CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Kamei
Councilmember Tordillos
Councilmember Cohen

SUBJECT: **Item 3.3: Mayor's June Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2026-2027**

DATE: June 5, 2026

Approved: Rosemary Kamei David Cohen Anthony Tordillos

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt Manager's Budget Addendum #28 and restore funding necessary to provide the alternative service delivery model to the California Room as described in MBA #19 by reallocating $245,000 on a one-time basis from the Library Parcel Tax Fund's Non-Personal/Equipment budget to the Personal Services budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.
2. Direct the City Manager's Office to explore additional sources of funding beyond the one-time allocation of funds proposed in MBA #28, including philanthropic funds and grant funding, to preserve public access to the California Room beyond Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

BACKGROUND

The California Room, located on the fifth floor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, serves as the City of San Jose's primary local history and special collections archive, preserving and providing public access to materials documenting the history of San Jose, Santa Clara County, and California. The collection contains books, photographs, maps, newspaper archives, city directories, building permits, government records, artwork, music, yearbooks, phone directories, and other historical materials. Many of these resources are unique, irreplaceable primary-source documents that cannot be accessed elsewhere. The California Room's holdings support research conducted by students, educators, historians, genealogists, journalists, authors, developers, land-use consultants, city staff, and community members seeking to better understand the region's history.

The California Room has also served as a venue for exhibits and educational programming that highlight the diverse communities and histories that have shaped the region. These exhibits have served as invaluable sources of information on indigenous history, Spanish and Mexican California, transportation, agriculture, urban development, and significant historical events.

The City Manager's Proposed Budget includes removal of 2.9 positions, resulting in General Fund savings of approximately $388,000.00 annually. Under the Proposed Budget, public access to the California Room would be restricted through the removal of dedicated staffing and replaced with a limited retrieval model. While materials would remain available by appointment, many items require specialized handling, staff oversight, and research assistance. Access to materials would be limited to approximately five research appointments per week through a request process and held outside the California Room itself. Staff estimates that this model would serve approximately 250 people annually, compared to more that 5,200 annual visitors under current operations. As a result, transitioning to an appointment-only model would substantially reduce practical public access to the collection and limit the ability of residents to engage with the City's historical archives.

Manager's Budget Addendum #28 identifies a one-time funding option to preserve public access to the California Room by reallocating $245,000.00 from the Library Parcel Tax Fund's Non-Personal/Equipment budget to the Personal Services budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

ANALYSIS

Manager's Budget Addendum #28 provides a viable one-time funding mechanism to avoid substantial loss of public access to this resource. By reallocating necessary funds from the LPT Fund's Non-Personal/Equipment budget, the City can maintain limited public hours, continue research support, preserve educational programming, and continue collection management and digitization efforts.

While this approach does not fully restore current service levels, it preserves the core functions that make the California Room a valuable civic resource.

Directing the City Manager's Office to explore additional sources of funding, including philanthropic contributions and grant funding, would support the goal of preserving public access beyond Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and help establish a more sustainable long-term funding strategy for this resource. For example, the city might consider a "Friends of the California Room" model in collaboration with community partners like PAC*SJ that have shown interest in supporting the California Room and its vital function as a source of historical knowledge and information.

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.