



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: PLACEMAKING AND
VIVA CALLESJ UPDATE

DATE: November 26, 2018

Approved

Date

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Placemaking and Viva CalleSJ Update highlighting 2018 achievements and opportunities to activate San José's public spaces in 2019.

OUTCOME

This report provides an update and overview of 2018 Placemaking programs, partnerships, creative revenue/funding efforts and sources, and performance metrics from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). The update will demonstrate program impact, growth, and popularity of all programs Placemaking. Additionally, this update contains information about Placemaking and Public Life programs and activities that the Department is currently developing for 2019. Input from the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee will help shape the plans for 2019.

BACKGROUND

The mission of PRNS is to build healthy communities through people, parks, and programs. In pursuit of this mission, the Department has focused community programming around the concepts of placemaking and public life as a strategy to achieve departmental goals and community outcomes. The intent is to better support the long-term maintenance of spaces that facilitate community building, encourage civic ownership of public spaces, and increase opportunities for engagement in public life.

The concept of a community-based, people-focused approach to urban design began in the 1960s when influential urbanists and planners like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte began advocating for city planning that resulted in a built environment oriented towards people. The term “placemaking” was introduced by urban planners and architects in the 1970s to describe the process of working collaboratively with all stakeholders to create public spaces like plazas and parks that are inviting, enjoyable, and reflective of the communities that use them. Placemaking is the process of intentionally creating quality places, wherein people want to live, work, play, and learn.”

The Department’s vision is to be a national leader in parks and recreation through the development of healthy communities, quality programs, and dynamic public spaces. Public life takes place in communal spaces and helps define the character of the city, builds civic pride, and encourages social integration. By creating a source of mutual stewardship for public spaces within the community, placemaking and public life strengthens local leadership and engages communities in the creation of public spaces that residents regularly use and value.

ANALYSIS

The Department strives to enhance service delivery through placemaking in public spaces. Key steps towards achieving these enhancements include directly engaging residents as stakeholders, and instilling a sense of pride and ownership in public places. Placemaking Team staff are committed to facilitating social interaction, developing valued public spaces, and improving the quality of life for residents. These commitments constitute an integral part of PRNS’ core service efforts to be curators of the City’s public life and stewards of open space. The efforts and future success of PRNS’ strategic placemaking and public life services continue to be challenged due to the one-time allocation of funds that end on June 30, 2019.

2018 Placemaking and Public Life Highlights

2018 was a busy year for Placemaking and Public Life programs. The Department delivered a significant number of Placemaking and Public Life program events that continue to create interest and momentum for neighborhood residents who seek to reclaim their parks as vibrant and dynamic community gathering spaces. Below are some of the 2018 Placemaking and Public Life program highlights:

Viva CalleSJ – For the fourth year in a row, Bay Area residents were free to bike, skate, walk, and play on San José streets during Viva CalleSJ. The 2018 program event, SoFA to the Streets, transformed six miles of open streets – from Parque de Los Pobladores in Downtown’s SoFA District to Martial Cottle Park in South San José – into the City’s largest urban park for the day. As in past years, the event promoted the community’s social connectivity and health and wellness, while directly reducing carbon emissions. The SoFA to the Streets route featured the iconic Monterey Road as the primary thoroughfare, allowing residents to explore the eclectic stretch of San José and its many historic and burgeoning destinations. Centralized hubs of

activity at the Downtown Arts District, Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, and Martial Cottle Park on the south side of the route provided access to resources, entertainment, and standard amenities such as restrooms, bicycle repair, lost and found, and merchandise sales. As a new addition to this year's event, approximately 300 runners took part in the inaugural Run Viva CalleSJ 5K and kids' fun run, increasing opportunities for engagement and helping to differentiate the program as one that is for more than just a biking. Based on the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) analysis, this event attracted an estimated 125,000 attendees to come walk, bike, and enjoy each other's company, which helps bridge socio-economic and geographic divides.

Program Evaluation

Key to the continued growth of Viva CalleSJ is evaluation of the program and improving the event based on the feedback. To this end, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation granted \$25,000 to the MTI, CommUniverCity, and the San Jose State University Urban and Regional Planning graduate program to expand the evaluation of Viva CalleSJ. A graduate-level class was charged with engaging residents and business owners before, during, and after the event to collect community perspectives and qualitative data regarding the impact of the event. More than 100 students participated. This funding will allow the continuation of participant surveys as staff seeks to measure the socio-economic impact of open-streets activations in San José. The final report is to be completed in January 2019.

Partnerships and Fund Development

Strategic partnerships and grant funding are key to the implementation of high-quality Viva CalleSJ program events that are reflective of communities in San José. For the 2018 Viva CalleSJ, PRNS engaged community partners and stakeholders to highlight resources available along the six-mile route. More than 60 organizations from all sectors and approximately 200 volunteers participated including: Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, SoFA Business Association, Knight Foundation, AARP, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, local businesses, arts organizations, community associations, and multiple City and County partners. This year's contributions from the Health Trust, AARP, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, and Santa Clara County total approximately \$565,000 in direct-cash and in-kind support, including multi-lingual marketing support through billboards, buses, bus stops, light rail, and more. The current one-time program costs for PRNS' Placemaking program this year is \$824,000, of which two-thirds was offset by the partner contributions listed above.

The 2018 program event continued the innovative partnership with Niantic, Inc. and its Pokémon GO augmented reality gaming application that launched in 2017. This year's partnership sought to refine the approach to recreational programming by using Pokémon GO as a digital carrot to increase participation at Viva CalleSJ. For the SoFA to the Streets event, PRNS engaged the Housing Department's Homelessness Response Team and its non-profit partners (HomeFirst and PATH) and challenged Pokémon GO players to provide a donation from a pre-determined list of items to assist in addressing homelessness challenges in the City. The partnership resulted in

over 4,600 unique application logins, with participants walking over 11,184 miles, and generating \$1,760 in cash donations, which Niantic matched.

For the first time, PRNS is launching a Spring VivaCalleSJ event to bring San José two events in one fiscal year. With only a one-time funding through June 30, 2019 the commitment and planning for fall VivaCalleSJ, including continued expansion for multiple events in a year, cannot be reliably organized.

Viva Parks: Neighborhoods – The PRNS team created Viva Parks to provide positive programming, physical activity, and civic engagement opportunities for families at under-utilized parks in high-need areas across San José. Underutilized open spaces can become trapped in a circle of blight if residents stop using their parks due to negative activities and inadequate maintenance. Parks have less “eyes” and the lack of our neighbors’ physical presence give room for illegal activities to take root. Viva Parks is a strategic disruption of that cycle with an investment of programming to help residents feel safe and welcome in their parks.

This year, the number of program events increased from 23 in 2017 to 52 in 2018 (Districts 2 and 8 provided one-time funding for program expansion). This growth was primarily in Council Districts 2, 7, and 8, with Districts 3 and 5 receiving programming levels similar to those in 2017. Events drew more than 10,000 community members, increasing access to recreational activities and resources to families in need.

Additionally, PRNS expanded its partnerships with the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, Children’s Discovery Museum, San Jose Earthquakes, and Be The Change to increase access to vital community resources and non-traditional recreation opportunities.

For example, Viva Parks: Neighborhoods offered a new program component called Mindful Movements at Ramac Park and Capitol Park with a goal of introducing residents to mindfulness and lifelong physical and mental health practices. Mindful Movements introduced yoga to residents by pairing yoga movements with familiar activities such as soccer. Other program components that Viva Parks offered at neighborhood parks included free yoga classes, Zen Den meditation, 3 vs. 3 futsal tournaments, backpack giveaways, the unveiling of a community mural funded by the San Jose Earthquakes, and free social services from the City and other local resource providers. Support from the Quakes Foundation afforded PRNS staff and program stakeholders the ability to generate awareness and increase community engagement. The parks had an average attendance of 600-700 residents and more than 9,000 attendees throughout the summer.

Viva Parks: Downtown – In 2018, this program solidified its transition from “It’s Happening” to “Viva Parks: Downtown” and continued the activation of Downtown parks, including Plaza de César Chavez and St. James Park, with approximately 35,700 participants enjoying more than 300 downtown activations. Activations designed around food allowed residents to grab a bite to eat in the park, participate in free programs, or step out of the office. Residents experienced

programs such as the Summer Concert Series and Doga (dog yoga), Sunset/Sunrise Yoga, Wine and Painting in the Park, Open Mic Nights, and the E.A.T. (Everyone At the Table) dinner event.

Plaza de César Chavez Activations

Plaza de César Chavez provides a unique space that draws residents, local workers, and visitors to celebrate downtown and encourages unique activities such as the Office of Cultural Affairs 3rd annual CityDance series, and a new collaboration with the Public Space Authority (PSA). By partnering with PSA, a private company, PRNS was able to expand programming opportunities to add 44 new family-friendly activations at the Plaza de César Chavez from June to September. The PSA coordinated with San José Made and Moveable Feast to provide food trucks and live music on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays. Over the course of the summer, activations were very successful and received positive feedback from the community. Over the course of the summer, approximately 26,700 residents attended activations in Plaza de César Chavez.

Viva Parks: Downtown staff also tested new programming concepts in Plaza de César Chavez, which created a daily presence in the park. Most notable was an informal video game tournament, as well as a socially conscious talent show. The video game tournament, featuring several popular video games such as Mario Kart and classics like Street Fighter, created a friendly and engaging environment in the park, encouraging attendees of all ages to participate in free video-game play on mobile televisions and two large 20-foot outdoor movie screens. The talent show brought together several community agencies to provide an opportunity for all individuals to display their talents. Acts included local artists and musicians. In 2019, PRNS Placemaking staff plans to increase collaborative efforts with the PSA and continues to develop new and innovative ideas to activate public space at Plaza de César Chavez.

St. James Park Activations

This year, staff took a slightly different approach to St. James Park activations. With St. James Park Management District Fund resources, PRNS awarded more than \$90,000 in grants to 25 vendors that provided park activations. PRNS Placemaking staff decided to replicate the neighborhood model for the Downtown park.

Non-traditional recreation amenities included a Saturday Night Concert Series and Starlight Cinema Movie Nights. Staff coordinated with vendors to provide 30-foot rock walls, large jumpers, life-size hamster balls, and extreme bungee jumpers, which provided diverse opportunities for residents of all ages to engage in recreation at these public life events. With these additional offerings, St. James Park transformed into a family-friendly environment between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. regularly. Staff received positive feedback from the community and attendance increased during the summer. Furthermore, Placemaking staff continued to activate the park Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. with daily lunchtime activities. Lunchtime activations included yoga, live music, large games, and tables and chairs for lunchtime breaks. For the 2019 programming season, staff plans to invite local organizations, and integrate community centers and camp operations with activities in St. James Park.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

PRNS continues to collaborate with other City departments, partners, and stakeholders to develop placemaking and public life strategies to foster community, economic, and infrastructure development. Staff will also continue the City's partnership with the Mineta Transportation Institute, which is evaluating Viva CalleSJ outcomes and performance with a generous grant of \$25,000 from the Knight Foundation.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting on December 13, 2018.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

This memorandum will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on December 5, 2019.

CEQA

Not a Project, Public Project Number PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Information Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/
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For questions, please contact Neil Rufino, Deputy Director, at (408) 535-3576.