



Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

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5:1

November 28, 2017

Mayor Liccardo and Members of City Council
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara St
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: November 28, 2017 Council Agenda Item 5.1: "Greenprint and Financial Feasibility Study"

Dear Honorable Mayor Liccardo and Honored Members of City Council,

On behalf of the Shasta / Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Greenprint and Financial Feasibility Study before you today.

The Shasta / Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association represents 1,400 households in neighborhoods immediately West of Diridon Station, an area of the City that is severely underserved in parks as per the City's requirement of 3.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. We are concerned that, as additional residents move into the area, the residents-to-parks ratio will continue to worsen. This widening disconnect disproportionately impacts our neighborhood parks, which have not seen the maintenance funding or staffing required to maintain them properly.

Our neighborhood parks are not alone in these deficiencies; some of the best of San Jose's parks have been determined to merely be in 'acceptable' condition, while more than thirty of them are well below that admittedly low bar. These deficiencies have been exacerbated by continuously deferred maintenance, Parks Maintenance staffing vacancies, and the drought of recent years. Significant capital investment is needed to simply bring the parks up to a minimum standard, with a current estimated maintenance backlog in excess of \$250 million dollars. However, restoring our parks to a "minimum standard" is not enough. Resources should be devoted to meet a long-term sustainable maintenance goal – one that acknowledges the value and return on investment inherent within properly constructed and maintained parks, libraries, community centers, and trails.

In February, Mayor Liccardo and Council Members Rocha and Jimenez issued a Memorandum advocating for lists of improvements and / or new park construction as part of a bond measure. Their subsequent memo of November 22, 2017, is a welcome next step in the right direction, calling for the adoption of a crowdsourcing tool for the identification and analysis of future park and trail sites. The current Memorandum calls for the identification of 'vacant neighborhood lots, long-abandoned buildings or railroad segments, desirable land held by another public agency (such as the Water District of CalTrans), and underutilized streets or cul-du-sacs. S/HPNA has consistently advocated on behalf of small community parks, as they are both more easily adopted, and can serve as focal points for neighborhoods. One such example is the success of Theodore Lenzen Park, despite being substantially under-budgeted for general maintenance needs.

The Greenprint's acceptance of smaller parks is a welcome change. In the last few years, S/HPNA has advocated for smaller-scale parks at 292 Stockton Avenue (later sold to a developer), the parking lot at Hanchett Avenue and The Alameda (later sold to a developer), and the corner of Tillman Avenue and Park Avenue (later redeveloped by Public Works). Prior policies worked against S/HPNA on these proposals, denying these properties the opportunity to be truly community-serving; we look forward to working with the City to advocate further for appropriately-scaled, neighborhood-focused parks and amenities.

Previously, a presentation came before a Council Committee to suggest the relaxation of 0.5 km (1/3 mile) standard for maximum distance to a park. The proposal was to substitute so-called 'safe access', likely a bike lane, trail, or dedicated walking route, with no distance limitation. We are concerned by this proposal, as it would potentially codify the ability to leave S/HPNA underserved, given our proximity to the Municipal Rose Garden. Similarly, the potential for a future park or POPO as part of The Alameda and West San Carlos Urban Villages might be used as an excuse to less-vigorously pursue new parks within S/HPNA's boundaries. The theoretical

park lands within the Urban Villages are unlikely to bear fruit, given the emphasis on density inherent within the Urban Villages. Therefore, we oppose the adoption of the 'safe access' exception to the proximity calculation.

Please take this opportunity to make a strong statement in favor of the social, economic, and health benefits of a properly maintained Parks system. In the face of recent difficult budget cuts, PRNS staff has struggled valiantly to maintain our parks at a level well-beyond the staffing and resources allotted to them. Now is the time to correct those deficiencies, and make clear that the Mayor and Council's vision for a vibrant, growing San Jose include parks and recreation facilities worthy of the Capital of Silicon Valley.

We take pride in our neighborhood; S/HPNA Board members and volunteers have been diligent advocates and volunteers in our parks for many years, and will continue to do so. Therefore, we ask you to match this dedication. Our community can only benefit from your support today. We look forward to being a part of the process to address quality urban planning, public safety, and truly livable amenities for our diverse community.

Respectfully submitted,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Edward Saum.

Edward Saum

President, Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

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November 28, 2017

Re: Item 5.1 on today's agenda - Greenprint update

Dear Mayor Liccardo and City Councilmembers,

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has served as a stakeholder on the steering committee for the Greenprint update, and we are appreciative of the opportunity to engage in this positive and productive effort.

A theme that stood out throughout the public outreach phase and in stakeholder discussions is the need for access to nature. Interestingly, the community identified "access to nature" not only as bringing people to nature (i.e. trails) but there was also a need for bringing nature to people in urban and suburban landscapes.

Tools for bringing nature to people are emerging, including the Re-oaking Silicon Valley and Vision for a Resilient Silicon Valley reports from the San Francisco Estuary Institute.¹ We strongly believe that the City should invest in bringing nature to people, not only people to nature. It seems to us that having a biologist on PRNS staff should be a great start.

In addition, we believe that nature can be integrated into the additional engagement process proposed in the memo by the Mayor and Council members Jimenez and Rocha. Please consider adding opportunities for people to provide input on where nature enhancement sites can be protected or created. It is likely that there will be overlaps with aspirations for new parks and trails, but such direction should enrich the language and the discussion; people can ask for nature as a conceptual theme or in detail (i. e. plant an oak, plant a butterfly garden, add a water feature).

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and other environment groups represent thousands of members in San Jose that would likely engage in the process if the tools and language are provided for them.

Thank you,

[Redacted signature]

Shani Kleinhaus, Ph.D
Environmental Advocate
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

¹ <http://resilientsv.sfei.org/>