



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Julie Edmonds-Mares

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY BUDGET
MEETINGS SUMMARY

DATE: June 1, 2016

Approved

Date

6/1/16

BACKGROUND

As in previous years, the Mayor, City Councilmembers, and the City Manager's Office coordinated Community Budget meetings in each of the ten Council Districts through the month of May. These ten meetings are an essential part of the City's Budget process. Approximately 450 community members participated this year, providing direct feedback to the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager's Office about service priorities.

Each Community Budget meeting was kicked-off by the district's Councilmember, followed by a comprehensive budget presentation and then a question and answer session. The meetings lasted between 60 to 90 minutes.

Additionally, residents were provided with copies of the Budget in Brief document as well as the City Manager's Proposed Operating Budget message (in English). Language interpretation was provided in Spanish and/or Vietnamese, at the request of the City Council office. At some meetings, comment cards were also offered so that residents had the option to submit questions in writing rather than verbally. In addition, one Community Budget meeting (District 3) was streamed live on-line as a pilot effort, resulting in an additional 30 residents able to participate virtually. At each of the ten Community Budget meetings, representatives/department experts were available to respond to questions and comments.

ANALYSIS

The community discussions were as diverse as the City's population. At the same time, several common themes emerged from the meetings:

- **Public Safety**: People are concerned about safety, more officers are needed, burglaries are a specific area of concern.
- **Improving the City Budget Situation / Proposed Sales Tax**: Residents want information and assurance that Sales Tax revenue will stay in San José.

- **Housing Shortages / Development and Neighborhood Impacts:** Lack of affordable housing and neighborhood impacts from (high-density) housing developments are concerns.
- **Homelessness:** Short-term responses and long-term solutions to the homelessness crisis are vital.
- **Traffic Safety and Congestion:** Increased traffic, speeding, and traffic accidents are concerns.
- **Neighborhood Blight / Illegal Dumping:** Illegal dumping, blight, and graffiti continues to challenge many neighborhoods.
- **Park/Community Center Access and Improvements:** Park renovations, increased staffing, and increased enforcement/patrolling were requested.
- **Street Maintenance / Road repair:** Potholes and street repair continue to be an issue, especially on neighborhood streets.

Deeper details shared by residents about these issues are summarized below along with direct quotes. The Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts shown below reflect the number of Community Budget meetings in which the issue was raised by residents.

Public Safety: Public safety is an important issue in all Council Districts, with a specific emphasis on the need to increase the number of officers and re-staff units such as burglary and investigations. While some people expressed the sentiment of feeling unsafe in their local neighborhoods and parks, a few others pointed out that San José is already one of the safest large cities in America.

- Need to increase police officers and improve response times; some people do not feel safe in their neighborhoods.
- Increase in burglaries and thefts across multiple areas with little/no PD response; this causes discouragement and trust in the community. Requests to staff burglary unit, crime prevention unit, open the police sub-station, and repair street lights.
- Need to remind community to report issues to police for the purposes of data-collection and resource-allocation; it is not always in their culture to do so.
- Inefficiency of using fire trucks for medical calls.
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 10 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “It’s not safe – there was a killing in front of my home, we need the 500 Police that were fired.”
 - “San José is one of the safest large cities in the US. I know we’re proposing to spend a lot of money on PD, so how safe does San José have to be to say it’s enough?”
 - “We see lots of theft around here in broad daylight. Theft is a quality of life issue, not as high priority as murder, but still quality of life and we can’t get anything done about it.”

Improving the City Budget Situation / Questions about the Proposed Sales Tax: Many community members indicated a desire for the City to grow its revenue in various ways, while

questions about the proposed sales tax were centered on ensuring that funds would stay in San José and increase/improve key services.

- Strong desire for a guarantee that proposed sales tax revenue would stay in San José.
- Interest in increasing City revenue through federal grants, attracting more businesses/economic development, and adopting more business-friendly permitting processes.
- An expressed desire to be more involved in the City budgeting process through earlier involvement in the process, easier access to budget information, and participatory budgeting.
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 10 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “On ¼ cent sales tax increase, if there is a \$30-40 mill increase, where does that money go?”
 - “How do you plan on using Measure B to fix potholes?”
 - “What services will be available in District X if the sales tax measure passes?”
 - “How can the community untie the City’s hands and create additional resources to increase services?”

Housing Shortages/Developments and Neighborhood Impacts: Resident concerns focused on the need for more (affordable) housing and the impact of new housing on neighborhoods.

- City needs to play a role in improving the regional housing deficit.
- Urgent need for affordable housing, also affordable housing specific to seniors.
- Neighborhoods are severely impacted by housing developments; developers and corporations should be paying some of these costs (such as fire stations, additional parking, and traffic congestion).
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 8 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “What are you doing about housing, especially affordable housing for seniors?”
 - “Where do developer fees go? Are we taxing developers enough? Are high-tech companies being held accountable for the high rents?”
 - “Townhomes are taking over our neighborhood parking...”
 - “I want to add a policy to address any new neighborhood impacts from new developments so that there is accountability.”

Homelessness: Many community members expressed concern about the growing homelessness problem, its impact on their quality of life, and the need to provide both services and long-term solutions for the homeless population.

- Need for a region-wide homeless response team, including issues on Caltrans property.
- Urgent need for short-term responses and long-term solutions.

- Significant concerns about housing projects for the homeless, specific concerns were expressed about the Senter Road housing project.
- Overarching issues in homelessness must be addressed – vocational, mental health, homeless services, etc.
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 6 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “Homeless – there is nothing in the budget. Since the jungle was dismantled, our community is impacted... What is the City doing in this neighborhood about the homeless – both long-term and short-term?”
 - “I go on a lot of early morning runs so I see a lot of homeless people in their natural state. With the new motels etc., how will we prevent homeless people coming from other cities?”
 - “It’s easy to say homeless people are a problem – we live across the street and we see it every day... and they need this (homeless services) project.”
 - “Homeless services should be a priority; including mental health service needs.”

Traffic Safety and Congestion: Many concerns were expressed with regard to serious traffic accidents and near-miss accidents.

- Significant issues with traffic congestion; recommendations include better signal sequencing, revising traffic patterns, traffic management at problem intersections, and alternative modes of transportation for commuters.
- Major concerns with speeding; recommendations include police enforcement for speeding and adding crossing guards at schools.
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 7 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “I want to hear more about the traffic/technology infrastructure upgrades slated for X... We need innovation at traffic intersections.”
 - “There is also an increase in speeding. It is posted 25 mph, almost no police present...people come and floor it, driving 50-60 mph. Any money in budget for traffic calming?”
 - “Tremendous number of serious accident and near misses in the X area.”

Neighborhood Blight / Illegal Dumping: Community members expressed appreciation for the City’s efforts to combat neighborhood blight, while continuing to be frustrated by the amount of neighborhood illegal dumping.

- Large item pick-up is an important City service.
- Illegal dumping is an on-going issue; also need coordination with “government peers” so that they do their part.
- San Jose Clean app makes reporting graffiti simple and effective.

- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 6 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “What about budget funds promoting new initiatives such as graffiti, neighborhood clean-ups, blight?”
 - “What about large item pickup for apt complexes – 2 couches sat on X Street for 3 months. How will that be addressed in the next budget?”
 - “I had a great experience using the large item pick up.”

Park/Community Center Access and Improvements: Parks are seen as vital elements of most communities and the desire exists for greater access to park space (especially grass fields and parks within walking distance). At the same time, without renovations, maintenance, and staffing/enforcement, the parks and community centers become less usable to the community.

- Community need for more grass fields and more park renovations
- Additional staffing is necessary – park rangers, enforcement, community center staffing. Specific parks/community centers were identified in multiple districts, several comments about the need for improved/expanded senior services
- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 6 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “I’m looking at the budget for Parks, but the fields are ridiculous – it’s like playing in mud. Can we take some of the money and ... prioritize this so kids can play soccer safely?”
 - “Community centers are serving 1,000 lunches/day. However, each center is thinly staffed – 1 Rec Leader and the grant funding is ending at the end of June and we need to keep them.”

Street Maintenance / Road Repair: Street repair and potholes continue to be an important issue, especially on neighborhood streets.

- **Number of Community Budget Meetings/Council Districts:** 4 of 10
- **Community Quotes:**
 - “Why is so little funding allocated to the DOT budget for city street repair?”
 - “What’s the plan to fix our roads?”

It is important to remark that many other issues were raised by residents. These issues were captured at the meetings by City Councilmembers, Council Staff and City staff to support the budget process.

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COORDINATION

All 10 Council offices supported the scheduling of dates, booking locations, and managing logistics for their respective Community Budget meetings. The Administration coordinated multiple department participation as well as equipment logistics.

/s/

Julie Edmonds-Mares
Deputy City Manager