



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

**SUBJECT: YOUTH COMMISSION 2020-2021
CITY BUDGET PRIORITIES**

DATE: June 2, 2020

Approved

Date: 6/2/2020

The purpose of this Manager's Budget Addendum is to provide the City Council with the Youth Commission's annual budget priority recommendations for 2020-2021.

BACKGROUND

Through the Youth Commission program, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) strives to foster greater awareness of municipal government and civic opportunities among youth who are between 14 and 18 years of age and living in San José. To prepare for this year's recommendations, Youth Commission participants reviewed City Service Area documents and met with their individual City Council Districts' Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) from November 2019 to January 2020. The purpose of the meetings were to identify the respective advisory councils' budget priorities and finalize their collective findings and recommendations during the annual Youth Advisory Council Summit on January 11, 2020. The Youth Commission approved their final budget priority list at the February 24, 2020 Youth Commission meeting.

ANALYSIS

The Youth Commission's 2020-2021 City Budget Priorities memorandum is attached for the City Council's consideration.

COORDINATION

This memo was coordinated with the City Manager's Budget Office and the City Attorney's Office.

/s/

Jon Cicirelli
Director, Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

Attachment A



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Youth Commission Chair
Jacqueline Paredes-Kao

**SUBJECT: YOUTH COMMISSION
2020-2021 CITY BUDGET
PRIORITIES**

DATE: May 19, 2020

INFORMATION

The San José Youth Commission hopes that the City Council considers the following budget priorities of San José's youth when making Council decisions on the final budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

OVERVIEW

A quarter of San José's population are youth. They are the leaders of the next generation and the future of our city. In a few years, today's youth will face and live the consequences of the decisions made by our city officials, which is why the San José Youth Commission feels it is crucially important that youth voices are considered while defining the 2020-2021 fiscal City Budget.

With the huge impacts that the coronavirus crisis has had on our city, the Youth Commission understands that many sacrifices must be made and that the 2020-2021 City Budget may now take on a recession type of outlook. To that end, the Youth Commission hopes that the City Council will review and keep the Youth Priorities listed below in mind when allocating funds and remember that while 'essential services' such as police and healthcare are vital, there are many other services in the city – community programs, education, libraries and more – that help youth develop socially, mentally, and emotionally.

Since early January 2020 the Youth Commission has conducted research through multiple youth town hall forums, a six-hour youth summit, and individual district Youth Advisory Council discussions to gather youth feedback and priorities on the city budget. Collectively, the youth has ranked the departments in priority with one being of highest importance.

YOUTH PRIORITY #1 HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Youth have consistently placed housing as one of their top priorities. Silicon Valley is infamous for its housing crisis, and youth already feel its effects from many angles.

- Youth are among the homeless in the streets, and while homelessness is a problem for all, it has the greatest - and worst – effect on homeless youth, who, at their most impressionable period of life, are forced to live in unstable conditions without support, love, and solid foundations that are essential for them to develop and thrive.
- Impact on low-income housed youth have become more intense than ever with the coronavirus threat. Even after the pandemic dies down, it is of highest priority that these youth are given the support and attention that they need. Similarly, the coronavirus has shined a spotlight on youth who live in shared housing, where multiple families are crammed into a single-family house. At a point where privacy and peace are necessary, these youth have none, and with the recent shelter-in-place order, the city must face the threat of rising domestic abuse as youth are ‘sheltered’ inside a home that may not necessarily be safe.
- The impact of high rents can be seen and felt by youth when their best instructors who youth depend on for support both in and out of the classroom have abruptly move out of the state due to the high cost of living. Youth have also stated that it is unlikely that they will live in San José when they are older due to the high cost of rents as well.
- Concerns over Google coming to San José and the implications that will have for the housing situation are frequently voiced among youth. They understand the controversy between possible rent increases to be a problem that faces not only adults, but the thousands of children who live in apartments and low-income housing.

The Youth Commission hopes that the city will continue to look into ways to incentivize the creation of affordable housing by private businesses and mitigate the displacement of youth who need stability in order to build a future. We understand that the city has been trying to address the housing crisis for years, and yet it persists. Every effort takes time and money and requires the combined mobilization of many departments to have an impact. It seems logical, therefore, to increase the funding in order to increase the efforts. Given the long-term benefits that will help future generations of youth, today’s teens are willing to make sacrifices — and understand that some of those may come from lower priority department funding, in order to fix this problem.

YOUTH PRIORITY #2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the face of rising unemployment and the small businesses impacted by the economic shutdown in 2020, youth especially value the core services of Business Development, Real Estate Services that generate revenue, and Regional Workforce development that youth hope will help move the city out of this crisis.

- The work2future who enact programs like San José Works are incredibly valuable to youth in gang-impacted neighborhoods, as well as youth who have dropped out of high school and wish to directly enter the workforce.
- Youth appreciate the city's effort to develop public art — each brightly colored mural or light display makes the city feel more like a connected community. Other small efforts, such as allocating one-time funding to repair and upgrade the downtown ice rink, are not missed by youth.
- With its Real Estate Services and Regional Workforce Development services combined with its focus on arts and cultural development make life in the city vibrant and enjoyable.

Overall, with a population comprising 40% of immigrants, youth are exposed to people from all cultures and can grow in an environment that is rich with new ideas and experiences. Living in San José, youth can experience an upbringing that stretches far past the bounds of the Bay Area. The Youth Commission believes that it is important to nurture this diversity, and this department's efforts to facilitate cultural development will benefit youth in years to come.

YOUTH PRIORITY #3 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Hundreds of youth gathered by Diridon Station on September 20, 2019 and marched in a climate strike along with youth in cities around the world, all demanding government leaders to address climate change. Our city is already a leader in sustainability, and youth believe that San José's stance towards the issue, recognizing it as a 'climate emergency,' and enacting aggressive measures to move the city towards a cleaner and greener future are the right approach to take. The Youth Commission encourages the city to continue to see it as today's responsibility to address global environmental issues for the sake of our future and youth tomorrow.

- Youth requested a town hall to be held on the environment — during that town hall, youth brainstormed creative ways to promote recycling in the city and emerged with several policy proposals on ways to incentivize the use of biodegradable materials in restaurants, proper recycling, and reduction of food waste.
- Yet another youth policy recommendation was to require high rise buildings to utilize green architecture. With the changes that the city will undergo in the following years, particularly with the arrival of Google to San Jose, youth hope that the city strongly keeps sustainability of infrastructure in mind when densifying and developing the city.

In the Mayor's 2019-2020 June budget message, Mayor Sam Liccardo prioritized confronting blight and beautifying the city, an action that youth highly support. Under this priority, the mayor recommended allocation of funds to support Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful (KCCB) and South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition (SBCC). This past year, youth from District 10 participated in two creek cleanups and hope that the city continues to support this effort in the upcoming fiscal year along with youth.

YOUTH PRIORITY #4 PARKS, RECREATION, AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Often in times of recession, cities are in danger of neglecting aspects of life that are considered ‘non-essential.’ For youth to grow and learn, they first have to 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. Their services — programs for youth, homework centers, and recreation centers — contribute to the mental, emotional, and physical health of youth in crucial ways.

- The PRNS Department provides an outlet for youth to spend their time productively and develop healthy habits while building relationships and skills. The department facilitates youth-serving programs such as R.O.C.K. Afterschool, ASES, San José Recreation Preschool, and Teen Centers. It gives youth opportunities to participate in sports, take classes, do arts and crafts, and through all of that, create experiences and explore passions.
- The trusting relationship between staff and youth in these programs provides the city an opportunity to address the mental health crisis affecting youth today, as millions of youth in the country are diagnosed with mental illnesses. Earlier this year, the Youth Commission submitted a policy proposal to train staff to recognize mental illnesses in the hopes that early intervention will prevent untreated illness. The Youth Commission recommends that the council consider that proposal when allocating funds.
- In the context of the social isolation, economic turbulence, and the shutdown of schools that has resulted from our response to the coronavirus, the services previously mentioned will be more important than ever when youth venture out of their homes and try to resume daily life. The homework support provided by the department’s homework centers will help youth who have fallen behind in school, and social interaction will be in high demand.
- During the last recession in 2008, the PRNS department’s staffing was cut, parks were no longer patrolled by park rangers on a regular basis, and many community centers were closed. The Youth Commission fears a repeat of these events in the year to come and urges the city to reflect on the implications of such a decision.
- Last recession, many community centers were used as reuse centers, and Santa Clara County nonprofits used the centers. While this is a viable way to continue to provide services to the community while freeing up funds to address other issues, it comes with the dangers of non-profits stationed in the reuse centers filling their programs up with outsider residents and crowding out local youth.
- The maintenance of city parks is essential. The days of social distancing have revealed just how much city residents rely upon parks to maintain their mental and physical health. It is necessary for those parks to be cleaned and kept operational for the sake of residents. In a meeting with the PRNS department director Jon Cicirelli, youth learned of PRNS’ role of managing the many homeless who situate themselves in neighborhood parks. Youth can only expect this problem to worsen in the face of an upcoming recession, and believe it necessary that the department continues its vital duties in maintaining a safe and clean atmosphere for all residents to live in.

- Youth rely deeply on the PRNS department for both its youth gang prevention services, and its role in allowing the Youth Commission itself to exist. The Youth Commission plays a vital role in allowing youth to be represented in their local government. Through the Youth Commission San José Youth have learned how to partner with city officials and decision makers to make our city stronger for all.

Youth understand that it is impossible to provide all the funding that the department needs in the face of the recession that will likely follow the coronavirus, and youth do not unreasonably expect this of the city. However, youth emphasize the need for creative solutions that will allow these services to continue to be available for youth. This might include prioritizing the support of community centers in areas where teens are in the highest need category, such as in gang impacted or lower economic areas.

YOUTH PRIORITY #5 LIBRARIES

Youth need libraries. Not only for the wealth of books and information, but for the quiet, safe atmosphere, the programs, the WIFI, the access to computers, the group study centers — the list goes on and on. For young children, access to the library is critical for literary development. For older teens, access to the internet is more important than ever as classes rely more and more on technology.

San José Public Library work youth is guided by the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy (EDL). This framework ensures all children and families of San José are fully engaged learners with equitable access to a community of learning; enabling them to be agents of their own opportunity. The Library strives to provide every student with the ability to choose a meaningful path upon graduating from high school, whether it be attending a community college or four-year university, launching a small business, or developing valuable, in-demand trade skills. SJPL is currently developing a set of College and Career Readiness standards, for all programs that are City-funded, sponsored or endorsed, with other leaders in youth development to be in place by Fall 2020.

SJPL offers teens a variety of leadership roles and volunteer experiences.

- The libraries provide youth a critical access point for not only knowledge and information but access to their school work. SJPL's robust physical and digital collections, and eResources support learners in their information needs.
- The Library offers students access to 1300 reservable PC's another 200 Laptops and 100 tablets for programming, group study rooms, and Wi-Fi at its 25 locations.
- TeenHQ, a space for middle and high school students at the Dr. Martin Luther King Library, offers access to innovative technology like a Recording Studio, a Makerspace, and Gaming Lounge.
- Teens Reach is the Library's youth council empowers to serve their community by volunteering, library advisors, and advocates. With nearly 200 active teens and 1,000 annual, San José Youth are helping shape their libraries program offerings.

- The SJ Engage program worked with youth throughout the city to spark discussion around civic issues and create community projects including a conversation with SJSU Council member, a letter writing campaign, a mental health fair and diversity film festival.
- SJPL also launched SJ Aspires program. This program allows students to earn up to \$5000 in scholarship funds for distribution to the vocational school, community college, college, or university of their choice by completing online curriculum on college and career skills. In 2020, the program will expand to all incoming students for two local high school.
- Youth are also central to the Summer Learning program with 227 teens volunteering 3,584 hours to help nearly 24,000 members of the community track their reading and learning over the summer.

During the 2008 recession, the staffing through the library system was reduced by 26 percent and hours were limited to four days a week. When allocating the 2020-2021 budget, youth urge the city to think both carefully and creatively about handling library funds and of the implications that come from cutting library hours. For instance, if funds must be allocated elsewhere, then libraries could remain open during peak hours — not just on weekdays, but on weekends as well.

YOUTH PRIORITY #6 POLICE DEPARTMENT

In youth eyes, the police department it is an indispensable department, but believe that higher focus on the previous departments will result in the most positive impact on youth. The police department fulfills many essential services in the city, juggling 24-hour call service in addition to investigating crimes and regulating laws. They have been a priority for the city for the past years and the investment has been paying off with the decline of household burglaries.

- 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 youths, the city does not feel safe.
- Youth urge the city to continue to combat violence, focusing especially on youth gang ‘hot-spots’ and human trafficking that youth are targeted for as well as youth assaults and youth abuse cases.

The Youth Commission hope that focus on the preceding departments will continue to contribute substantially to the public safety of the city, not by combating violence as the police department must, but by stopping the problem at its roots — by giving youth places to live, support, safety, and resources so that they occupy their time with positive activities rather than using crime as an outlet for expression.

YOUTH PRIORITY #7 PUBLIC WORKS

Of all the services from this department, youth most value the service of facilitating private development. This aligns with the concern many youths have voiced over Google coming to San José, which may benefit many, but also hurt others. Among those hurt will be youth living in low-income families. As this service is focused on protecting the safety and welfare of residents, youth hope the city will prioritize the wellbeing of youth in the midst of a developing and changing city.

YOUTH PRIORITY #8 TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

The past fiscal year, 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. Youth hope that the city looks into ways to advance bike infrastructure so that citizens can feel safe while commuting in more environmentally friendly ways. However, in comparison to the previously mentioned departments, Transportation has fallen further down on the youth priority list.

It is worth mentioning, that this department would have been placed much higher on the priority list if the city was in charge of VTA and Bart. Youth have constantly expressed a desire for safer public transportation - many are deterred from using public transportation for safety reasons. Although the city does not control VTA or Bart, youth hope that the city keeps this in mind when designing policy and making decisions regarding public transportation in the city.

YOUTH PRIORITY #9 FIRE

Having firefighters responding to emergencies throughout the 200 square miles of the city and Santa Clara's additional unincorporated areas is essential and requires a great deal of dedication and sacrifice, especially in the wake of coronavirus, where firefighters bravely perform their work at risk of their own health. However, youth do not find the need of the Fire department to be as high as those of other issues the city is facing and rank it accordingly.

YOUTH PRIORITY #10 PLANNING, BUILDING, AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Though the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department is important in guiding the development of the city, youth neither feel its effects strongly in their daily lives, nor envision its effect on future generations of youth to be as impactful as the actions of other departments.

YOUTH PRIORITY #11 FINANCE

Similar to the aforementioned department, youth do not strongly feel the effects of the finance department or feel that it has the same level of urgency as other departments.

YOUTH PRIORITY #12 CITY CLERK

Youth feel that the city clerk's role of facilitating a democratic process in the city's legislative process is not as high priority as the other eleven departments. Even though we recognize the support it provides for Boards and Commissions, youth feel other departments directly affect them.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with 2019-2020 City District Youth Commissioners and the San José Library. Reviewed by the following departments: Housing, Economic Development, Environment, Police, Public Works, Transportation and Fire.

/s/
Jacqueline Paredes-Kao
San José Citywide Youth Commissioner

For questions, please contact Betty Ramirez, Youth Outreach Specialist, (408) 793-5559.

Documents Consulted:

The Mayor's March Budget Message 2019
The Mayor's June Budget Message 2019
The Mayor's March Budget Message 2020
2019-2020 Adopted Operating Budget Message
Youth Commission Budget Recommendation 2019/2020
City of San Jose Annual Report on City Services 2018-19
Climate Smart San Jose Plan
Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan

