

FW: Council Agenda 10/19/2021, Item 3.5 -- Restoring Guadalupe River Park and Gardens

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Mon 10/18/2021 11:59 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachments (100 KB)

St James Park Fencing - SJMN Article 6-25-1990.pdf;

From: David Pandori <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, October 18, 2021 11:55 AM

To: The Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo <TheOfficeofMayorSamLiccardo@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>; City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Subject: Council Agenda 10/19/2021, Item 3.5 -- Restoring Guadalupe River Park and Gardens

[External Email]

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers

I am a member of the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens Working Group -- a group of staff members and community members assembled last year to find a humane path to helping the homeless who have sought refuge in the park and restoring the park itself.

I support the joint memorandum dated October 15, 2021 by Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Jones and Councilmembers Perales and Cohen. I hope that the rest of the city council will support it too.

Fencing is not the solution. A fence, no matter how sturdy, is only temporary. Any erected fence will come down eventually, no later than when the rest of the Guadalupe Gardens Master Plan is funded. Once the fence is taken down, encampments will return unless the city changes the policies and inactions that have allowed the current encampments to establish and flourish.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency fenced the entire boundaries of St. James Park during its last renovation. The fence remained up for years, even after the renovation was complete. Once the fence finally came down, it did not change the dynamics that attracted the homeless and others from occupying the park. Please find attached an article from the San Jose Mercury News on the issue.

A fence has never been needed for Guadalupe River Park and Gardens. What the park and the city as a whole needs is a commitment to ending the era of essentially city sanctioned encampments, including that vast encampment that has been permitted in Guadalupe River Park and Gardens and the safety zone for the airport.

10/18/21, 8:07 PM

Mail - Agendadesk - Outlook

San Jose is not a third-world city that must accept the hopelessness, lawlessness and helplessness embodied by shanty towns. We live in one of the wealthiest and smartest places in the world. We need the political commitment for common sense solutions. A fence is not a solution, but a desperate last resort. Please don't repeat the mistakes of the past.

Thank you for your consideration.

David Pandori

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FOR ST. JAMES PARK, FUTURE IS SLOW TO ARRIVE

*By DELIA M. RIOS, Mercury News Staff Writer June 25, 1990 Publication: San Jose Mercury News
(CA) Page: 1B Word Count: 587*

The fence surrounding downtown's St. James Park has stood for nearly two years as a chain-link monument to both San Jose's past and its future. Behind the fence, the memorial to assassinated President McKinley rises in testament to the park's late 19th century heyday -- just yards from a newly wrought fountain designed to recapture that past.

But what is most obvious to passers-by crossing the historic square is the park's awkward present.

Construction began two years ago to reclaim the park from the overgrowth and neglect that had taken hold during the years of downtown's abandonment. The drought intervened last year, prompting water restrictions and the postponement of some planting.

But the fence remained. And despite the attempts here and there to push it in for access, it will probably stay up at least through December, when the planting of trees and flowers and the installation of brick walkways is expected to be completed.

Even that won't be the end of the park's resurrection.

Mayor Tom McEnery's recently released city budget provides \$50,000 for park improvements this year and proclaims, "This historic park will be one of the newest features in downtown by the end of summer."

However, construction will resume in fiscal 1995, when the city plans to spend an additional \$1.6 million to install a second Victorian-era fountain and additional planters at the park's corners, said Art Rosales, park and recreation department manager for St. James Park renovations.

The first phase of development cost the city \$866,000. It was completed this month with the removal of dying American elm trees, the installation of new grass, an irrigation system, lighting and a fountain on the Second Street side of the park. A second phase -- which will include the brick walkways, park benches and additional trees -- is expected to get under way by the end of this month and will cost \$273,000.

The intent, city officials say, is to evoke the St. James Park of the 1800s, when the park was the place to gather.

Throughout this century, the park has played a key role in the city's history. Across the street from the old Santa Clara County courthouse, McKinley and Robert F. Kennedy spoke to San Jose residents shortly before their assassinations. Nearly 60 years ago, one of the last reported lynchings on the West Coast occurred at the park when two murder suspects were dragged from their jail cells and hanged from the park's trees.

But in recent years, with its heavy overgrowth and poorly lit walkways, the park had become a refuge for the city's homeless.

"Like most of the downtown parks, time had passed it by," said Frank Taylor, redevelopment director.

The only remnant of the presence of the homeless in the park is a sign posted on the fence, directing them to a new soup kitchen.

"When they open the park back up, I can anticipate that people would want to use it to congregate. But my feeling is that they won't be allowed to do that," said Paula Kubicz of the Mental Health Advocacy Project, a member of the "Help the Homeless" coalition.

"Seeing a bunch of homeless people in the park is certainly not part of the image that redevelopment would like for San Jose."

Instead, city officials say, reviving the city's various downtown parks is considered a crucial finishing touch to San Jose's renewal.

"It's a very beautiful expanse of green in an area where we see future development and housing," said Taylor.

"Housing and city parks are a very good fit for urban design."

San Jose Mercury News (CA)

Date: June 25, 1990

Page: 1B

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FW: Call to Action

Mossing, Mackenzie <Mackenzie.Mossing@sanjoseca.gov>

Mon 10/18/2021 5:18 PM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

For posting to Item 3.5 on the agenda tomorrow. Thanks!



Mackenzie Mossing

Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Advisor

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From: jim [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, October 18, 2021 5:05 PM

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Subject: Re: Call to Action

[External Email]

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

As a former President of the Board of Directors of Guadalupe River Park Conservancy and longtime Coleman Avenue business owner, it pains me to oppose the proposed alternative to fencing 40 acres in Guadalupe Gardens.

However, this is much too little and much too late. The City suddenly has the means to rehouse the homeless and police the area after allowing illegal encampments and lawlessness for years? The long broken Park Ranger program is going to be fixed, empowered to act, and will have the full support of SJPD? Sounds great, but given the City's track record, I don't have any confidence in the City's ability to provide Rangers or the other services listed in the proposal.

Let's build the fence for \$1.5M and, after two or three years, evaluate 1) its effectiveness, and 2) the City's record of restoring the entire GRPG to its intended use.

If activations are working in other areas of the park, and if homeless people haven't repopulated the park, and if there's a viable law enforcement program, the fence can come down. Ultimately, the land needs to return to parkland so that the GG Master Plan can come to fruition, but the City's pattern of neglect of this area does not warrant wasting more funds at this time.

Sincerely,
Jim Alves

Fw: Council Agenda 10/19/2021 - Item 3.5 Actions Related to the 9821 - SJC Guadalupe Gardens Fencing Project and Temporary Closure of Spring Street and Asbury Streets

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Wed 10/20/2021 11:11 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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How is our service? Please take our short survey.

From: Jason Su [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2021 10:22 AM

To: The Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo <TheOfficeofMayorSamLiccardo@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Cc: Cicirelli, Jon <Jon.Cicirelli@sanjoseca.gov>; Kline, Kelly <Kelly.Kline@sanjoseca.gov>; Ramos, Christina M <christina.m.ramos@sanjoseca.gov>

Subject: Re: Council Agenda 10/19/2021 - Item 3.5 Actions Related to the 9821 - SJC Guadalupe Gardens Fencing Project and Temporary Closure of Spring Street and Asbury Streets

[External Email]

Dear City Clerk,

I noticed that this letter was not included in the letters from the public file of the Council agenda. I am inquiring about the possibility of including it.

Thank you,

On Tue, Oct 19, 2021 at 9:56 AM Jason Su <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Honorable Mayor, Members of the City Council, and City Clerk,

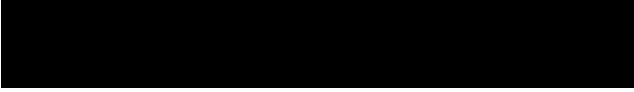
Attached is our comment letter on behalf of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy for today's Council Agenda - Item 3.5.

Thank you,

--

Jason Su (he/him)

Executive Director | Guadalupe River Park Conservancy



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Jason Su *(he/him)*

Executive Director | Guadalupe River Park Conservancy



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October 19, 2021

Mayor, City Council, City Clerk
City of San Jose
200 E Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Letter of Support re: Item 3.5 - Actions Related to the 9821 - SJC Guadalupe Gardens Fencing Project and Temporary Closure of Spring Street and Asbury Streets

Dear Honorable Mayor, Members of the City Council, and City Clerk,

The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (GRPC) is the City's non-profit partner providing community leadership for the active use and development of the Guadalupe River Park. Our letter is rooted in pursuit of the vision for the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens as identified in the San Jose Envision 2040 General Plan as San Jose's "grand park," and the Guadalupe River Park Master Plan and Guadalupe Gardens Master Plan..

First, we acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing work of our City and elected partners. The challenges this project is addressing is monumental and complex, and the coordination between multiple City departments to achieve this is noteworthy.

We offer our support of the Memorandum by Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Jones, Councilmember Peralez, and Councilmember Cohen, particularly to accelerate rehousing for unhoused residents at the flight path site as the staff continues to bring the San Jose International Airport back to FAA compliance.

We are also encouraged that the Mayor, City Council, and staff proposed project alternatives and creative opportunities to activate and restore that section of the Guadalupe Gardens to an amenity the whole city may enjoy. A fence should not be the sole option; it would be poor use of public land that has the potential to provide great civic and environmental benefits. It would also prevent everyone, the unhoused residents and the general public, from connecting with the Gardens in positive ways.

We hope that the City will eventually see the active-use and development of the site as an opportunity to drive place-based equity, through activities that promote public health and recreation, localized workforce development and education opportunities, and promote social cohesion and environmental stewardship by connecting people to nature and each other.

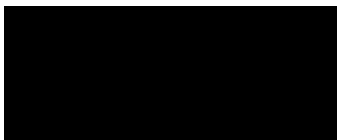
This letter highlights items we believe would be prudent for discussion by City Council, and further exploration by Staff:

1. Given that this proposal is at the intersection of airport safety and park development, we encourage the City to expand their definition of success around optimizing use of city funding to factor in city assets like the land itself, and the potential economic, environmental, and equitable value that can be gained through investments in our parks. What we have here is a civic investment opportunity to enhance our social infrastructure and support healthier, greener, and more connected communities.
2. With the area procured by the City with funds from the FAA, there are a number of restrictions that make the development of the Guadalupe Gardens area more challenging. One in particular is the provision that uses and leases need to be executed at fair market value, unless the uses meet an exception for community use that enhance public benefit. Directing staff to analyze, clarify, and strategize how we can achieve the activation goals through cross-sector partnerships (nonprofits, private sector, external funders, etc.) would ensure a clearer pathway to achieving the vision of the River Park as identified in our General Plan.
3. The Conservancy works closely and routinely with our City partners to program and maintain the park, provide education and enrichment opportunities, extend community outreach efforts, and collectively work to promote neighborhood development through parks. Through this we are intimately aware of staff's passion for the City, and the persistent challenges around staffing, hiring, and resources that hinder their efforts. We would be remiss not to mention that achieving the goals in the Memorandums and other City priorities would require a deep look at how they are supported so that our City is set up for success.

We hope the City reframes the efforts to bring our Airport back to FAA compliance as an opportunity to catalyze the buildout of the Guadalupe Gardens Master Plan, and position investments in parks, public spaces, and community amenities as integral parts of our broad recovery efforts. We also hope the City sees this as an opportunity to furthering other City and regional goals, such as the Santa Clara County Community Plan to End Homelessness, San Jose Envision 2040 General Plan, Climate Smart San Jose, ActivateSJ, and others.

It would be a milestone for San Jose to finish the build out of the "Grand Park" as designated in San Jose's Envision 2040 General Plan, and do so in a way that supports many other priorities. We see this work already underway, and encourage its direction.

Regards,



Jason Su
Executive Director