



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Rose Herrera
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Johnny Khamis

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: April 3, 2015

APPROVED:

DATE: 4-3-15

SUBJECT: FRIENDS OF LEVITT PAVILION EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept staff report and endorse the concept of Levitt Pavilion in St. James Park.
2. Endorse the community proceeding to form a Levitt Pavilion Steering Committee, which will ultimately become an independent, private non-profit "Friends of Levitt San José." The Committee should have representation from the following stakeholders:
 - a. Residents (including representation from the Horace Mann Neighborhood Association, Historic Hensley Neighborhood Association, Downtown HOA Coalition, San Jose Downtown Residents Association)
 - b. Business
 - c. Faith Congregations Fronting St. James Park
 - d. Historic Preservation
 - e. Arts Advocates
 - f. Parks Advocates
 - g. Valley Transportation Authority
 - h. City of San José
 - i. Philanthropy
 - j. Homeless Service Providers
 - k. San José Police Department
3. The Levitt Pavilion Steering Committee shall proceed with a fundraising feasibility study and a preliminary business plan for Levitt Pavilion San José .
4. Direct the City Manager to work with the Levitt Pavilion Steering Committee in an advisory role. Additionally, the City Manager is directed to work with the Committee to determine the following:
 - a. Operating and maintenance cost and sustainable financial plan that would protect the City's General Fund

- b. Location of Levitt Pavilion within St. James Park
 - c. Preliminary Pavilion design that is aesthetically consistent with the federal historical district that encompasses St. James Park
 - d. Appropriate level of environmental analysis
5. Return to Council in six months for an update on the work outlined above.

BACKGROUND

In December 2013, the City Council authorized the City Manager to participate in a community-led process to assess the feasibility of a Levitt Pavilion in St. James Park. We appreciate the extensive work that city staff and the community has conducted over the last 15 months, holding several working sessions, meetings with community, noise analysis, site visits to other Levitt venues and gathering public input at the Arts Commission, Historic Landmarks Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and the Council led Community and Economic Development Committee.

Throughout the process, we've heard the urgent need to revitalize St. James Park and restore its promise of a safe and vibrant public space in the heart of our City's urban core. The surrounding areas of the park, which sits within blocks of nine new residential developments, are rapidly changing with higher densities, mixed-use development and a new civic center complex. There is significant private investment happening, allowing a Levitt Pavilion to capitalize on the Downtown revitalization. We urge the Council to join us in supporting a partnership with Levitt; we believe the timing is urgent to move forward.

Levitt Pavilions focuses on revitalizing blighted city parks and has successfully activated a half-dozen other notorious urban trouble spots, including Los Angeles's MacArthur Park and Pasadena's Memorial Park, with plans to expand into Denver, Houston, and New Orleans. There is no doubt that St. James Park, San José's first urban park remains a daily display of the grittiest challenges of modern urban life: violence, drug use, crime, homelessness, and all forms of despair. Over the last year, city staff and community members have worked diligently to activate the park, most notably through the successful "Summer in St. James" series of events. There is a willingness within City Hall and the community to keep the momentum moving forward on achieving park activation.

Levitt also requires that there be community leadership and investment in the process. With a broad set of stakeholders around the table, representing interests ranging from residents and business to the arts and historical preservation, and the work during summer 2014 to activate the park with community events, strong momentum has emerged for the revitalization of the Park. Partnering with Levitt Pavilions presents an opportunity to transform our City's oldest park, a long neglected and underused urban park, into a vibrant outdoor public space where live music and performance invigorates community life.