

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jill Bourne

SUBJECT: SAN JOSÉ YOUTH COMMISSION: UPLIFTING SAN JOSÉ YOUTH PRIORITIES AND VOICES **DATE:** May 20, 2024

Approved



Date: 5/21/2024

BACKGROUND

Since 1971, the San José Youth Commission (“Youth Commission”) has served as the advisory group to the Mayor and City Council, empowering youth through citywide events and initiatives. The Mayor and City Council members appoint eleven Commissioners ages 14-20 to represent the youth of each of the ten Council Districts and a Citywide seat. The Youth Commission represents the more than 248,000 youth in the City of San José.

Youth Commissioners organize and direct Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), composed of youth from each Council District, to develop policy recommendations, propose City budget priorities, host civic town hall meetings and summits, host local events, and survey nearly 900 youth annually on teen wellness and youth priorities. This year, the total number of students involved in the YACs exceeded 135 students. The Youth Commission promotes resources and opportunities available to youth, including equitable access and support to marginalized youth communities.

Following a referral from the City Council on October 4, 2022, the Youth Commission’s FY 2023-2024 work plan prioritized increasing youth representation in local government. The analysis below includes a summary of the work accomplished this year, along with the Youth Commission’s FY 2024-2025 work priorities.

ANALYSIS

The Youth Commission serves as an important advisory body to the City of San José to develop, implement, and support for-youth, by-youth initiatives.

Since assuming the convening role in 2021, the San José Public Library (“SJPL” “Library”) has leveraged staffing and resources to advance the goals of the Youth Commission. In FY 2023-2024, the Youth Commission identified key youth priorities that would enhance their critical role in effectively serving the needs of the youth community in San José. City funding empowered

the Youth Commission to convey the City's commitment to investing in the future of its youth. Through its work plan, the Youth Commission supported key objectives relating to the San José Bill of Rights for Children and Youth and the recently approved Children & Youth Services Master Plan.

As the Youth Commission plans for next year, financial support for the Youth Commission is proposed to advance the following priorities and needs:

- Increase local youth participation in civic engagement and promote awareness of issues relating to youth priorities;
- Advance the implementation of the Children and Youth Services Master Plan;
- Secure partnerships to increase awareness and exchange of resources; and,
- Advise the City Council on emerging priorities that affect the youth.

FY 2023-2024 Work Plan Accomplishments

In FY 2023-2024, the Library received a General Fund allocation of \$11,000 for the Youth Commission's expenses pertaining to online networking accounts, communications, and support for monthly meetings. During FY 2023-2024, the funding allocated to support the Youth Commission's work plan successfully uplifted youth voices by:

- **Identifying youth priorities and project ideas:** From October 2023 to December 2023, the Youth Commission released its annual Teen Priorities survey, capturing nearly 900 youth voices. The top three youth priorities identified through the survey results focused on concerns relating to poverty and homelessness, violence and safety, as well as the availability and quality of educational resources. Over 60 young people further expanded on these priorities by developing recommended actions and project ideas during the Youth Commission's annual Budget Priorities Summit in January 2024.
- **Authoring policy recommendations addressing critical issues in San José:** Alongside their respective YACs, Youth Commissioners authored policy recommendation memos on various topics, including establishing clearly marked bike and pedestrian lanes, implementing menstrual products in Library restrooms, creating a Black, Indigenous and Person of Color Visual Artist Grant Program, and placing sexual violence resource helpline placards in City restrooms. Following their research, the Youth Commission developed 10 memoranda and contributed recommendations on integrating youth-centered services. Moreover, Youth Commissioners act as a bridge to other important community projects, including the Bill Wilson Center's Guaranteed Income Program and the Anti-Doxxing in Schools resolution alongside the Santa Clara County Board of Education.
- **Securing local partnerships to benefit young people and nurture essential skills:** As a Commission composed of youth living in and attending school in San José, it is uniquely posed to partner with and plan events focused on the needs of their immediate communities. The Youth Commissioners and their YACs organized 20 events this year for over 1,000 attendees, spanning policy conferences, youth entrepreneurship fairs, opioid overdose training, Study Smart programs, tree plantings, and other leadership-

focused programs. The Youth Commissioners also attended dozens of community events throughout the year, supporting initiatives from local nonprofits, City departments, and other youth organizations.

FY 2024-2025 Work Plan Priorities

As a result of the accomplishments reached last year, the objectives for FY 2024-2025 include the following priorities:

- **Funding citywide youth civic engagement and youth decision-making processes:** By serving as a convener for the voices and ideas of the more than 248,000 youth in San José, the Youth Commission invests in a shared decision-making process that prioritizes youth development in addressing various City issues. Expanded financial investment will allow the Youth Commission and its YACs to organize more youth-driven events, partner with various city and/or county organizations to enact civic change, conduct more outreach on civic resources, and advocate for policies that benefit young people.
- **Advancing the implementation and demonstration of the Children and Youth Services Master Plan:** The Youth Commission serves as a crucial vehicle for implementing the next phase of the Children and Youth Services Master Plan (“Master Plan”). The youth priorities identified and executed throughout FY 2023-2024 align with the issue areas identified by the Master Plan, especially Health and Mental Wellness, Housing Access and Security, Learning and Empowerment, Meaningful and Sustaining Jobs, and Safe, Clean, and Connected Communities. Moreover, funding leadership development and opportunities for over 135 San José youth involved in the Commission and YACs contributes to holistic systems transformation in San José, reducing systemic barriers, and allowing youth to recommend actions on issues they care deeply about.
- **Marketing and outreach materials:** Additional support for greater promotion of program opportunities will include costs associated with translating materials to Spanish and Vietnamese for monolingual parents and caregivers. The Youth Commission also prioritizes engaging with underserved and underrepresented youth by collaborating with organizations and sharing promotional materials through the City’s Youth Empowerment Alliance and Project Hope.

Budget Request to Support Youth Commission Budget Priorities and Charge

Following the expenditures from last year’s activities, FY 2024-2025 planning is projected to have increased cost estimates resulting from expanded YAC project benchmarks and travel for a Commissioner’s national appointment. The Youth Commission requests a total allocation of \$41,000 as outlined below.

Budget Area	Requested Amount	Description
Youth-led citywide civic programs	\$11,000	\$1,000 x 11/per YAC project =\$11,000
Youth Commission Recognition	\$8,000	Rotunda-use and décor for Awards Dinner = \$2,000, Awards Dinner catering = \$6,000
Commissioner leadership appointment	\$22,000	Participation for one Youth Commissioner as a Delegate to the Youth Education and Families Council, of the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference, City Summit and two policy roundtables. Requires one chaperone to accompany a minor at an estimated cost of \$5,500 per trip of four to five nights each.

For FY 2024-2025, each Youth Commissioner will organize with their YACs to host one main project during year. The \$11,000 will also support Commissioners to continue to attend and serve in their leadership capacity in other key policy discussions and community projects, covering costs such as conference fees, outreach and program materials.

The Youth Commission Recognition takes place at the end of the year to recognize the work of the Youth Advisory Councils and exiting Commissioners.

In February 2024, District 5 Youth Commissioner Andrew Lieu was appointed to a National League of Cities (NLC) Youth Representative seat on their Council on Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Council) following a national call for applications. This appointment provides an opportunity to be involved in the work of NLC and its Center for Leadership, Education, Advancement & Development (LEAD), including its national efforts to promote youth participation in civic affairs. The NLC invites applications from youth leaders who serve on a city’s youth council, commission, or advisory board and who are also currently enrolled as a high school sophomore or junior.¹ The YEF Council meets up to four times during each 12-month term. Attendance at these meetings is a required component of Council membership. NLC does not pay travel expenses for youth to attend NLC conferences and expects that each youth member’s hometown (i.e., municipal government or community partners) will cover these costs as part of their support for local youth civic engagement. Commissioner Lieu’s application was endorsed by Councilmember Cohen and Councilmember Ortiz. The confirmed NLC conferences include the City Summit on Nov. 13-16, 2024, in Tampa, Florida, and the Congressional City

¹ <https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/24-25-YEF-Council-Youth-Delegate-Applications.pdf>

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Conference on March 10-12, 2025, in Washington, D.C. Since the Commissioner is a minor, a staff member will need to accompany him on his appointed travel.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Commission is crucial in promoting and supporting the Bill of Rights for Children and Youth, implementing the Children and Youth Services Master Plan, and empowering young people to drive the change they seek. The Youth Commission advances equity and systems transformation by advocating for policies and programs that align with budget priorities uplifted by youth throughout the past year, such as access to education, housing, and safety. The Youth Commission's budget request will help ensure all youth are represented in the City decision-making process and utilize their available resources, as well as enable and empower more youth to become leaders and advocates in their local communities by providing mechanisms and support for youth to engage with elected officials and decision-makers. Through its efforts, the Youth Commission helps to ensure that all young people in San José have access to fundamental rights and protections. Investing in youth in San José ensures that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

/s/

Jill Bourne
City Librarian

For questions, please contact Elizabeth Nolan, Senior Librarian, at (408) 808-2000.

Attachment: Youth Commission 2024-2025 Budget Priorities

May 8, 2024

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

On behalf of the San José Youth Commission ("Commission"), we request your consideration of the following budget priorities identified by San José youth as you navigate the final budget decisions for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

The Commission represents approximately 248,000 youth under age 19 in San José, promoting available resources and opportunities, providing equitable access and support to historically underserved youth communities, and developing policy recommendations concerning youth. Over this past year, the Commission's work plan has centered on three main areas:

- Youth participatory budget
- Environmental advocacy
- Understanding gender-based violence

The Commission, with our respective Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), organized and led 20 events this year, spanning policy conferences, youth entrepreneurship fairs, opioid overdose training, Study Smart programs, tree plantings, and other leadership focused programs designed to empower hundreds of San José youth. The Youth Commissioners also attend dozens of community events throughout the year, supporting initiatives from local nonprofits, City departments, and other youth organizations.

One of the Commission's main projects is conducting the annual youth survey, gathering the voices of nearly 900 young people to capture their concerns, ideas, and priorities. Alongside our YACs and 60 local youth, our annual budget summit in January 2024 further outlined projects and advocacy opportunities for the Commission's work plan.

The Commission is also committed to **enhancing environmental awareness** through initiatives such as native plant rehabilitation, food waste reduction, litter pickups, and fostering school and community gardens, as outlined in the Commission's 2023-24 Work Plan. The Commission plans to expand stormwater and trash reduction campaigns in the upcoming fiscal year, prioritizing these initiatives to further environmental objectives.

Another key project was the collaboration with local organizations and city departments to address **youth awareness of gender-based violence**, including sexual harassment, assault/domestic violence, and healthy relationships. This involved gathering youth input through events, researching preventative measures and support programs, and proposing practical solutions, like placing helpline placards in city bathrooms for safety.

Amid increasing costs and San Jose's evolving economy, **preparing workers to enter well-paying jobs** is a top priority. The Commission recommends specifically expanding access to educational

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experiences and hands-on learning opportunities in high-demand fields, as evidenced by three events the Commission spearheaded this year: Career Exploration Fair, Creative Futures Fair, and AIM: Aspire, Inspire, Motivate Conference.

Additionally, the Commission has committed to supporting **the Children and Youth Services Master Plan** and the City's work around **Blue Zones**. The Commission emphasizes the importance of empowering youth and families while reducing vulnerabilities and recommends focusing on communication strategies, **improving health and safety measures**, securing resources for sustainability, and integrating arts and cultural initiatives within the work.

Looking forward, the San José Youth Commission plans to **elevate civic engagement** as a primary objective in our work plan for the upcoming fiscal year, particularly with the backdrop of an election year. Recognizing the importance of empowering young people to actively participate in the democratic process, the Commission will incorporate civic engagement initiatives into its work plan.

This letter was coordinated with the 2023-2024 San José Youth Commissioners and the Library Department. For questions, please contact Elizabeth Nolan, Senior Librarian, at (408) 808-2184.

Sincerely,



DEITRA HOANG
San José Youth Commission Chair