-Wide Appropriation.

e) Remove language included in the Mayor's Message that seeks to give Measure E or other City funds to develop an additional locked psychiatric facility in San José. Direct staff to work with the County to understand its inpatient and outpatient capacities and focus on solutions that are less restrictive but effective alternatives for treating people suffering from mental health concerns.

2) Accept Councilmember Cohen's memo.

## **Background**

The priorities that are critically important to District 3 include - but are not limited to advancing the Children and Youth Master Plan; police reforms; downtown economic revitalization initiatives; addressing the city's severe staffing shortage and wage protection; racial justice and equity- including equity in our COVID-19 Recovery; a multi-pronged and long-term affordable housing strategy; deep civic engagement with our community; and equitable protection of our urban canopy.

The progress accomplished by our City's Office of Racial Equity should be facilitated by ensuring that racial equity positions in our City departments are fully staffed. I appreciate the Mayor's proposal to conduct a racial equity audit across our City.

It is important to continue the good work that our City has done in engaging our community in the Recovery Task Force process. We should invest in continued, systematic community engagement work including continuing the promotores model as the Mayor suggested in his budget memo.

We should make good on a promise that we made to our community after the murder of George Floyd—after former Vice Mayor Chappie Jones wisely led this Council in directing a community process to reimagine public safety. It is good to see that the Mayor acknowledges the importance of moving on the Reimaging Public Safety (RiPS) proposals. As some on this Council will remember, beginning in August 2021, the RiPS task force began an exploration of alternatives to police response in our community and meaningful recommendations for reform. RiPS members were rerepresentatives of 28 community-based organizations with deep relationships and expertise in our diverse communities. A report was made to and accepted by Council in May 2022.

The Community-Based Approach to Ending Interpersonal Violence Pilot Program Proposal, proposed by the REAL coalition and mentioned in the Mayor’s Message, supports our City’s efforts in addressing interpersonal violence from a community and survivor-centered approach. The proposal would be the first step in creating a feasibility study and landscape analysis on how best to pilot this alternative approach. It aims to deeply involve the community and center the voices of those personally impacted by interpersonal violence to prevent and repair harm. This approach currently does not exist in San Jose and would work to address the interpersonal violence that is never reported to 911 and provides a means of intervention for members of our community who we know will never call for law enforcement for a variety of reasons.

We know that for many people in our city, it is their loved ones, friends, neighbors, clergy and others who witness and intervene in interpersonal violence, these are forms of community-based response. This pilot offers an opportunity to invest in this non-carceral solution, collect unknown data, and make the community a partner in the prevention of and intervention of interpersonal violence. This works when the effort is led by the community from start to finish.

On a similar theme, as the Mayor notes, our City already invests in the prevention and intervention of violence through its San José Bringing Everyone’s Strengths Together program. However, it is significantly under-invested. Investing in our youth, mothers, and their families is imperative for us especially if we want a healthy and safe city for all.

Ever since the Strong Neighborhood Initiative sunset, neighborhoods across our city lost services, programs, and other technical support that are city offered. Neighborhoods lost a vital program to keep their neighborhoods clean and safe.

Lastly, I am concerned with the Mayor’s approach to redirecting Measure E funds to pay for a psychiatric facility. The cost of a psychiatric facility alone would cost the same as our projected surplus, and more. In the spirit of last week’s Council Meeting, we had a lively conversation about the legality and ballot language of Measure T for the use of funds for Lake Cunningham. So, therefore, we should apply the same sentiment to Measure E’s use of funds. Measure E’s ballot language does not support the use of funds to be used for a psychiatric facility.<sup>1</sup> For our voters to continue to have faith in the San Jose City Council we must use Measure E funds for their original intent which is to build affordable housing for seniors, veterans, disabled, and low-income families and help the unhoused residents move into shelters and permanent housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Ballot Language Measure E [637114958551730000 \(sanjoseca.gov\)](https://www.sanjoseca.gov/637114958551730000)