



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE **FROM:** Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Community Impact Report **DATE:** November 24, 2025

Approved

Date:

12/4/2025

RECOMMENDATION

Accept an update on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Community Impact Report.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

The Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) is advancing two major initiatives to build a more equitable and financially sustainable parks system:

1. **Parks and Recreation Master Plan:** PRNS is developing a new Master Plan to create a comprehensive, community-informed framework to guide investments in parks, trails, and recreation facilities. It will specifically create a legal basis for changing how park fees are distributed, ensuring that neighborhoods with fewer development projects have fair access to resources for repairs and new amenities. Once the Master Plan is complete, the City can move forward with changing policy to redistribute future park fees.
2. **Potential Park Revenue Measure:** Recognizing that park maintenance funding has not kept pace with the system's growth, PRNS is conducting an education and engagement campaign to explore dedicated funding options for park upkeep and other critical priorities. Community education and feedback will shape final recommendations for a potential 2026 ballot measure.

Additionally, the 2025 Community Impact Report fulfills the Department's annual financial reporting requirement under Council Policy 1-21 and now also serves as the annual ActivateSJ Status Report.

BACKGROUND

The Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) continues to advance its mission through the ActivateSJ Strategic Plan, adopted by the City Council in December 2019. ActivateSJ establishes a people-first, service-driven framework grounded in five guiding principles: Stewardship, Nature, Equity & Access, Identity, and Public Life. Together, these principles guide PRNS in meeting our mission of creating vibrant, healthy communities through parks, recreation, and neighborhood services.

On March 19, 2024¹, the City Council approved the Mayor's March Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, which included direction to the City Manager to explore new funding mechanisms for park operations and maintenance and to revise regulations to support an equity-based distribution of park fees.

The Department is now developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to carry forward the ActivateSJ guiding principles while addressing funding inequities and system sustainability. In tandem, PRNS is advancing a potential revenue measure to diversify funding and reduce reliance on the General Fund.

Finally, PRNS is required to submit an annual report demonstrating the Department's commitment to financial sustainability in service delivery (Council Policy 1-21, Pricing and Revenue Policy). The 2025 Community Impact Report fulfills this requirement.

ANALYSIS

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) is the industry standard for guiding cities in planning, investing in, and caring for their parks, trails, and recreational facilities. It provides a data and community-informed policy framework to help ensure decisions about where and how to improve the system are strategic, equitable, and sustainable.

The Greenprint² previously served as PRNS' Master Plan. However, the Greenprint has not been updated since 2009 and served as a capital plan for the development of new parks and facilities. The new Master Plan will create a more sustainable and better coordinated parks and recreation system, where capital projects, maintenance, and operations are planned together to maximize resources and impact. Rooted in extensive

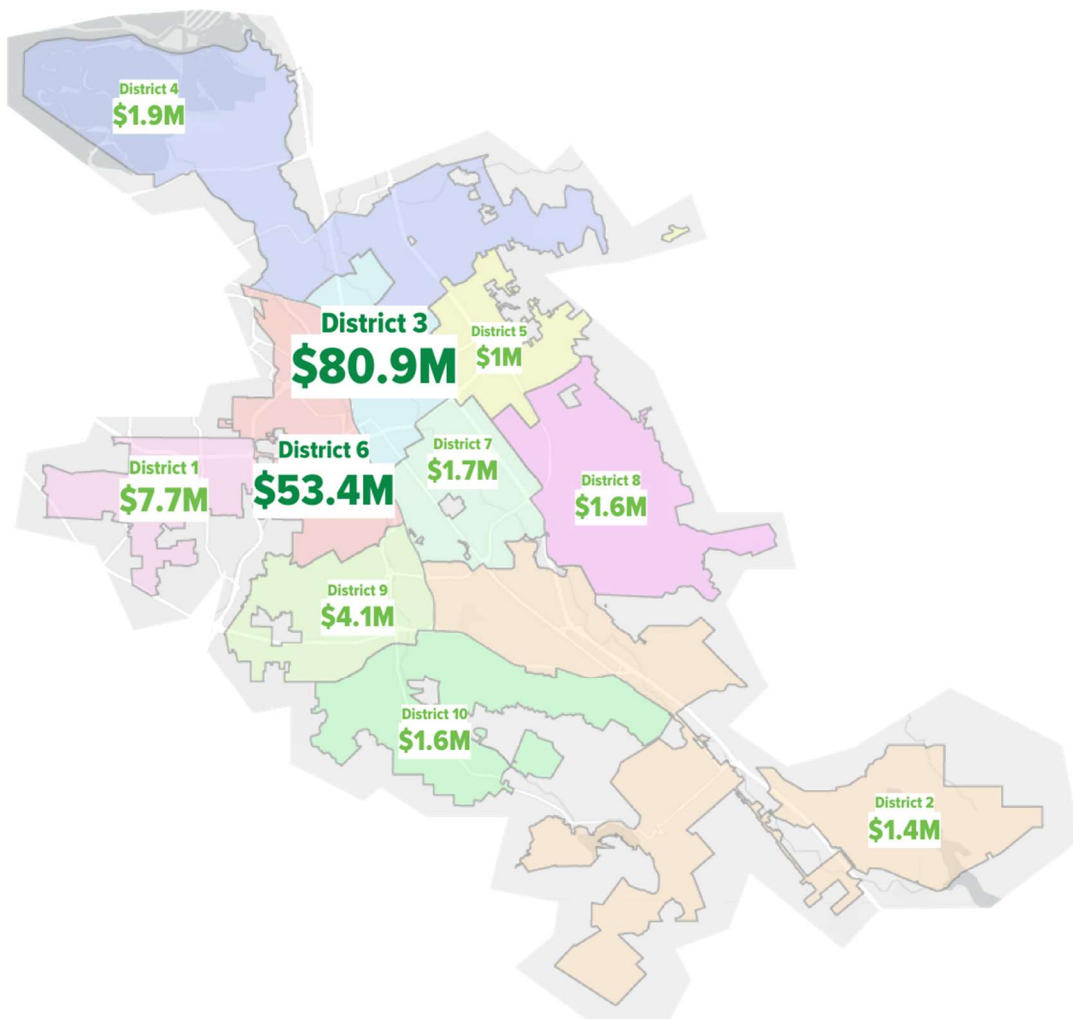
¹ [City Council Meeting Minutes, March 19, 2024](#) (page 8)

² [San José Greenprint 2000 and 2009 Update](#)

community engagement, the Master Plan will capture the priorities, needs, and values of San José residents and other community stakeholders. This engagement is critical because it not only shapes the plan's goals and investments but also provides a legal basis for updating policies, including how park fees are distributed across the city.

Currently, most park funding comes from residential development fees, which has created inequities in the parks system. Areas with new development receive significantly more resources than neighborhoods with less residential growth (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Park Fees Collected Over the Past 10 Years



The Master Plan will identify policy options to create a more balanced, equitable approach, allowing the City to direct resources where they are needed most while complying with state laws governing fee use. By aligning with ActivateSJ and informed

by robust community engagement, the Master Plan will ensure San José's parks and recreation system continues to reflect community priorities, promote equity, and support a healthier, more connected city.

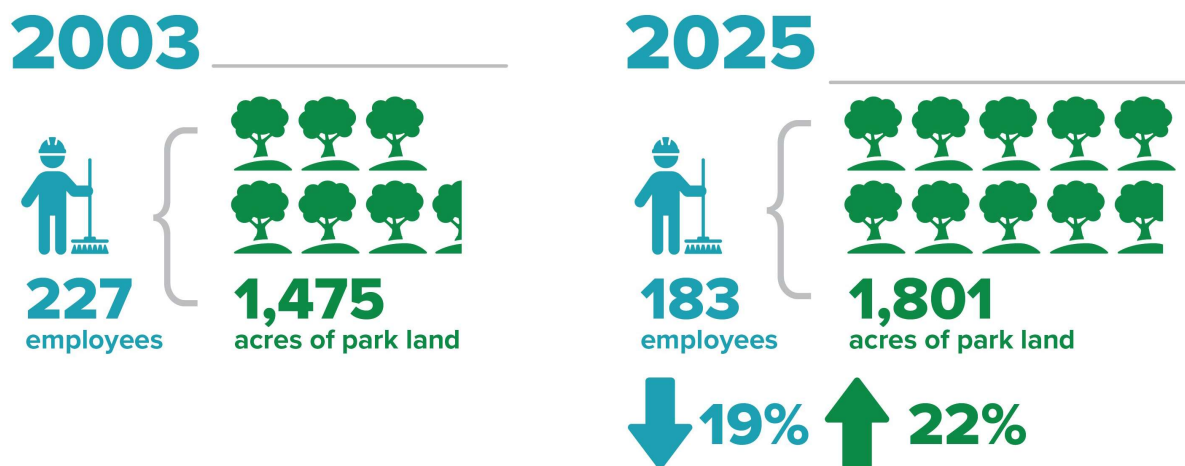
The Department is currently developing a scope of work and plans to begin technical work on the Master Plan in early 2026, followed by community engagement later in the year.

Revenue Measure for Park Maintenance

Stewardship (i.e., the responsibility to take care of what we have) emerged as the community's top priority during the ActivateSJ community engagement process. However, the City's resources to maintain parks have significantly declined since the early 2000s, despite an increase in the amount of parkland that needs care.

At its peak in 2003, there were 227 full-time employees (FTEs) in key maintenance classifications responsible for maintaining 1,475 developed acres. As of 2025, staffing has dropped to 183 FTEs, while the amount of developed parkland has grown to 1,801 acres—a 19% reduction in staffing alongside a 22% increase in acreage. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Maintenance Staff are Stretched Thin



Dedicated, stable funding is essential to caring for San José's parks, trails, and recreational facilities at the level the community expects and deserves. Currently, the General Fund is the primary source of maintenance funding, which is subject to economic fluctuations and budget cuts. Once budget cuts are made, it is difficult to recover and make up for those losses. Without a stable source of funding, park conditions will continue to deteriorate, and the deferred maintenance backlog will grow, threatening public safety, equity, and access to quality outdoor spaces.

To address this challenge, PRNS is conducting an education and engagement campaign to build awareness of the funding issues, strengthen community pride, and foster a shared sense of ownership in developing a solution through a potential parks revenue measure on the November 2026 ballot.

The campaign launched on October 4, 2025, at the Annual Neighborhoods Conference, where approximately 40 neighborhood leaders participated in a workshop on park funding. The Department has prepared a suite of materials—including a webpage, PowerPoint presentations, factsheets, a map-based online survey, social media posts, and talking points for staff and partners—to continue public education and engagement through the end of the fiscal year.

To inform the education campaign, PRNS and the City Manager's Office surveyed more than 1,000 San José voters to better understand community priorities and perceptions about park funding. The survey did not test specific ballot language but instead measured overall support for the concept of creating dedicated funding for parks. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) said there is a "great need" or "some need" for more park funding, and 72% agreed that investments should prioritize areas most in need of repairs and maintenance rather than those closest to their homes. When asked about a conceptual \$0.02-per-square-foot parcel tax, 54% expressed support, 25% were opposed, and 21% were undecided. The education and engagement campaign will focus on reaching these undecided voters to build understanding and support for park funding. The threshold for passage of this tax would be 66.6%.

The City is exploring several potential funding options for the 2026 election cycle in response to City Council direction, including a parcel tax specific to park maintenance, a general obligation bond, and a transient occupancy tax. In addition, the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department conducted a study in partnership with the City, California Department of Public Health, and the Harvard Chan School of Public Health to explore the health and economic benefits of a potential sugar-sweetened beverage excise tax in San José. This tax could fund the City's park maintenance and strategies aligned with the City's Children and Youth Services Master Plan. The revenue from a sugar-sweetened beverage tax would be collected and used by the City while also resulting in savings for the County's healthcare system from reduced consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Each revenue option would create different levels of funding for parks, so the Department is developing spending plans for each scenario to show the community and City Council how parks would be improved. Feedback from residents on these proposed spending plans will help guide final recommendations. Any new source of funding would supplement the General Fund allocated to PRNS and should not replace existing budget allocations.

The City Manager's Office is polling revenue measures, and if any option is viable, the Administration will bring forward recommendations to the City Council during the 2026-2027 Budget Process.

Community Impact Report

The 2025 Community Impact Report (Attachment A) fulfills the Department's obligation under Council Policy 1-21, Pricing and Revenue Policy, to issue a report each year about how it met the policy's goal to establish a financially sustainable approach to delivering services. Beginning this year, the Community Impact Report will serve a dual purpose. It continues to meet the financial reporting requirements under Council Policy 1-21 while also functioning as the annual ActivateSJ Status Report.

The Department remains committed to sustainable financial management while prioritizing equitable pricing for high-quality programs, facilities, and services. PRNS regularly evaluates and adjusts its pricing to remain competitive within the local market. Simultaneously, as a public agency, PRNS prioritizes equitable access for the community's most vulnerable populations through subsidies, scholarships, and pricing discounts. In 2024-2025, PRNS provided \$1.5 million in scholarships to 2,133 unduplicated recipients.

In 2024-2025, PRNS generated \$33 million in revenue through diverse streams, including inter-fund transfers, fee-based programs, and grants. Upon reviewing overall revenue to expenses, PRNS cost recovery was 22% compared to 27.6% in 2023-2024, indicating a decrease in revenue generation.

In 2021-2022, the Californians for All Resilience Corps Grant awarded PRNS \$10.2 million in state funding, for which PRNS requests reimbursement over multiple years. In 2023-2024, PRNS received a significant \$6 million reimbursement, which boosted revenue that year. The Department did not receive similar reimbursement this year but anticipates receiving them in the future, which will contribute to future revenue.

COORDINATION

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

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Agenda website for the December 3, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and the December 11, 2025, Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memorandums that involve no approvals of any City action.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/

Jon Cicirelli
Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Public Information Manager, at amanda.rodriguez@sanjoseca.gov or 408-460-4468.

Attachment A: ActivateSJ 2025 Community Impact Report