



# Memorandum

**TO: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**FROM:** Kerry Adams Hapner  
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**SUBJECT: EASY URBANISM AND  
PLACEMAKING**

**DATE:** November 17, 2017

Approved	/s/	Date
	Kim Walesh	11/17/17

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the informational report of the City's recent Easy Urbanism and Placemaking Interdepartmental Initiative.

## **OUTCOME**

The Committee will be provided with information on the City's activities related to facilitating "easy urbanism" and placemaking activities.

## **BACKGROUND**

Public life and placemaking are increasingly important priorities for the City of San José. In January 2017, an interdepartmental team led by Deputy City Manager Kim Walesh came together to envision what more robust public life could mean for San José and how Department and community resources could align for greater impact.

*The team sees the following vision and opportunity:*

- Public life—meaning, *people of diverse backgrounds interacting in public spaces*—can and should become an even stronger, more distinctive feature of everyday life in San José;
- More robust public life will bring a *range of tangible benefits* to the people of San José: improved health, safety, happiness, mental health, community cohesion, social equity, economic development, environmental sustainability, community pride and identity;
- San José is in transition from its suburban development past, which emphasized private life, to a *more urban future* that can also bring more *robust public life*;

- This work to create *special places alive with community life* throughout the City is at the heart of San José's Envision 2040 General Plan; and
- As one of the world's most diverse cities and a welcoming city for immigrants, San José recognizes that various cultures view and use public space differently, and that public life is *where people of different backgrounds can meet and mix*.

Concurrent with this visioning exercise, an Interdepartmental Easy Urbanism and Placemaking Committee has been meeting to facilitate enhanced public life in San José. At the May 2017 Committee meeting, an interdepartmental team reported on progress on efforts to facilitate increased vibrancy in the public realm through the removal of barriers to activation. The Committee comprised of members from Office of Economic Development (OED)/Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA), Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE), Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), Public Works, Transportation (DOT), Fire Department (SJFD) and the Police Department (SJPD), generally meets every three weeks to address the following goals:

- Coordinate the City of San José's placemaking portfolio and evaluate policy, projects and opportunities;
- Engage stakeholders to identify barriers to entry that disproportionately affect small and local businesses, and young and immigrant entrepreneurs from fully participating in placemaking;
- Identify and raise awareness of placemaking activities happening city-wide;
- Share best practices, lessons and trends;
- Determine how to field/respond to requests from external placemakers, including how to assess and "get to yes;"
- Consider how to complement interdepartmental work, identify any gaps in or duplication of services;
- Consider how to leverage human and fiscal resources; and
- Consider funding opportunities.

The Committee identified a number of specific initiatives to explore with the goal of enabling urban activation across the city. Top recurring themes include:

1. Facilitating street closures for outdoor special events;
2. Facilitating food trucks, buskers and retail vendors;
3. Changing City codes and zoning to better facilitate private property for outdoor special events; and
4. Modeling best practices and iterative lessons learned in key citywide placemaking initiatives such as Viva CalleSJ and the public space activations at Plaza de César Chávez and St. James Park.

As part of the Mayor's March Budget Message for 2017-2018, the Mayor directed the City Manager to provide an update for public space activation to the Committee in the fall of 2017.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Committee update will include both policy updates as well as City programmatic updates, emphasizing selected placemaking projects produced or presented by the City.

### ***Policy Initiatives***

Easy Urbanism Permit for Use of Paseos & Plazas: Approved by Council as part of the Fees & Charges process for the 2017-2018 budget, the OCA's Easy Urbanism Permit established a mid-range fee of \$150 to encourage more frequent placemaking activities on paseos and plazas. This permit allows up to 500 people to gather on a paseo or plaza and organizers can present a myriad of elements (e.g. food, non-alcohol beverages, music, activities, equipment, furniture, etc.) to attract people to gather.

### **Outdoor Special Event Traffic Control:**

The cost and ability to secure staff to close public streets for temporary use for outdoor special events remains a concern for outdoor special event organizers. This item has been a focus of City staff since 2010 with various steps taken to address the issue. It is a balance of appropriate staff to provide a clear and safe traffic control plan in order to prevent accidental or intentional vehicle incursion into an event, and the cost of the staff to facilitate the plan. As SJPd is attempting to rebuild its staffing, the need for officers to work mandatory overtime to cover core patrol services is causing difficulty in securing off-duty police officers to cover positions for numerous temporary outdoor special events through the Secondary Employment Unit (SEU). SJPd works closely with DOT to formulate a traffic control plan that is safe for the community attending the event. Due to the requirements detailed within the California Vehicle Code Section 21100(e), staffing options to facilitate the closure of public streets is limited. Staff has implemented various staffing options to address the shortage of off-duty police staff available to work temporary outdoor special events including:

1. Since June 2010, the deployment of DOT Parking and Traffic Control Officers (PTCO) has been integrated into the staffing model for street closures related to outdoor special events. Currently, on average approximately 7-8 PTCOs may be available on a voluntary overtime basis to assist SJPd to secure streets on any given weekend. As with SJPd, the availability of PTCO staff to work temporary outdoor special events is limited. The existing program staffing level within the Parking Compliance Unit is not adequate to and was never anticipated to support the higher demands of the outdoor special event program.

2. In December 2014, the classification of Crossing Guard was updated to allow Crossing Guards to perform street closure duties for outdoor special events. Use of Crossing Guards for assistance to close a street is conducted on a limited basis with Crossing Guards most effective at locations where minimal traffic is expected.
3. SEU and DOT staff implement a progressive-staffing plan for outdoor special event street closures which includes the use of equipment and necessary staff. SEU staff posts the event to all off-duty and reserve Police Officers at the \$55 SEU pay rate. Concurrently SEU staff will post to PTCOs and CSOs to cover traffic control locations. If the positions are not filled, SEU staff will ask the permission of the event organizer to increase to overtime pay for off-duty and reserve officers, to better attract officers to work the outdoor special events positions.

Proposed Outdoor Sidewalk Seating Process Improvements: Staff is exploring opportunities to streamline and expand outdoor sidewalk seating for multiple uses beyond sidewalk cafes, as currently allowed in Title 20. While we have been working to amend Part 12: Sidewalk Café of the Title 20 Zoning Ordinance (Sections 20.100.1400 through 20.100.1490), the City Attorney's Office has recommended a different process in light of the Council having recently approved amendments to the Title 13.37: Encroachment Permits. Staff is exploring this new option to streamline sidewalk seating in the public right-of-way. Proposed streamlining is still anticipated to allow:

1. More Businesses Can Apply: More types of eligible business establishments (other than just public eating establishments) are proposed to be able to apply for outdoor sidewalk seating in the public right-of-way.
2. More Applicants Can Apply: In addition to owners or operators of an allowed business establishment, property owners and business associations responsible for an eligible area are proposed to be able to apply for outdoor sidewalk seating, provided they comply with the City's existing insurance and indemnification requirements.
3. Eligible Locations: Eligible businesses located in commercial areas proposed to be able to apply for outdoor sidewalk seating would include those located in:
  - Downtown;
  - Neighborhood business districts;
  - Urban villages; and
  - Most (not all) historic districts/areas.

PBCE staff conducted three community meetings to discuss the proposed ordinance changes with business stakeholders and members of the public at-large. Meetings were held on December 8, 2016, May 18, 2017, and September 28, 2017. Additionally, PBCE has coordinated with staff from the OED, OCA, DPW, DOT, SJPd, SJFD, Department of Finance, and the City Attorney's Office. More internal coordination is anticipated in light of the new approach suggested to streamline sidewalk seating in the public right-of-way.

### *Programmatic Updates*

Concurrent to the interdepartmental team's efforts to create more accessible and efficient policies and procedures, City staff continue to move forward to model best placemaking practices on activations. Recent placemaking highlights include:

Sonic Runway: On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the OCA in partnership with Burning Man Project launched *Sonic Runway* by artists Rob Jensen and Warren Trezevant as the first artwork for the *Playa to Paseo* initiative. Installed along Santa Clara Street in front of San Jose City Hall, *Sonic Runway* is a light-art installation that visualizes the speed of sound. The artwork converts audio signals into a pattern of lights that shoot down a corridor of arches at the speed of sound, (1235kph /767mph). The runway's arches are each lined with 277 addressable LEDs. Live audio input is analyzed and converted into intricate patterns that shoot down the corridor with sound and lights in sync. Standing at the front of the runway, the beats of the music visually ripple away from the viewer. Looking back from the far end, one can see the sound coming and hear the music just as the patterns reach the viewer.

Installed through mid-January, *Sonic Runway* will be activated through the *Sonic Runway: Experiments in Sound* series, comprised of performances by local sound artists, musicians and artists. Over the next three years, the *Playa to Paseo* partnership between the City of San José and Burning Man Project will site temporary, interactive artworks throughout San José as an invitation to play, engage, and participate in art-making city-wide.

CityDance: Presented by the OCA, CityDance is a participatory dance series that occurred on Thursday nights from August 24<sup>th</sup> to October 12<sup>th</sup> at Plaza de Cesar Chavez. Each evening was comprised of an hour-long dance lesson with either live music or a DJ. A range of dance and music genres were presented over the course of the series, with weeks dedicated to salsa, disco, Bollywood, hip hop, swing, and country two step, among others. In addition to dance instruction and music, attendees enjoyed food trucks and a beer garden. The series was well attended with a weekly average of about 300 attendees. The OCA is committed to continuing the dance series in 2018 with support from the Knight Foundation and in partnership with PRNS, ESD, Visit San Jose and the San Jose Downtown Association.

Viva CalleSJ: PRNS's 2017 Viva CalleSJ program event was a great success. This year's event extended the positive impact of the program, connecting San José's downtown to the east side's Lake Cunningham Regional Park. The seven-mile road closure saw an increase in community driven programming that attracted an estimated 130,000. Bay Area residents and visitors from around the country. Last year's VivaCalleSJ was estimated to have 100,000 participants. The highlight of this year's program event was the successful collaboration with Niantic, Inc. to bring aspects of augmented reality gaming to Viva CalleSJ through the Pokémon GO application. The collaborative efforts resulted in over 35,000 unique application logins and over 1 million in game Pokémon being caught!

It's Happening: PRNS's downtown park revitalization effort completed its fourth year of successful park activation. Estimated attendance increased to 26,000 participants, adding an additional 1,000 participants to all programming over the course of the summer. This year saw change in programming frequency, moving to a model that sought to activate the parks at least five days a week, as well as an increase in the variety of public life programming in Plaza Dé Cesar Chávez and St. James Park. Key additions to this year's summer programming include the successful Sunset Yoga program, drawing hundreds of participants downtown for large scale group yoga in the park, the Wine and Painting series, and ongoing open mic night opportunities for local musicians. Building forwards, PRNS is looking to continue activation into fall 2017 and early spring 2018.

¡Viva Parks! – The 2017 ¡Viva Parks! Summer activation series completed its third year of successful neighborhood park activations. This year saw an additional 10 ¡Viva Parks! program activations. Building on the 23 park activations from last year and expanding the program into parks in Council Districts 2, 8, and 10 at the request of Councilmembers, including Chris Hotts, Ramac, and Meadowfair Parks. A key highlight of this year's program is the increased collaboration between SJPd and PRNS for the activation of Chris Hotts Park in the Almaden Valley, looking to revitalize the neighborhood park and help address neighborhood crime and blight issues.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the November 27, 2017, Community and Economic Development Committee meeting.

### **COORDINATION**

This memo has been coordinated with OED/OCA, PRNS, PBCE, SJPd, SJFD, DOT, and the CAO.

### **CEQA**

Not a Project File No. PP10-069(a), Staff Reports/Assessments/Annual Reports/Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City Actions.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

November 27, 2017

**Subject: Easy Urbanism and Placemaking Initiative**

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