



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Jon Cicirelli
Nanci Klein

SUBJECT: PUBLIC LIFE IN SAN JOSE
ANNUAL REPORT

DATE: May 22, 2023

Approved Angel Ruiz Date 6/1/23

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the annual report on public life in San José, including citywide efforts to activate and improve San José's public life.

BACKGROUND

The Office of the City Manager has eight City Enterprise Priorities that serve as focal points across City departments and services. Amongst these priorities includes:

“Safe, Vibrant, and Inclusive Neighborhoods and Public Life: The diverse mosaic of people who live, work, learn, and play in San José deserve vibrant, beautiful, accessible, safe, and inclusive public spaces that inspire friendship and connection across generations, cultures, and points of view. Our neighborhoods and public life must reflect the rich cultural history and lived experiences of our residents. Neighborhoods should serve as conduits for people to connect with one another, to build community, and provide pathways to opportunity, lifelong learning, and prosperity.”

Public life initiatives are coordinated by multiple departments including: Environmental Services, Fire, Housing, Library, Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs (OEDCA), Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, Police, and Transportation. These departments, along with community partners, have sought over the years to ensure that everyone in our community has access to lively public spaces and places that are beautiful, positive, clean, safe, interesting and inclusive.

The goal of public life is to enhance service delivery through placemaking in public spaces. The key to this approach is engaging residents as stakeholders and instilling a sense of pride and ownership in public places. A public life strategy allows residents to define the character of a city, build civic pride, and encourage greater connection socially and with San José. By establishing mutual stewardship of places, public life and placemaking strengthen local

leadership and engage communities in the creation, activation and maintenance of San José's public spaces. The term "placemaking" describes the process of working collaboratively with all stakeholders to create public spaces such as plazas and parks that are pleasurable or interesting, and reflective of the communities that use them. Placemaking commonly conjures intentionally "creating quality places, wherein people want to live, work, play, and learn."

ANALYSIS

As the City of San José embraces the safe return of open-air assemblies, the number of sanctioned outdoor events facilitated by the OEDCA's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) Outdoor Special Events Section and PRNS's Special Park Use Unit is steadily approaching pre-pandemic levels. This past fiscal year, special events played a sizable role in the cultural diversity and economic vibrancy of our city. OCA expects to end the fiscal year granting authorization for approximately 129 outdoor special events, which equates to more than 394 event dates attended by over two million people. The PRNS Special Park Use Unit, responsible for permitting events within parks, will oversee approximately 477 events which equates to 1,646 event dates in 2022-2023.

Placemaking and Public Life Highlights

Below are highlights of the interdepartmental placemaking and public life efforts that were provided over the past year as well as highlights for upcoming programs.

Abierto, Viva CalleSJ, Viva Parks and Paint the CitySJ Outdoor Events

The 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget established ongoing funding for the PRNS Placemaking Team to produce Viva CalleSJ and Viva Parks events. As proposed in the Mayor's June Budget Message for 2022-2023 as approved by the City Council, the City also continued to fund the "Abierto" program managed by PRNS. This program was developed to provide funding for arts-based agencies affected by the pandemic. Public health orders had a tremendous impact on arts organizations by leading to cancelled performances and limiting their ability to raise revenue to support their agencies. The City identified \$1,200,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act to support the distribution of Abierto funds to arts-based agencies.

The Placemaking Team amended contracts with four lead agencies – Filco, School of Arts and Culture, San José Downtown Association and San José Jazz – to inject the \$1.2 million to smaller arts-based groups through a streamlined one-page request for funding. By creating a simple application process and providing lead agencies the authority to coordinate and fund requests, the Placemaking Team distributed funds to more than 59 arts groups to facilitate 117 additional small- and mid-size arts activations throughout San José. The response from the public and the arts sector was overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

PRNS has also leveraged partnerships to plan and deliver three Viva CalleSJ activations in 2022-2023, two already held on September 18, 2022 and April 23, 2023 and a third scheduled for June 11, 2023. Viva CalleSJ (pronounced Vee-Va Ka-Ye SJ) is a free open streets recreational program that closes miles of scenic San José streets to create the City's largest parks and recreation spaces three times per year, with routes that bring people and communities together to walk, bike, skate, play and explore some of San José's most eclectic and historic neighborhoods. Not only does it make for a fun time, Viva CalleSJ also has substantial economic, health and environmental benefits. Surveys from the April 23rd event indicate 41 percent of Viva CalleSJ participants spend \$21 or more at the event/local businesses, 34 percent will be physically active for 1-2 hours and 56 percent arrive to the event by bicycle. More information about dates, routes and activities at Viva CalleSJ can be found at <https://www.vivacallesj.org>¹.

Viva Parks Neighborhoods and Viva Parks Downtown will plan and deliver 129 events in 2022-2023. Viva Parks events activate parks and plazas throughout the City's neighborhoods and downtown to make them inviting, safe and enjoyable for residents during the spring, summer and fall. These activations include lawn games, activities like rock-climbing walls, movie nights and the new the Paint the CitySJ program. Paint the CitySJ is a new program for 2022-2023 initiated through significant community feedback. Paint the CitySJ is a wine and painting series for the community that offers free painting classes led by instructors and offers beverages for sale. In past years, wine & paint nights were included as part of Viva Parks neighborhoods and downtown events. Due to popular demand and feedback from the community as well as City Council, staff expanded these events into the Paint the CitySJ program. The program will host 25 wine and paint nights this fiscal year across all 10 council districts.

Starting with spring 2023 Paint the CitySJ events and summer 2023 Viva Parks neighborhood park activations, staff has become even more intentional about activating public spaces in communities and neighborhoods using an equity lens. In 2022-2023, staff began using the [Healthy Places Index](https://www.healthypacesindex.org)² (HPI) to identify parks in neighborhoods where residents can most benefit from positive recreational opportunities to safely play in their parks. The HPI maps social conditions that drive health such as education, job opportunities, clean water and other indicators at the neighborhood level. In certain instances, to promote inclusion where some community members may not have access to electronic devices to register online for Paint the CitySJ events, staff has worked closely with Council Offices to outreach to and save spaces for individuals lacking digital access.

Looking ahead, PRNS continues to evaluate, evolve and improve Placemaking programs and activities. In previous years St. James Park activations focused primarily on daily activities, including lunch time and early evening programming, and attendance was at times inconsistent.

¹ Viva CalleSJ: <https://www.vivacallesj.org>

² Healthy Places Index: <https://www.healthypacesindex.org>

For 2023-2024, staff will change the approach and plans fewer daily events in favor of larger events that are expected to capture a broader and more diverse audience and achieve a greater impact at the park. Another area of change will be park permitting and reservations. With a large volume of Special Park Use event permits each year and an antiquated permitting system, PRNS is looking at streamlining its Special Park Use permit process to provide a more customer-oriented and service-friendly approach to event organizers looking to host special events in City parks. This includes simplifying the application process, condensing how the event organizer receives direction and streamlining communication. To enhance customer service, staff is initiating improvements to the park and picnic reservation process including ensuring City websites convey critical information early and clearly and are translatable for residents and visitors who do not speak English.

Office of Cultural Affairs Events, Programs and Projects Promoting Public Life

Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) takes pride in partnering with the creative community to promote its creativity, diversity, and public life. Outdoor special event organizers did not let one of the wettest seasons on record stop them from creating new opportunities to showcase San José, while veteran event organizers continued to provide activities that make San José one of the Bay Area's brightest cities. Providing families with the opportunity to celebrate together was a popular theme again this fiscal year, with events like the reemerged San José Rotary Downtown Fireworks Show, San José Rock and Roll Half Marathon, and the Veterans' Day Parade bringing tens of thousands of people to the downtown core. The cultural diversity of our city is one of our strongest assets and the dozens of ethnic events continues to shine the light on how we stand apart from our neighboring municipalities. With two separate Vietnamese Lunar New Year Tet Festivals, multiple colorful Holi Festivals, the annual Nikkei Matsuri Festival, and many other cultural events, our city knows the value of acceptance through celebration and creativity. OCA has numerous programs and projects that aim to promote public life. Below are selected highlights.

Make Music San Jose 2022 – Make Music San José is an annual citywide celebration of music that was hosted virtually by OCA on the summer solstice, June 21, 2022. This celebration included 24 local musicians at nine locations across San Jose like Mexican Heritage Plaza, Parque de los Pobladores in the SoFA district, and City Hall Plaza in addition to two livestream channels so the public could view performances virtually. Make Music San Jose returns on June 21, 2023. To date, there are 16 city-wide venues and 24 performers signed up. Anyone can sign up as a musician or participant in this free citywide event at <https://www.makemusicday.org/SanJose/>³

CityDance – A free public space activation offering San José community members a learning and socializing experience through dance and music, the 2022 CityDance series continued at the Circle of Palms in partnership with the San Jose Museum of Art on the Third Thursday in July, August, September, and October. Each event engaged over three hundred guests at each

³ Make Music San Jose: <https://www.makemusicday.org/SanJose/>

event, with Bollywood being the most attended, and offered attendees free entrance into the museum in the evening. Several arts partners joined with tabling the event including: SV PRIDE, New Ballet, School of Arts and Culture at Mexican Heritage Plaza, San Jose Women's Club, More Más Marami, Creative Ambassadors, Teatro Vision and more. The four-month 2023 series will kick off on June 15th and will showcase popular local dance instructors and musicians of popular dance genres including Country Line Dance, K-Pop, Salsa and World Dance.

WeCreate408 Creativity Challenge – With the generous support of the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the OCA brought back the WeCreate408 Creativity Challenge in October 2022 during National Arts and Humanities month. San Joséans joined a month-long creative challenge, #WeCreate408, to build public awareness and support for the arts. Every day in October, a "creativity challenge prompt" was sent through email, social media, and online in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Prompts were designed to inspire people to create independently and attend #WeCreate408 events around San José. The #WeCreate408 campaign themes prompt and development included participation from forty partners and highlighted cultural organizations and events throughout San José. Creative responses can be viewed by visiting the "Wall of Creativity" featured on the [WeCreate408.org](https://www.wecreate408.org)⁴ site.

Public Art – The City of San José Public Art Program inspires community through artworks and exhibitions. We expand community participation opportunities and impact the economic and visual dynamics of the city. Our priorities are guided by the goals and values of project partners and the community. Through active engagement between artists and project stakeholders, we celebrate diversity, innovative spirit, rich history, present and envisioned future. The program facilitates projects that are recognized nationally and internationally for innovative programming. Highlights of recently completed projects of the OCA Public Art Program include: *XO* by Laura Kimpton and Jeff Schomberg at the San José Mineta International Airport, Resilient City at the new Fire Training Center; deaccession and removal of the *Fallon Statue*; and *Hidden Heritages: San José's Vietnamese Legacy*, a City Hall exhibition produced in partnership with the San José Museum of Art and Chopsticks Alley.

Sonic Runway – This past year, the OCA launched a series of activations at *Sonic Runway*, the public art installation on City Hall Plaza that demonstrates the speed of sound through dynamic light patterns. The series called Sonic Runway: Experiments in Sound featured a diverse selection of artists including: Vivace Youth Chorus; Cellista; Ukrainian artists presented by San José Jazz at the Ukrainian flag raising; DJ Rhythm, who played songs submitted by City employees; and Sonido Clash who performed during "Selenabration," which occurred on the birthday of the late singer Selena Quintanilla Perez. The next *Sonic Runway* performance will be on May 25th from 8 - 9 pm featuring Jessica Neideffer, who will perform sound bowls offering an immersive and therapeutic sound bath. On June 6th in honor of the City Council's flag raising as part of Pride Month, *Sonic Runway* will be illuminated in rainbow-color light patterns.

⁴ WeCreate408: [WeCreate408.org](https://www.wecreate408.org)

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2023 Creative Ambassadors – With the generous support of the Dave and Lucille Packard Foundation, the OCA has commissioned four exceptional multi-disciplinary artists as 2023 Creative Ambassadors. Promoting the value of the arts and creativity, each ambassador will offer a unique public project and outreach into their respective multicultural communities and diverse networks. The 2023 Creative Ambassadorships are: Yoon Chung Han; Elba Raquel in partnership with Together We Create; Suhita Shirodkar; and Bertrand Patron Paule in partnership with SJ Storyboard. Each Creative Ambassador receives a \$9,500 stipend for their project and time.

Through these programs, services, and projects, Public Life has recovered since the pandemic to once again promote social cohesion, belonging, well-being, economic prosperity, and cultural vibrancy in San José.

OCA and PRNS plan to continue reporting on citywide efforts to activate and improve San José's public life through an annual Info Memo.

COORDINATION

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

/s/

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/s/

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For questions, please contact PRNS Deputy Director Avi Yotam at avi.yotam@sanjoseca.gov or Assistant Director of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs Kerry Adams Hapner at kerry.adams-hapner@sanjoseca.gov.