

Mayor and City Council

May 7, 2021

City of San José
200 E Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

Dear Mayor and City Council,

The Neighborhoods Commission acknowledges the Novel Corona Virus Pandemic and its impact on the City's resources and personnel. Replanning and reallocating of City's resources as the need arises will be a reality of the situation. Fortunately, the City has recognized the possible economic impact of the virus epidemic and is implementing plans to deal with the impacts and mitigate the effects.

The Neighborhoods Commission realizes that conditions caused by the virus epidemic will impact City revenues and budget allocations and the Commission's recommendations provided in the budget letter may be affected.

Following please find the Neighborhoods Commission's 2021 Annual Budget Letter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood Safety: The Commission recommends:

- Allocating resources to target burglaries, porch piracy, and automobile break-ins
- Using Measure B 1/4-Cent Sales Tax revenue as a source of funds to increase the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force staffing and resources.
- Providing additional city staffing to enforce the existing Fireworks ordinance.

Code Enforcement: The commission recommends the City dedicate more resources to Code Enforcement.

- Specifically hiring dedicated additional Code Enforcement Officers to address complaints from residents regarding illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, people living in RVs on residential streets and graffiti. Delayed response or no response from Code Enforcement creates additional and larger problems for the community and the city.
 - Blight across our City is a high priority among residents .The Commission recommends code enforcement funding be provided for budget, staff, and internal support.
 - Additionally, the Commission recommends funding be provided to allow the use of Community Service Officers to support Code Enforcement efforts throughout the City.

Transportation: The Commission recommends:

- The Commission recommends that additional funding be provided to increase the staffing of the Traffic Enforcement Unit.
- Additional funding be provided to increase the number of crossing guards at uncontrolled intersections.

BUDGET LETTER RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for FY 2021-22 also continue to address issues reported by residents over the last two-years. San José's growth and development continue to challenge and stress the City's resources. Additionally, the Novel Corona Virus Pandemic will impact City revenues and the budget allocations of City's resources and personnel.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Neighborhood Safety issues continue to be among the highest concerns expressed in community responses.

- Burglaries, porch piracy, and automobile break-ins are a significant concern to residents and a major topic at community meetings. Seniors are distressed because of the theft of medical supplies, food, and other goods delivered to those who have limited mobility or are confined to their homes. Residents report that City sidewalks are littered with broken glass from car break-ins.
- Increased gang activity in neighborhoods has been reported by residents. Tagging and graffiti as well as gang-related criminal incidents are a concern. The Commission recommends using Measure B 1/4-Cent Sales Tax revenue as a source of funds to increase the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force staffing and resources. The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force has been successful in the prevention, intervention and suppression of gang activity.
- Illegal Fireworks is an ongoing problem and needs additional city staffing to enforce the existing Fireworks ordinance.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

- Code Enforcement issues were high among the concerns expressed in community responses to the Neighborhoods Commission during commission meetings and expressed to commissioners at Neighborhood Association meetings and District Leadership Group meetings.
- Illegal Dumping, abandoned vehicles that go unchecked, people living in RVs on residential streets in addition to graffiti continue to be ongoing problems.
- Residents continue to report no response to simple Code Enforcement requests or extended responses that take so long that a simple violation increases in scope so that when the issue is finally addressed by Code Enforcement it is a major problem in the neighborhood. As a result, Council is then requested to become involved taking more staff time from other entities in the city to resolve the problem.

- Blight caused by trash on the streets whether generated by illegal dumping, the homeless or trash falling from vehicles continues to plague neighborhoods throughout the city and is a top concern of residents.
- The Commission recommends that code enforcement funding be provided for budget, staff, and internal support. Additionally, the Commission recommends funding be provided to allow the use of Community Service Officers to support Code Enforcement.

TRANSPORTATION

- Residents report ongoing and worsening, speeding, sideshows, pedestrian safety, and school-area traffic issues. Residents report the lack of Traffic Enforcement Unit deployment in areas where there is speeding and pedestrian safety concerns. The Commission recommends that additional funding be provided to increase the staffing of the Traffic Enforcement Unit.
- Crossing guards are needed at uncontrolled intersections, where there are no traffic signals, to “herd” students together to cross in orderly groups. Presently, students cross streets individually causing traffic backups on streets resulting in motorists not obeying traffic rules and causing safety issues. The Commission recommends that additional funding be provided to increase the number of crossing guards at uncontrolled intersections.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The Neighborhood Safety, Code Enforcement, and Transportation budget recommendations address issues and concerns that affect the quality of life in San José. A factor that would aid in dealing with these issues is improving communications between the City and its residents. Residents report that they are not aware of many City development projects, community information meetings, and City outreach efforts. The recent Audit of Development Noticing performed by the San José City Auditor’s Office Finding 2 determined that the City does not have a comprehensive list of contact information for neighborhood associations and notices do not appear to be fully translated. The Finding 2 recommendation, agreed to by the City, was to improve mechanisms for reaching neighborhood associations and limited-English speaking communities by creating a comprehensive list and map of neighborhood associations and contacts for all City departments to use early in the development review process and also be used for other Citywide outreach efforts.

Effective communication between the City and its residents is key to having community engagement in dealing with issues affecting the quality of life in San José. The comprehensive list and map of neighborhood associations will be an important asset in improving communication. It is critical that when developed, the list and map are maintained, and funding and resources are provided.

Providing funding and resources to develop and maintain the comprehensive list and map of San Jose neighborhood associations and contacts in support of the development review process and other Citywide outreach efforts.

While historically considered out of scope for the NC to address as part of its charter, it's important to communicate that neighbors consistently say homelessness and neighborhood safety is their main concerns. Homelessness issues range from the health and safety of our unhoused neighbors, to unpredictable and unwelcome new encampments being set up in neighborhood streets and trash left behind after RV campers find a new location. The Neighborhoods Commission acknowledges the City's efforts in dealing with homelessness to date and recommends continued efforts in finding effective solutions.

Additionally, the Novel Corona Virus Pandemic and its impact has made all of us aware of the need for effective communication between the City and San José residents. Please consider the Neighborhoods Commission as a resource to use for reaching out to San José neighborhoods

Sincerely,

Jim Carter, Chair
San José Neighborhoods Commission

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