

The Honorable Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San José
and Members of the San José City Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent Aug. 5, 2019

re: August 6th Agenda item 4.1, "Private Development Workforce Standards"

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

I'm writing to express my personal concerns about Agenda Item 4.1 and its possible implications to the city's park system. While the agenda item ostensibly is about "private development workforce standards" and "minimum labor standards", the supporting memos include language on the "compelling public interest in enabling housing production needed to mitigate the current housing crisis," and how "fee relief can be provided that might enable financing and construction".

New housing projects need supporting infrastructure such as streets, sewers, -- and parks. Rather than burdening current taxpayers with the cost of supporting these new developments, developers are expected to pay for the infrastructure needed for their projects. Sometimes the developers build the roads and parks themselves, sometimes it is done with in-lieu fees whereby the city pools the money from a number of nearby projects and then improves a road or builds a park. Recently, the city sometimes has sought to encourage development by waiving portions of the park fees, which impacts the nearby residents by adding new park users without correspondingly augmenting the local parks. And now I understand that there's talk about combining all the various fees into a single fee, and then also providing "relief" by reducing this overall fee. However, the cost of the needed roads and sewer lines probably cannot be reduced much, and so the park system might end up being even more impacted.

This brings up two points:

- It is inappropriate for the city to now take any action affecting the park system as there has not been the required public notification of such action as required by the Brown Act.
- Parks are critical to the future growth of San José! If housing is added without concurrently adding to the park system, the parks we have now will be overused and our quality-of-life will degrade. Residents of the new high-density projects now being developed will *need* parks, as they don't have private backyards or often even patios: they need some place to get outdoors for fresh air and sunshine. And conveniently nearby parks are especially important for residents of low-income and affordable units, as they are least able to afford traveling to and parking at the area's regional parks, or paying the entrance fees at places like Raging Waters or Great America.

If developers do not provide new parks for their new residents, San José's current voting and taxpaying residents, in order to protect their existing quality-of-life, will likely oppose any further development.

For the sake of our future city, please be careful to protect and support the parks of San José!

Thank you.

~Larry Ames, longtime parks advocate.

cc: City Clerk; City Manager; PRNS Dir.; SJ Parks Advocates; SJ Parks & Rec Commission;
Green Foothills Exec. Dir. and Advocate; SV at Home; District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group



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Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

The District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG), an association established over a decade ago, is comprised of officers, boardmembers and involved community representatives from the multitude of neighborhood associations across District 6 in San José. After discussion at tonight’s monthly meeting, the members attending unanimously voted to approve the writing of this letter.

We are concerned by Agenda Item 4.1 and its possible impact to the city’s park system. We received a briefing by Jean Dresden of the San José Park Advocates about a June 25th Council discussion on the arcane subject of “private development workforce standards” and “minimum labor standards”. We were told how, during public comment, a series of speakers, out-of-the-blue, spoke against park fees, prompting at least one Councilmember to comment something to the effect that, in a trade between housing and parks, it’s better to sleep in a house than in the park.

We are writing once again to reaffirm our support for parks. This is not an “either-or” choice. Housing is important, yes! -- but parks are critical as well! If high-density housing is built without backyards, patios, or nearby parks, then the residents are basically living in cages, deprived of sunlight, fresh air, exercise, and interpersonal interaction -- they cease to be residents and instead are more like prisoners in solitary confinement.

Yes, parks do cost money. But it is not fair to our current residents to either have their local parks overrun with the residents of the new developments, or else to tax themselves further so that the developers can reap their profits without mitigating the impacts of their enterprises.

Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers, please do not feel that the park fees are limiting the developers. Of course, they will complain about “high fees” -- everyone complains! -- but the park fee is but a fraction of a percent of a project’s total cost. If projects are not moving forward at the present time, it’s likely because of timing and our position late in a growth market: there’ll probably be recession by the time any project started now could be completed -- and giving away tax breaks will not affect that.

We can have housing -- decent housing! -- ***and*** parks! Please, do not give away San José’s future!

Thank you.

James Rincon, Chair, D6NLG

cc: City Clerk; City Manager; PRNS Dir.; SJ Parks Advocates; SJ Parks & Rec Commission