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City Manager's Office

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Julie Edmonds-Mares

**SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN FOR HEALTHY  
FOOD SAN JOSE**

**DATE:** August 21, 2012

Approved

Date

8/22/12

## INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the collaborative effort between the City and the HealthTrust to perform the objectives and scope of work outlined in the grant agreement between the City of San José and HealthTrust regarding the "Campaign for Healthy Food San Jose." The Campaign is designed to increase access to healthy food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, in all neighborhoods in San José.

## BACKGROUND

The vision of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) is to be the National Leader of Parks and Recreation in cultivating healthy communities through quality programs and dynamic public spaces. PRNS uses the City's Greenprint for Parks, Recreation Facilities and Trails (Greenprint) as a framework to focus the efforts of staff toward the achievement of this vision and other common goals developed in conjunction with the community, partners and key stakeholders. The original Greenprint was approved by Council in 2000 and was updated in 2009. It supports and aligns with other Citywide planning efforts such as the General Plan and the Green Vision.

As a strategy to build healthy communities, PRNS manages programs and facilities that together increase community livability. In addition to parks, community centers and trails, the department develops and operates community gardens as one of its core services. Community gardens help build a sense of community and fulfill important socialization needs, as well as create sustainable urban farming opportunities for locally grown crops. The City currently has 19 gardens.

The City's community garden program is immensely popular and demand for garden plots has been increasing year after year. Currently, there are approximately 400 San José residents that are waiting for a plot. Due to budget reductions in past years however, the number of staff supervising the gardens had been reduced from two full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to 0.50

FTE. Staff began to look for grant opportunities to sustain the financial needs of the program. In the fall of 2011, staff applied for and received a grant from HealthTrust.

The HealthTrust is a local, non-profit organization that aims to advance healthy living and wellness. Further information can be found on their website at: <http://www.healthtrust.org/>. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) partnered with the HealthTrust in seeking a grant from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Program administered by Santa Clara County. The CPPW Program is a nationally driven initiative that was established to tackle obesity and tobacco use in the United States. Other partners in the program include First 5 Santa Clara County, Working Partnerships USA, and Pacific Coast Farmers Markets Association.

On November 1, 2011, the HealthTrust awarded PRNS a grant in the amount of \$25,000 for a cooperative effort in increasing public awareness of the Campaign for Healthy Food San Jose (hereinafter "the Campaign"). Similarly, the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) received a grant in the amount of \$23,000 for efforts to streamline permit processes for small farmers' markets and mobile vending, with a similar goal of enhancing access to healthy food within the City.

Ten years of consequent budget reductions has challenged staff's ability to consider service expansions based on increased demand for initiatives such as the Community Gardens. Through this effort staff is exploring alternative financing and community partnership models that can result in increasing neighborhood access to healthy foods while minimizing the cost to the City of San José.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

With the assistance of the grant, and as a result of the collaborative partnership, a number of accomplishments and key initiatives are either moving forward or have been implemented to date. Four of the key initiatives are described below:

**1. Develop a new or revised policy to support alternative operation of community gardens.**

Staff is currently in the process of advancing two new community garden projects that involve alternative financing and the use of community partners to operate the sites. These partners will absorb the majority of costs associated with operating the gardens thereby maximizing capacity to operate new sites with less City of San José resources. The two community garden projects staff will review and potentially replicate are:

- **Garden to Table Community Gardens:** This partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) and CommUniverCity is focusing on a pilot program to develop a 26 plot community garden on SCVWD owned property near Coyote Creek. Subject to SCVWD approval, this alternative model will allow CommUniverCity, a collaborative effort between the City, residents and San Jose State University, to be responsible for the development, operations and maintenance of the garden.

More information about CommUniverCity can be found on their website at:  
<http://cucsjs.org/>

- **Veggielution Partnership:** The City and Veggielution have had a successful partnership at Emma Prusch Farm Park since 2008. Veggielution is a non-profit community farm dedicated to creating a more sustainable food system in San José. They empower people to change the way they think about food by getting their hands in the soil, connecting with the land, and tasting the fruits of their labor. Veggielution is in the process of tripling their current two acre site for a total site of six acres of communal gardens and fruit orchards. This site will be operated at no cost to the City and will provide countless opportunities for urban farming, learning, and other educational programs through volunteering and collaboration.

Further information on Veggielution can be found on their website at:  
<http://www.veggielution.org/>

- 2. Evaluate the current adopted 2009 Greenprint service level objectives for Community Gardens and develop a new or revised policy for placing community gardens in new or existing parks.**
  - PRNS staff will use the master plan process for park development as a tool to evaluate the inclusion of community gardens as an amenity for existing or new parks based on service level objectives, size, location and community interest.
- 3. Recommend as a priority the expansion of community gardens in the PRNS annual budget, as part of the City's budget process.**
  - Funded and enhanced garden supervision (from 0.5 to 0.75 FTE) to support community gardening.
  - Capital and Operating Budgets: PRNS staff will utilize these budget process opportunities to recommend funding priorities for the expansion of the community garden program and development of new gardens with minimal operational costs to the City. These budget recommendations will be subject to City Council consideration and approval and will be evaluated against other top capital project priorities such as infrastructure, land banking, sports fields and land banking for new park development.
  - Staff will continue to seek grants in support of the campaign for healthy food.
- 4. Assist the HealthTrust in conducting and holding multiple community forums to educate existing and future gardeners and community members regarding the campaign.**

PRNS staff worked with HealthTrust and other partners in holding and conducting 20 independent outreach events and reached approximately 1,500 San José residents to solicit feedback about the proposed changes and garner public support. These events included:

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- First 5 Grantees Meeting (March 14, 2012) with representatives from: International Children's assistance Network (ICAN), Sacred Heart Community Service Agency, Catholic Charities, Somos Mayfair, SJB Child Development Centers, Silicon Valley Education Foundation (SVEF).
- Neighborhood community meetings, individual outreach, and flyer distribution conducted by First 5 grantees with First 5-supported families (March-April 2012) including these venues: McKinley-Bonita Neighborhood Association SNI/NAC Meeting, Olinder and Edenvale Neighborhood Meetings, Luther Burbank and Dahl Community Meetings, Berryessa Cooking Classes, Salud Familiar y Exito Excolar, Family Resource Centers, Hindi RAR and Gardening Club.
- 2012 Santa Clara County Certified Farmers Market Manager Meeting (March 29, 2012)
- PRNS Community Meeting (April 28, 2012)
- Individual outreach and flyer distribution conducted by Pacific Coast Farmers' Market at the Berryessa Family/Community Event and other farmers' markets (March-May 2012)

The initiatives listed above were chosen because they have minimal City start-up costs. Additionally, they benefit local community-building and economic development in alignment with Healthy Food Access and Urban Agriculture policies in San José's General Plan.

PRNS is also partnering with PBCE in supporting this campaign. An ordinance to amend the Zoning Ordinance (Title 20) was approved Council on August 14, 2012, to establish zoning and use regulations to streamline the approval process for certain types of farmers' markets within San José. The amendment includes a definition and operational requirements for "Small Certified Farmers' Markets" which would be permitted by right within certain zoning districts so long as they meet certain criteria set forth in the Ordinance. These amendments are intended to implement Envision San José 2040 General Plan policies and the City Council Priority Ordinances for FY 2011-2012 (identified on February 28, 2012) by supporting increased access to healthy food through a streamlined permit process for recurring farmers' markets on private property.

Allowing farmers' markets to operate at park sites and streamlining the permit processes for farmers' markets at private and public properties will provide increased accessibility to healthy foods to the general public. Community gardens benefit the community through improved nutrition, physical activity, and lower household food costs.

Key next steps for PRNS include:

1. By September 30, 2012, develop procedures to support operation of certified farmers' markets on City park properties;
2. Continue to explore opportunities to pursue additional alterative garden operations modeled after the successful Veggelution program at Emma Prusch Farm Park and the impending CommUniverCity Garden to Table site; and

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3. Evaluate the potential for funding new community garden development and initiatives as part of the next Annual Budget Process.

PRNS staff will coordinate ongoing efforts with the County Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Health Services as well as with the City's Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, the Police Department and the Office of Economic Development. Also, staff will continue to update the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee on a regular basis on the progress of initiatives to support the Campaign for Healthy Food San Jose.

/s/  
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For questions please contact Steve Hammack, Deputy Director, at 408-793-5579.