



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember David Cohen

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: October 4, 2022

Approved

Date: 10/4/2022

SUBJECT: ELEVATING YOUTH VOICES ON COMMISSIONS

RECOMMENDATION

1. Ask the Youth Commission to evaluate ways to elevate youth voices in San Jose policy by examining the following:
 - a. Determine whether the Youth Commission should be expanded to include voices of those ages 21 – 25.
 - b. Identify which additional City of San Jose Commissions would benefit from including a dedicated position for youth (age range 14-20 or 14-25).
 - c. Create a procedure for selecting youth members for the chosen commissions.
2. Direct staff to report the Youth Commission's findings to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee (NSE) by the spring of 2023.

BACKGROUND

In alignment with the recommendation in the Children's Bill of Rights, the voices of youth are important as we shape policy in San Jose. Other cities, in addition to a Youth Commission, also reserve spaces for youth membership on boards and commissions that deal with issues directly relevant to their experiences. For example, youth could add valuable perspective on the library/early education, arts, and parks commissions, among others. We already plan to offer space for youth participation on the climate commission.

There is value in youth being given ample opportunities to become civically involved. Future generations are most directly and heavily impacted by the policies we put in place, and which are vetted through our commission structure. The lived experiences of young people can offer valuable insight and perspective to the work of the City's Commissions.

The first way to empower young voices would be to put the Youth Commission in charge of determining which commissions would benefit most from their participation. In addition, they should be allowed to suggest the procedures for appointing youth members.

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Subject: Elevating Youth Voices on Commissions

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Membership on San Jose's Youth Commission currently specifies membership for youth ages 14-20. The United Nations definition of Youth (<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>) includes youth after high school and includes those up to age 25. Our Youth Commission may benefit from voices up to age 25.