



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Jim Shannon

**SUBJECT: SENIOR CITIZENS COMMISSION  
2024-2025 CITY BUDGET  
PRIORITIES**

**DATE:** May 9, 2024

Approved

Date: 5/9/2024

## BACKGROUND

This Manager's Budget Addendum (MBA) transmits the information memorandum from the Senior Citizens Commission to the Mayor and City Council regarding the Commission's 2024-2025 budget priorities. At the request of Councilmember Foley, this MBA will also be issued in future budget cycles in a process similar to the transmittal of budget priorities for the San José Youth Commission.

JIM SHANNON  
Budget Director

## ATTACHMENT:

Senior Citizens Commission 2024-2025 City Budget Priorities

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Senior Citizens Commission  
Chair, Gina Gates-Lopez

**SUBJECT:** BUDGET PROPOSALS  
2024-2025 CITY BUDGET  
PRIORITIES

**DATE:** May 9, 2024

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Approved

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**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

## INFORMATION MEMO

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The City of San José Senior Citizens Commission recommends the Honorable Mayor and City Council consider the following budget priorities of San Jose's older adults when setting priorities and developing the 2024-2025 City of San Jose operating budget.

### **BACKGROUND**

Thirteen percent (130,000) of San Jose's current population is older adults aged 50 and older. Per the 2023 IFF Population Demographic Projections there are 448,001 older adults age 60+ living in Santa Clara County. While some of those adults in the IFF study do not live in San Jose, some do utilize San Jose's services, parks and trails, facilities, and recreation programs. After working hard for decades, older adults are now living 20 years longer on a limited income with the cost of inflation. Today's older adults face a vastly different retirement than twenty years ago.

Older adults are living with the consequences of the decisions made by our city officials each year, which is why the San José Senior Citizens Commission feels it is crucially important that older adults are prioritized while developing the 2024-2025 City of San Jose Operating Budget.

Given the significant impacts the coronavirus crisis has had on our city and its aging population, the Seniors Citizens Commission recommends that the City Council will review and keep the Senior Citizens Commission recommended priorities listed below in mind when allocating funds to support a vibrant and healthy aging population reflective of the Age-Friendly Initiative that support a well-rounded quality of life for our Older Adults inclusive of public safety, healthcare,

community programs, health services, education, libraries and more – that help older adults thrive socially, mentally, and emotionally.

## **ANALYSIS**

The City of San Jose Senior Citizens Commission recommends the following:

### **SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Senior Citizens Commission has placed housing as their top priority. Silicon Valley continues to endure a housing crisis including limited availability of affordable housing. There is a lack of knowledge of programs and outreach services to support older adults. Additionally high rent and in some cases unsafe conditions are amplified given the older adults limited income and access to resources.

- Older adults are among the higher percent of homeless in the streets,
- Impact on low-income housed older adults has become more intense than ever since the pandemic. Similarly, the coronavirus has shined a spotlight on older adults who live in shared housing, where adults of all ages live in housing that may have unsafe conditions.
- The impact of high rent can be seen and felt by all communities and especially older adults. As older adults age, rent and cost of living will continue to increase locally while older adult's income will remain fixed.
- We know housing is also a priority for City Council per the 2040 Envision Plan. One of the seven priorities is Healthy Neighborhoods – San Jose's neighborhoods are attractable, affordable, and safe places to live with residents engaged in their community.

The Seniors Citizens Commission strongly recommends that the city continue to look into ways to incentivize the creation of affordable housing. The Senior Citizens Commission recognizes this is an ongoing challenge that should remain a priority for Mayor and Council. Major Strategy #12 of the 2040 Envision Plan states "Periodic Major Review", and one of the items is listed is affordable housing. Now is the time for a major review of affordable housing needs for older adults in San Jose. Every effort takes time and money and requires the combined mobilization of many departments to have an impact. We recommend that resources are prioritized and that funding to senior housing programs be significantly increased.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

In past fiscal years, the city spent a sizable portion of the budget on the transportation department, and along with Measure T's funds, put a lot of effort into paving the many miles of roads. Older adults hope that the city will investigate ways to advance trail infrastructure so that citizens can feel safe while exercising and commuting in more environmentally friendly ways. We are grateful that transportation is one of the four focus areas for the City Councils Priority-

Settings for 2023-2024 and ask that the City Council continues the focus in this important area for older adults.

- The Senior Citizens Commission recommends the city consider in-house shuttle network between senior nutrition sites and city venues such as Senior Safari, classes, and citywide events. Since many bus stops are not close or easily accessible, an in-house shuttle network would allow older adults to participate more in programs and events offered throughout the city.
- Currently, not all Community Centers have a bus stop located in front of their site for easier access. One site in particular, older adults must walk three quarters of a mile to get to the center. As the city continues to build for the future, the Senior Citizens Commission requests that the city works with VTA to ensure that bus stops are located close and easily accessible for older adults to all city facilities.
- The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services department is given a budget for transportation to provide taxi rides for older adults who cannot ride the bus and do not qualify for paratransit. Since the pandemic, the taxi rides ensure that older adults who live alone can get out of their homes for socialization and a nutritious meal. For many older adults, the senior nutrition program is the only nutritious meal they receive. Due to financial restraints many older adults will split the senior nutrition meal and save the other half for dinner. The Senior Citizens Commission requests that the city continue funding for the taxi program to ensure older adults do not become isolated and depressed. Additionally, the commission requests the Council to consider models for PRNS to restore the transportation model PRNS maintained prior to the recession. This model should be developed in way to support older adults access to the individual Community Center's that reflect the older adults needs and ability to access these services that support them in enhancing their quality of life throughout San Jose.

Older Adults have constantly expressed a desire for safer and accessible public transportation - many are deterred from using public transportation for safety reasons or easy access to a bus stop. Although the city does not control VTA or Bart, older adults hope that the city keeps this in mind when designing policy and making decisions regarding public transportation in the city.

## **RECREATION**

Older adults need community centers for the programs, nutritious meals, safe atmosphere, access to WIFI, access to computers, group gatherings - the list goes on and on. Often in times of recession, cities are faced with difficult decisions that affect aspects of life that are considered 'non-essential.' For Older adults to learn, grow and thrive, they first have must be safe and 'healthy.' However, it is important to recognize that the services provided by the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood services are also essential for all citizens' well-being and are not sacrificed in face of hard economic times. The departments' services - programs for older adults, senior nutrition services, and recreation centers contribute to the mental, emotional, and physical health of older adults in crucial ways.

- The PRNS Department provides an outlet for older adults to spend their time productively and develop healthy habits while building relationships and new skills such as digital learning. The 14 Senior Nutrition Program sites and Community Centers give older adults opportunities to participate in classes and workshops, events, meals, do arts and crafts, and through all of that, create experiences and explore passions.
- The community centers can provide older adults a critical access point for not only knowledge and information but access to computers. In today's digital world, many older adults do not own a technology device, nor do they know how to use a smart phone.
- The trusting relationship between staff and older adults in these programs provides the city an opportunity to address the mental health crisis affecting older adults today, as millions of older adults in the country are diagnosed with mental illnesses.
- In the context of the social isolation, economic turbulence, and the shutdown of other organizations and businesses that has resulted from our response to the coronavirus, the services previously mentioned will be more important than ever when older adults venture out of their homes and try to resume daily life.
- Older adults rely deeply on the PRNS department for both Senior Nutrition Program and recreation, and its role in allowing the Seniors Citizens Commission itself to exist. The Seniors Citizens Commission plays a vital role in allowing older adults to be represented in their local government. Through the Seniors Citizens Commission San Jose older adults have learned how to partner with city officials and decision makers to make our city stronger for all.

The Senior Citizens Commission recommends the increase in scholarship funding for older adults aged 50 and older. By doing so more older adults on limited incomes can have access to classes and programs. In addition, the Commission requests that the city consider additional funding to provide a computer lab and digital literacy classes at all community centers.

### **SAFETY**

The police department and the PRNS Park Rangers fulfill many essential services in the city streets and regional parks juggling 24-hour call service, safety in the regional parks, and regulating laws. The Police have been a priority for the city for the past years and the investment has been paying off with the decline of household burglaries. We acknowledge that public safety is important to the City Council as it is one of the four City Council Focus Areas in 2023 – 2024 Priority-Setting.

- The maintenance of city parks and trails is essential. The days of social distancing have revealed just how much city residents rely upon parks and trails to maintain their mental and physical health. It is necessary for parks and trails to be cleaned and kept operational for the sake of residents. Many unhoused situate themselves in neighborhood parks and trails. Older adults can only expect this problem to worsen in the face of an upcoming recession, and believe it necessary that the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services department continues its vital duties in maintaining a safe and clean atmosphere for all residents to live in.

- Overall violence crime rates continue to be on the rise. From 2018 to 2019, the city saw an increase in homicide, rape, aggravated assault, human trafficking and more. For many Older adults, the city does not feel safe.
- Safe and clean neighborhoods and public spaces are important for older adults to get out outside for recreation and socialization while feeling safe.
- Older adults urge the city to continue to combat violence, focusing especially on older adult fraud prevention as well as older adults' assaults and abuse cases.

The Seniors Citizens Commission recommends that the City continues to contribute substantially to the safety of the city, parks and trails. Safety is important for the welfare of residents and especially older adults. We hope the city will prioritize the wellbeing of older adults in the midst of a developing and changing demographics and giving older adults places to live, receive support and resources, and feel safe so they can thrive physically and mentally.

### **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.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with 2023-2024 City Seniors Citizens Commissioners and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services.

/s/  
Gina Gates-Lopez  
Chair  
San José Seniors Citizens Commission

For questions, please contact Jeremy Shoffner, Superintendent, [Jeremy.Shoffner@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Jeremy.Shoffner@sanjoseca.gov).

### **Documents Consulted:**

Seniors Citizens Commission Budget Recommendation 2024/2025

Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan

2023-2024 City Council Focus Areas

2023 IFF Population Demographic Projections

National Council on Aging, Article April 2023

