

May 8, 2019

Mayor and City Council

City of San José

200 E Santa Clara Street  
San José, CA 95113

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Following please find the Neighborhoods Commission's 2019 Annual Budget Letter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood Safety: Improve response times to police, fire and code enforcement

- TBD

Code Enforcement: The Commission recommends the City dedicate more resources to Code Enforcement, specifically:

- TBD

Transportation:

- TBD

BUDGET LETTER

San José has experienced another year of growth and evolution as one of the nation's leading cities. With growth and evolution come the challenges to deal with the resultant changes and issues that affect the quality of life in San José.

Neighborhood safety, code enforcement, and transportation have been impacted by the continuing growth and evolution of San José. In many cases, the impact issues are ongoing because of lack of resources and/or increases in demands that are not able to

be met with existing planning and budgeting. Issues are not adequately addressed resulting in a backlog or increase of problems not dealt with.

Ongoing quality of life issues at the “street level” continue to be unresolved. Commissioners reported very similar concerns from their communities last year: In some communities, residents no longer report incidents because Public Safety response is too slow, including slow or non-existent dispatch call answering. Illegal fireworks, especially on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, remain a major unresolved issue. Fewer than half of City residents still report San José as a great place to live for overall quality of life.

The continuing growth and development of San José does provide a source of revenue and resources to direct toward addressing and resolving the issues. Many of the issues have been identified and analyzed and recommendations developed for their resolution. Successful implementation of the recommendations will in many cases, require a focused approach with project-based objectives and timelines for completion.

Commissioners solicited budget recommendations from neighborhood/homeowner associations, leadership groups, and community organizations for each of their districts. The Commissioners engagement with the organizations provided meaningful neighborhood-level information from those affected by neighborhood safety, code enforcement, and transportation issues. The Commission’s budget recommendations are based on the inputs received from their communities.

## NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Neighborhood Safety issues were among the highest concerns expressed in community responses.

- **Emergency Calls Response Times:** Community inputs from district residents throughout the city reported slow, or no, response to 911. Currently, police call takers and dispatchers accept both 911 emergency and 311 non-emergency calls. The 311 non-emergency calls account for approximately 40 percent of call volume. The SJ City Auditor reported that in order to meet the California requirement for answering emergency call within 15 seconds the SJ Fire and Police Departments rely heavily on overtime for police call takers and dispatchers. The Commission recommends that additional full-time employees be hired for police call takers and dispatchers instead of relying on overtime. Additionally, the Commission recommends that San José separate the 911 emergency calls from the 311 non-emergency calls and develop a 311 non-

emergency call response system. The resulting 911 and 311 call response systems should incorporate the latest technology. Measure B ¼-Cent Sales Tax revenue should be evaluated as a possible source to fund these systems.

- **Illegal Fireworks:** The Commission has provided input on this issue over the past several years. The Commission recommends that the SJ Fire and Police Departments have additional budget, staff, and internal support commensurate with the public concerns on this issue. Both departments need additional resources and staffing in order to patrol, issue citations, and if necessary arrest offenders. The SJ Fire and Police Departments have engaged community organizations such as Stop Illegal Fireworks and neighborhood associations to communicate to their neighborhoods the dangers and social impacts of illegal fireworks. The Commission again strongly urges additional staffing and resources for dispatch and data tracking, enforcing laws in real time, raising fines and upgrading year-round online reporting.

## CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code enforcement issues were also high among the concerns expressed in community responses. I

- illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, people living in RVs on residential streets, and graffiti continue to be ongoing problems. Residents report no response to simple Code Enforcement requests, or responses that take so long that a simple violation increases in scope into a real problem. The code enforcement department does not have budget, staff, and internal support to address code enforcement issues especially in the areas of Illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, and graffiti. The Commission recommends that Community Service Officers be used for issuing citations in these areas. This will allow the code enforcement department to concentrate on making certain citation issues are corrected. The Commission recommends that code enforcement funding be provided for budget, staff, and internal support and using Community Service Officers.
- Traffic enforcement has suffered as a result of budget reductions. Neighborhoods provided inputs on concerns that included speeding, pedestrian safety, and school area traffic issues. In 2008 the Traffic Enforcement Unit was staffed by 1 lieutenant, 7 sergeants and 44 officers and issued approximately 75,000 citations. Presently, the unit is staffed by 1 lieutenant, 2 sergeants, and 8 officers and issues approximately 10,000 citations. The Commission

recommends that funding be provided increasing the staffing of the Traffic Enforcement Unit.

## TRANSPORTATION

The condition of San José streets remains an issue with communities.

- Residents are eager for the Measure T Bond funds to be implemented to pave streets and, especially, fill potholes. Communicating the plan and timeline via all channels will help alleviate the ongoing concern on this topic.

Finally, while homelessness is out of scope for this Commission, it again notes that continued lack of housing for our homeless neighbors has an expensive and destructive flow-down in the form of horrible illegal dumping, police-call outs, and poor safety for unhomed and homed neighbors alike. The Commission applauds any and all progress on homelessness – it cannot happen fast enough.

Sincerely,

Gary Cunningham, Chair  
San José Neighborhoods Commission