CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Mayor Mahan
Councilmember Ortiz
Councilmember Tordillos
Councilmember Candelas
Councilmember Campos

SUBJECT: **See Below**

DATE: March 19, 2026

Approved

Date:

SUBJECT: Initiating an Inventory and Community Process Regarding Public Assets Named for César Chavez

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager, in coordination with the City Clerk and City Attorney, to return to City Council with:

1. An inventory of all City-owned land, facilities, amenities, and other public art and assets in San José named after César Chavez, or otherwise bearing his name or likeness;
2. To the extent feasible, an inventory of other assets with City designation or public sites within San José that are overseen by another local jurisdiction or public agency and are named after César Chavez;
3. An assessment of the applicable legal authority, governing policy, and procedural pathway for renaming each identified site;
4. Recommendations for a community engagement process — modeled where appropriate on existing City naming processes, and prioritizing the Latino and farmworker communities — to consider potential renaming actions in a trauma-informed, inclusive, and culturally respectful manner; and
5. Initiate any administrative processes under the City Manager's authority for name changes, where appropriate.

DISCUSSION

Recent public reporting has brought forward serious and deeply disturbing allegations regarding César Chavez. These reports are profoundly painful, particularly for survivors, farmworker families, and many in the Latino community who have long understood Chavez as a symbol of justice and dignity. At the same time, the farmworker rights movement has never been about one person alone. It has always been a people-driven movement grounded in dignity, sacrifice, and collective action. As the City considers its response, it is important to distinguish between honoring that broader legacy and continuing to bestow public honors on a single individual whose legacy is now under serious question.

San José has a responsibility to ensure that public spaces and civic honors reflect our community's values and do not further traumatize survivors. Any future community engagement process should be designed in a trauma-informed manner that acknowledges potential harm and avoids retraumatization. The engagement process should be designed to build trust, provide clear and factual information, and create space for a range of community perspectives without presuming any predetermined outcome. Before any renaming actions are considered, the City should first identify the full scope of relevant assets, determine which jurisdictions control them, and clarify the legal and policy steps required.

City Council Policy 7-5 establishes the process for naming City-owned land and facilities, including review by the City Clerk, relevant commissions or committees, and ultimately the City Council before adoption.[1] The policy also distinguishes between substantial City facilities and smaller amenities and outlines the approval authority for each. The City also has an established community process for naming new parks, trails, and community centers through the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department.[2] That process, which could be considered, includes community surveys, staff review of naming criteria, input from the Parks and Recreation Commission, and final consideration by the City Council. This approach ensures that public naming decisions reflect community values and public input.

This memorandum does not prejudge the outcome of any individual renaming decision. Rather, it initiates the necessary first step: an accounting of affected public assets and a clear, community-informed process for determining whether and how renaming should proceed. In a moment like this, the City should respond with seriousness, transparency, and care. Initiating an inventory and public process is a measured step that allows San

[1] Council Policy 7-5 Naming of City-Owned Land and Facilities: https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/12757/636669904910330000
[2] Naming New Parks, Trails, and Community Centers: https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/parks-recreation-neighborhood-services/general-information/policies-reports/namingprocess

José to act thoughtfully, support survivors, and honor the broader legacy of farmworker rights.

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.